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By

SBS and Company LLP
Chartered Accountants



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Dear Readers,

Greetings for the season!

In this edition, we bring you, the possibility of claiming refund of unutilised input tax credit at the time of closure of the unit. Under the GST laws, business carried in each state by a registered person is obligated to obtain registration. There arises a situation, when one of the said registered person has unutilised credit for various reasons, intends to close the business in such state, whether there would be any possibility of approaching the authorities for grant of refund. We have taken a case study to explore this point.

The next article is on the concluding piece of 'residence' under Income Tax Act. We have written two pieces earlier, which were published in our previous editions. This conclusion part deals with mostly no-touched area dealing with crew member of ship and aircraft.

The subsequent article is on the various issues arising from computation of capital gain on sale of depreciable asset in terms of Section 50 of Income Tax Act. Basis our experience, we have collated certain issues, which would arise, when the sale of depreciable asset happens and by taking help of the judicial precedents tried to analyse the same.

The finale is on the recent support extended by Government in the form of Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY). Through this, the Government intends to contribute the PF share of employer and employee in certain class of establishments and employee share in certain class of establishments qua new employees to promote the employment generation. The insights were contributed by our learned senior associate Mr SV Ramachandra Rao.

I hope that you will have good time reading this edition and please do share your feedback. I will also urge clients to mail us topics or issues on which you want us to deliberate in our future editions, so that we can contribute to the same.

Thanking You,



Suresh Babu S
Founder & Chairman

GST

REFUND OF UNUTILISED CREDIT - CLOSURE OF UNIT

Contributed by CA Sri Harsha |

We are all aware that one of the cardinal principles of any taxation regime of any country is that to see that the domestic vendors export services or goods but not the taxes. To neutralise the tax burden borne by the domestic vendors in pursuit of exports, the Government, normally allows the tax borne by the vendors/exporters as refund. The refund is normally allowed only to the extent of unutilised input tax credit. In simpler words, if the exporter has domestic supplies also, then he can first use the credit to set off the tax liability on the domestic supplies and then approach the Government for the balance unutilised portion as refund. We have written previously on the refunds under the GST laws, please read [An Incisive analysis on Refund of TRAN Credit | SBS Blog](#) before proceeding to read this piece.

In this article, we wish to explore the possibility of claiming the refund of unutilised input tax credit which arises because the registration is voluntarily cancelled, or business is discontinued in that state. Let us take a case study and explore the legal possibilities for utilisation of credit. ABC Co is in State of Telangana and majorly engaged in provision of works contract services. ABC Co has work orders in many states in India and has obtained registration under GST laws in each such states. Hence, ABC Co has a registration in State of Telangana and other states, wherever it had works in hands.

Let us assume that ABC Co (TG)¹ has procured various inputs and input services for provision of works contract services over a period. However, at the end of 31st March, there is a huge balance of credit which was unutilised. ABC Co is confident that there would not be any works orders in the TG State and the management has come to a decision of closing the registration in TG State. The question that would arise is, what would be the fate of unutilised input tax credit in the TG State.

Can the same be transferred to other active states where there would be a potential output tax liability? Or Can, the same be claimed as refund in the TG State? Let us proceed to explore both the scenarios.

Scenario 1: Possibility of Transfer of Credit to Other Active States:

The entire GST law is based on the concept of destination-based consumption tax. In other words, the tax must reach a state where the goods or services are consumed. In the above facts, the services or goods are consumed in TG state and accordingly there is no provision under the GST laws to transfer the unutilised credit to other states where there are active operations and tax payable. In fact, under the erstwhile regime, specifically under the service tax law, there was an option for the registered person to obtain a centralised registration and accumulate the credit at entity level and use the same for payment of taxes at entity level.

There was no such option under the GST laws. The GST laws state that where a person is required to obtain registration in more than one state, in respect of each such registration, be treated as distinct person. Considering this particular provision, the unutilised credit in one state cannot be used against payable in other state, which puts the entire entity at a disadvantageous position when compared to the previous regime.

¹This represents the GST Registration in State of Telangana

This raises an important question as to, what is the necessity of treating the registration in each state as distinct entity. One of the primary reasons would be to treat supplies between the states within the same entity to be taxable to see that each consumption state would get its fair share of tax. But that being satisfied now, leads to another major problem which the legislation could not foresee. Though there are various mechanisms to transfer the credit from one registration to another registration (either cross charge or Input Service Distributor), such transfer is possible only if the services or goods are also consumed in other state. There cannot be transfer of credit from one state to another state without simultaneous supply of goods or services.

