

BILL NO. 120 OF 2021

A Bill further to amend the Income-tax Act, 1961 and the Finance Act, 2012.

BE it enacted by Parliament in the Seventy-second Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARY

1. This Act may be called the Taxation Laws (Amendment) Act, 2021.

Short title.

CHAPTER II

AMENDMENT TO THE INCOME-TAX ACT, 1961

43 of 1961.

2. In section 9 of the Income-tax Act, 1961, in sub-section (1), in clause (i), in *Explanation 5*, after the third proviso, the following provisos shall be inserted, namely:—

Amendment of section 9.

"Provided also that nothing contained in this *Explanation* shall apply to—

(i) an assessment or reassessment to be made under section 143, section 144, section 147 or section 153A or section 153C; or

(ii) an order to be passed enhancing the assessment or reducing a refund already made or otherwise increasing the liability of the assessee under section 154; or

(iii) an order to be passed deeming a person to be an assessee in default under sub-section (1) of section 201,

in respect of income accruing or arising through or from the transfer of an asset or a capital asset situate in India in consequence of the transfer of a share or interest in a company or entity registered or incorporated outside India made before the 28th day of May, 2012:

Provided also that where—

(i) an assessment or reassessment has been made under section 143, section 144, section 147 or section 153A or section 153C; or

(ii) an order has been passed enhancing the assessment or reducing a refund already made or otherwise increasing the liability of the assessee under section 154; or

(iii) an order has been passed deeming a person to be an assessee in default under sub-section (1) of section 201; or

(iv) an order has been passed imposing a penalty under Chapter XXI or under section 221,

in respect of income accruing or arising through or from the transfer of an asset or a capital asset situate in India in consequence of the transfer of a share or interest in a company or entity registered or incorporated outside India made before the 28th day of May, 2012 and the person in whose case such assessment or reassessment or order has been passed or made, as the case may be, fulfils the specified conditions, then, such assessment or reassessment or order, to the extent it relates to the said income, shall be deemed never to have been passed or made, as the case may be:

Provided also that where any amount becomes refundable to the person referred to in fifth proviso as a consequence of him fulfilling the specified conditions, then, such amount shall be refunded to him, but no interest under section 244A shall be paid on that amount.

Explanation.—For the purposes of fifth and sixth provisos, the specified conditions shall be as provided hereunder:—

(i) where the said person has filed any appeal before an appellate forum or any writ petition before the High Court or the Supreme Court against any order in respect of said income, he shall either withdraw or submit an undertaking to withdraw such appeal or writ petition, in such form and manner as may be prescribed;

(ii) where the said person has initiated any proceeding for arbitration, conciliation or mediation, or has given any notice thereof under any law for the time being in force or under any agreement entered into by India with any other country or territory outside India, whether for protection of investment or otherwise, he shall either withdraw or shall submit an undertaking to withdraw the claim, if any, in such proceedings or notice, in such form and manner as may be prescribed;

(iii) the said person shall furnish an undertaking, in such form and manner as may be prescribed, waiving his right, whether direct or indirect, to seek or pursue any remedy or any claim in relation to the said income which may otherwise be available to him under any law for the time being in force, in equity, under any statute or under any agreement entered into by India with any country or territory outside India, whether for protection of investment or otherwise; and

(iv) such other conditions as may be prescribed."

CHAPTER III

AMENDMENT TO THE FINANCE ACT, 2012

23 of 2012.

3. In the Finance Act, 2012, in section 119, the following provisos shall be inserted, namely:—

Amendment
of section
119.

"Provided that this section shall cease to apply to the person who fulfils the following conditions, namely:—

(i) where such person has filed any appeal before an appellate forum or a writ petition before the High Court or the Supreme Court against any order in respect of said income, he shall, either withdraw or submit an undertaking to withdraw such appeal or writ petition, in such form and manner as may be prescribed;

(ii) where such person has initiated any proceeding for arbitration, conciliation or mediation, or has given any notice thereof under any law for the time being in force or under any agreement entered into by India with any other country or territory outside India, whether for protection of investment or otherwise, he shall either withdraw or submit an undertaking to withdraw the claim, if any, in such proceedings or notice, in such form and manner as may be prescribed;

(iii) such person shall furnish an undertaking, in such form and manner as may be prescribed, waiving his right, whether direct or indirect, to seek or pursue any remedy or any claim in relation to the said income which may otherwise be available to him under any law for the time being in force, in equity, under any statute or under any agreement entered into by India with any country or territory outside India, whether for protection of investment or otherwise; and

(iv) such other conditions as may be prescribed:

43 of 1961.

