



PRESS RELEASE
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ED Attaches Assets Worth Rs. 159.51 Crore in Illegal Coal Mining Case

Directorate of Enforcement (ED), Headquarters Office, has provisionally attached assets worth Rs. 159.51 Crore under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 in connection with an ongoing investigation into large-scale illegal coal mining and pilferage in the leasehold areas of Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL).

The investigation has revealed that the illegal mining operations were carried out by a syndicate led by Anup Majee, also known as "Lala." Certain beneficiary companies in West Bengal were found to have knowingly purchased illegally excavated coal in cash, thereby assisting in the concealment and projection of Proceeds of Crime as legitimate. The attached assets include investments in movable financial instruments such as corporate bonds and alternate investment funds held in the names of beneficiary entities, including Shyam Sel and Power Limited and Shyam Ferro Alloys Limited, part of the Shyam Group managed and controlled by Sanjay Agarwal and Brij Bhushan Agarwal.

Further investigation has established that the syndicate was engaged in illegal excavation and widespread coal pilferage, distributing the coal to multiple factories in West Bengal with the active facilitation of local administrative elements. A key modus operandi involved the use of an illegal transport challan system known as the "Lala pad," which functioned as a fake tax invoice issued in the name of non-existent entities.

Along with the fake transport challan, a currency note of Rs. 10 or Rs. 20 was provided to the transporter. The transporter would take a photograph of the said currency note while holding it beside the number plate of the truck, dumper, or tipper carrying the illegal coal and send the image to the operator of the coal syndicate. The operator would then circulate the photograph through WhatsApp to concerned Police officials and other government authorities along the route of the vehicle, ensuring that the truck was not intercepted or, if intercepted, was immediately released.

The investigation has also uncovered the use of an underground hawala network for transferring Proceeds of Crime in cash, bypassing formal banking channels. Transactions were authenticated using unique identifiers, typically the serial number of a currency note shared between sender and recipient. Upon verification of the matching note, cash was handed over without any formal documentation, enabling seamless and untraceable movement of funds.

With this latest attachment, the total value of assets attached in the case has reached Rs. 482.22 Crore.

The offence involves multiple layers of complex financial transactions designed to conceal the origin and ownership of illicit funds. The ED continues to systematically unravel these layers to identify ultimate beneficiaries, trace additional Proceeds of Crime, and detect all persons involved in the laundering process.

The ED reiterates its commitment to taking stringent action against economic offences, particularly those involving illegal mining and money laundering, which undermine public resources and economic integrity.