Hence, the conclusion which we could arrive is that this scenario works out only in cases, where the credit can be moved along with underlying goods or services and not credit alone. In situations, where the credit is higher than the output payable in a particular state and the registered person does not expect any business in such state, there would not be any way of utilising the balance credit.

Scenario 2: Application of Refund:

In this scenario, the registered person instead of transferring the credit to other active states, can explore the possibility of claiming the same as refund. However, the road to claim the refund is not clear and let us explore as to why we say that.

Section 54 of CT Act² deals with refund of tax. Explanation (1) to Section 54 states that 'refund' includes refund of tax paid on zero-rated supplies of goods or services or both or on inputs or input services used in making such zero-rated supplies, or refund of tax on the supply of goods regarded as deemed exports, or refund of unutilised input tax credit as provided under sub-section (3).

Further, Section 54(3) provides that a registered person may claim refund of any unutilised input tax credit at the end of any tax period and it provides that no refund of any unutilised input tax credit shall be allowed in cases other than zero rated supplies made without payment of tax or where the credit has been accumulated because of inverted rate of duty.

In addition to the above, Section 29 of CT Act which deals with 'cancellation or suspension of registration' stipulates that a registered person having regard to the circumstance that the business is discontinued, may apply for cancellation of registration in the prescribed manner. Section 29(5) stipulates that every registered person whose registration is cancelled shall pay an amount, by way of debit of electronic credit ledger or electronic cash ledger, equivalent to credit of input tax in respect of inputs held in stock and inputs contained in semi-finished or finished goods held in stock or capital goods or plant and machinery on the day immediately preceding the date of cancellation or the output tax payable on such goods, whichever is higher, calculated in the manner prescribed.

On a combined reading of all the above, it is evident that the current regulations do not provide for refund of unutilised input tax credit in case of discontinuation or closure of business. This is evidently clear from the language used in Section 54(3) restricting the scenarios only to two under which the unutilised input tax credit is allowed for refund, where discontinuation/closure is not one of them. Hence, on a plain reading of the provisions of Section 54, the unutilised input tax credit on the reason that the business is closed or discontinued is not available.

²Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017

Further, the provisions of Section 29 states that at the time of cancellation, the registered person should reverse the credit of inputs (the section is silent on input services) and capital goods or plant and machinery or pay output tax on such goods whichever is higher. The tax authorities may take this as an aid for interpretation of the intention of the legislature to seek the reversal of unutilised credit (on inputs and capital goods) at the time of closure or discontinuation.

Hence, from the above, it appears that claiming of refund of unutilised credit due to reason that the business is discontinued or closed is not technically permissible. Having said that, by using the jurisprudence available under the earlier law, there may be a possibility of applying refund in the scenarios where the unit is closed, or business is discontinued. Let us have a look at some of these judgments.

The recent decision of Honourable CESTAT³ of Chennai in the matter JU Pesticides & Chemicals Private Limited⁴. The Honourable Tribunal in the above matter, stated that Rule 5 of CCR⁵ (equivalent to Section 54(3) of CT Act) does not speak of refund in a situation where the manufacturing unit is closed, and the said rule does not also specifically prohibit refund when a unit closes down and accordingly the unit which is closed can apply refund especially when the tax suffered amount in form of Cenvat Credit is lying with the tax authorities. The Tribunal also stated that, when the Constitution mandates that there shall not be any collection of tax without authority of law, there cannot also be the retention of tax by the tax authorities, without the authority of law and accordingly granted refund.

The earliest of decisions is the Karnataka High Court in the matter of Slovak India Trading Co Limited⁶⁷. The assessee was engaged in the manufacture of shoes for Bata India Limited. They have applied for refund of unutilised input credit which was available at the time of closure of unit. The refund application was rejected at the levels before the CESTAT. The CESTAT has allowed the refund application stating that the refund cannot be rejected when the assessee goes out of Modvat Scheme or when the company is closed. The High Court agreed with the reasoning of the Tribunal and stated that there is no express prohibition in Rule 5 of CCR.