Provided further that if any amount becomes refundable under the Income-tax Act, 1961 to the person referred to in first proviso as a consequence of him fulfilling said conditions, such amount shall be refunded to him, but no interest under section 244A of the Income-tax Act, 1961 shall be paid on that amount."

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

The issue of taxability of gains arising from the transfer of assets located in India through the transfer of the shares of a foreign company (hereinafter referred to as "indirect transfer of Indian assets") was a subject matter of protracted litigation. Finally, the Supreme Court in 2012 had given a verdict that gains arising from indirect transfer of Indian assets are not taxable under the extant provisions of the Act.

2. As the verdict of the Supreme Court was inconsistent with the legislative intent, the provisions of the Income-tax Act, 1961 were amended by the Finance Act, 2012 with retrospective effect, to clarify that gains arising from sale of share of a foreign company is taxable in India if such share, directly or indirectly, derives its value substantially from the assets located in India. The Finance Act, 2012 also provided for validation of demand, etc., under the Income-tax Act, 1961 for cases relating to indirect transfer of Indian assets.

3. Pursuant thereto, income-tax demand had been raised in seventeen cases. In two cases assessments are pending due to stay granted by High Court. Out of the said seventeen cases, arbitration under Bilateral Investment Protection Treaty with United Kingdom and Netherlands had been invoked in four cases. In two cases, the Arbitration Tribunal ruled in favour of taxpayer and against the Income Tax Department.

4. The said clarificatory amendments made by the Finance Act, 2012 invited criticism from stakeholders mainly with respect to retrospective effect given to the amendments. It is argued that such retrospective amendments militate against the principle of tax certainty and damage India's reputation as an attractive destination. In the past few years, major reforms have been initiated in the financial and infrastructure sector which has created a positive environment for investment in the country. However, this retrospective clarificatory amendment and consequent demand created in a few cases continues to be a sore point with potential investors. The country today stands at a juncture when quick recovery of the economy after the COVID-19 pandemic is the need of the hour and foreign investment has an important role to play in promoting faster economic growth and employment.

5. The Bill proposes to amend the Income-tax Act, 1961 so as to provide that no tax demand shall be raised in future on the basis of the said retrospective amendment for any indirect transfer of Indian assets if the transaction was undertaken before 28th May, 2012 (i.e., the date on which the Finance Bill, 2012 received the assent of the President). It is further proposed to provide that the demand raised for indirect transfer of Indian assets made before 28th May, 2012 shall be nullified on fulfilment of specified conditions such as withdrawal or furnishing of undertaking for withdrawal of pending litigation and furnishing of an undertaking to the effect that no claim for cost, damages, interest, etc., shall be filed. It is also proposed to refund the amount paid in these cases without any interest thereon. The Bill also proposes to amend the Finance Act, 2012 so as to provide that the validation of demand, etc., under section 119 of the Finance Act, 2012 shall cease to apply on fulfilment of specified conditions such as withdrawal or furnishing of undertaking for withdrawal of pending litigation and furnishing of an undertaking that no claim for cost, damages, interest, etc., shall be filed.

6. The Bill seeks to achieve the aforesaid objectives.

PRESIDENT'S RECOMMENDATION UNDER ARTICLE 117 OF THE
CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

[Letter No. 142/38-TPL, dated 4-8-2021 from Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs to the Secretary General, Lok Sabha] The President, having been informed of the subject matter of the Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021, recommends under clauses (1) and (3) of article 117, read with clause (1) of article 274 of the Constitution of India, the introduction of the Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021, in Lok Sabha and also recommends to Lok Sabha the consideration of the Bill.

FINANCIAL MEMORANDUM

The Bill does not involve any expenditure, recurring or non-recurring, from the Consolidated Funds of India.

MEMORANDUM REGARDING DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Clause 2 of the Bill seeks to amend section 9 of the Income-tax Act, 1961 relating to income deemed to accrue or arise in India. The proposed amendment seeks to insert fourth, fifth and sixth provisos in *Explanation 5* to clause (i) of sub-section (1) of the said section along with an *Explanation* which empowers the Board to make rules to provide for (i) the form and manner in which an undertaking shall be submitted; and (ii) any other condition to be fulfilled for the purposes of fifth and sixth provisos.

2. Clause 3 of the Bill seeks to amend section 119 of the Finance Act, 2012 relating to validation of demands, etc., under the Income-tax Act, 1961 in certain cases. The proposed amendment seeks to insert first and second provisos to the said section. The first proviso empowers the Board to make rules to provide for (i) the form and manner in which an undertaking shall be submitted; and (ii) any other condition to be fulfilled.

3. The matters in respect of which rules may be made are matters of detail or procedure and as such the delegation of the legislative powers involved is of a normal character.

UTPAL KUMAR SINGH

Secretary General