



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**19/4/2023**

Directorate of Enforcement (ED) has attached immovable properties worth Rs 5.7 Crore belonging to Villayutham & his family members. The attached properties includes vacant plots, agricultural lands, and buildings including a Hotel run in the name of M/s. Hotel Ramajayam in Rameswaram.

Investigation was initiated under Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 against Villayutham and others on the basis of multiple FIRs registered by the Tamil Nadu Police and Wildlife Authorities from 2008 till 2022.

Investigation revealed that Villayutham, a Smuggler and habitual offender had generated proceeds of crime by indulging into smuggling and trading of Sea cucumbers. The Collection and trade of Sea cucumbers are strictly banned in India since the year 2001 and they are a marine species protected under Schedule I of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. There is a high demand for the sea cucumbers in Singapore, China and other Far eastern countries.

The said proceeds generated in cash was later layered and channelled into the banking system and was used to repay loans in cash, and to acquire properties including a Hotel.

Subsequently, Villyutham was arrested on 13.03.2023 after being found guilty of offence of money laundering and is currently in judicial custody.

Further investigation is in progress.