There are other host of judgments which held that credit can be claimed as refund at the time of closure of business. Applying the same to the current situations, ABC (TG) can try to claim the refund on the reason of closure of the unit.

³Customs, Excise and Service Tax Appellate Tribunal

⁴[2021] 131 taxmann.com 339 (Chennai – CESTAT)

⁵Cenvat Credit Rules, 2004

⁶2006 (7) TMI 9 – Karnataka High Court

⁷SLP dismissed by Supreme Court in 2007 (1) TMI 556 – SC Order

DIRECT TAX

RESIDENTIAL STATUS AND TAXABILITY OF CREW MEMBERS OF A SHIP OR AIRCRAFT

Contributed by CA Sri Harsha & CA Narendra

In our previous articles¹, the concept of deemed residency and various aspects of residency under Section 6 has been discussed in detail. In this part, the concept of determination of residential status of a crew member of a ship or aircraft along with taxability of such person has been dealt with.

As per Section 6(1) of the Income Tax Act, 1961 ('ITA' or 'Act'), an individual shall be treated as resident:

- a. If he is in India for a period of 182 days or more during previous year or
- b. If he is in India for a period of 365 days within 4 years immediately preceding previous years and 60 days or more during the previous year.

In other words, a person being an individual is treated as resident in India, if any of conditions i.e., (a) or (b) above is satisfied, otherwise such person is treated as non-resident.

Crew Member of a Ship:

Further, Explanation 1 to Section 6(1) states that in the case of an Individual being a citizen of India who leaves in India in any previous year as a member of ***crew member of an Indian ship***, the period of stay for that year specified above as 60 days is to be replaced with 182 days.

Further, Explanation 2 to Section 6(1) read with Rule 126 states that to compute number of days stay in India, in respect of citizen of India who is a crew member of a foreign bound ship, the period starting from date entered into the continuous discharge certificate ('CDC') in respect of joining the ship for 'eligible voyage' to date entered into the CDC in respect of signing off by that individual from the ship in respect such voyage will not be included.

'Eligible voyage' has been defined to mean a voyage entered by the ship in carriage of passengers or freight in international traffic, for the voyage having originated from any port in India and has a destination any port outside India and viceversa.

On reading of Explanation 1, it can be understood that Explanation 1 i.e., enhanced period is applicable only in the case of Indian ships thereby for other ships, 60 days period of stay must be applied.

Explanation 2 does not contain any reference to Indian ships thereby such explanation may be applicable for every foreign bound ship.

Further, Explanation 1 and Explanation 2 are applicable only if such person being an individual, is a citizen of India.

¹Deemed Residency - Concept and Issues Thereof SBS Wiki E- Journal Dec 2021

Particulars	Indian Ship	Other than Indian Ships
Citizen	182 days and explanation 2	60 days and explanation 2
Other than Citizen	60 days and no explanation 2	60 days and no Explanation 2

However, in respect of crew member of a air craft, Income Tax Act does not contain any special provisions for determination of residential status. Hence, normal provisions may be applicable for such persons for determining the residential status.

Taxability of Income by crew members of a ship or aircraft:

Income earned by a person is taxable in the country of resident of the person based on the residential status of such person. Such income may also be taxable in the country of source based on the source rule.

In the above paras, determination of residential status has been discussed. Based on the above conditions, if one becomes resident in India, income earned by such person is taxable in India subject to availing of credit of taxes paid in source country.

However, in the context of crew members of ship or aircraft, it may be difficult to identify the country of source for taxing the income earned by way of exercising employment aboard on a ship or aircraft.

To remove such difficulties, provisions of Article 15/16 of DTAA², which deals with 'dependent personal services', states that income earned by a person in respect of an employment exercised aboard on a ship or aircraft operating in international traffic is taxable in the country of enterprise which operates such ship or aircraft.

However, different DTAA provides different treatment for taxability of such income in a particular jurisdiction the details of which are provided in the Table below:

²DTAA between India-USA.

DTAA	Taxability
Article 15 of India -Australia	May be taxable in the country of enterprise which operates such aircraft or ship.
Article 15 of India – China	Shall be taxable only in the CS of enterprise which operates such aircraft or ship.
Article 15 of India – Germany	May be taxed in the CS of which the enterprise operating the ship or aircraft is a resident.
Article 16 of India -Hongkong	Shall be taxable only in the CS of enterprise which operates such aircraft or ship.
Article 15 of India – Japan	May be taxable in the country of enterprise which operates such aircraft or ship.
Article 15 of India -Korea	Shall be taxable only in the CS of enterprise which operates such aircraft or ship.
Article 15 of India – Saudi Arabia	May be taxable in the country of enterprise which operates such aircraft or ship.
Article 15 of India – Singapore	Shall be taxable only in the CS of enterprise which operates such aircraft or ship.
Article 15 of India -UK	May be taxed in the CS of which the person deriving the profits from the operation of the ship or aircraft is a resident.
Article 16 of India – USA	May be taxable in the country of enterprise which operates such aircraft or ship.

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DIRECT TAX

VARIOUS ISSUES UNDER SECTION 50 - CAPITAL GAINS - DEPRECIABLE ASSET

Contributed by CA Sri Harsha & CA Narendra, CA Akhila

In this article, we shall discuss various issues under section 50 of Income Tax Act, 1961 ('ITA') which deals with computation of gain arising from the transfer of depreciable capital asset.

Introduction:

Section 50 of ITA states that when there is a transfer of capital asset which forms part of block of assets in respect of which depreciation has been allowed, gain or loss arising from transfer of such depreciable capital asset shall be treated as gain or loss arising from transfer of short-term capital asset.

Issue #1: Discontinuation in claiming of depreciation:

Section 50 as stated above are applicable in respect of capital asset in respect of which depreciation is claimed by the assessee. The question that arises is whether it is mandatory to claim depreciation in the year of transfer to calculate capital gain as per section 50 or it is sufficient to satisfy that condition, if depreciation is claimed in any year.

For example, the assessee may discontinue the claim of depreciation due to discontinuation of commercial activity because of which he may not be able to claim depreciation and subsequently such person transfers such capital asset.

The Hon'ble Kerala High Court in the case of Sakthi Metal Depot¹ has held that once the asset forms part of 'block of assets' as defined under section 2(11), it continues to be a part of block of assets as long as assessee continues its business. Accordingly, the High Court has held that gain arising from transfer of such asset, even though depreciation is not claimed during the current year, shall be treated as gain arising from transfer of short-term capital asset.

While analysing the provisions of Section 50, the High Court has referred to Section 50A which states that, in the case of capital on which depreciation is claimed under section 32 *in any previous year*, Written Down Value (WDV) of such asset as defined under Section 43(6) shall be considered as cost of acquisition for the purpose of Section 49.

As the provisions of Section 50A states that claiming of depreciation in any previous year, makes the WDV of such capital asset as cost of acquisition, and by referring to provisions of Section 2(11), Hon'ble High Court has held that gain arising from such type of asset is short term in nature. This case has been affirmed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court². The same view has been held by the Bombay High Court in the case of Smt. Meena Pamnani³.

¹[2010] 189 Taxman 329 (Kerala)

²[2021] 130 taxmann.com 238 (SC)

³[2017] 86 taxmann.com 175 (Bombay)

Issue #2: Transfer of capital asset being a Land and Building:

To invoke provisions of Section 50, capital asset shall be a part of 'block of assets' and depreciation should be claimed on that asset. However, as land is not a depreciable asset, the question arises, whether provisions of Section 50 are applicable for transfer of capital asset being a building along with land.

As stated earlier, to invoke provisions of Section 50 for computing the short-term capital gain, the first and foremost condition to be satisfied is underlying asset should be a capital asset which forms part of 'block of assets' as defined under Section 2(11) i.e., group of assets in respect of which same rate of depreciation has been provided in the Act, and depreciation has been allowed on that asset.

However, in the case of land, even it is assumed, that said asset forms part of block of asset, as no depreciation is allowed, it does not satisfy the definition of 'block of assets' and accordingly on sale of such land, provisions of Section 50 cannot be invoked.

Further, if land is acquired along with building (where land value can be ascertained) which is used for the purpose of business and depreciation is claimed in respect of building, such asset being a land portion cannot be treated as forming part of block of assets and gain arising on transfer of such land need not be computed as per provisions of section 50. This view has been upheld by various High Courts and Tribunals.

Issue #3 - Section 50 vs. Section 41(2):

Section 41(2) of ITA states that gain, to the extent not exceeding difference between actual cost and WDV, arising from sale, discard, demolition or destruction of building, machinery, plant or furniture, on which depreciation under section 32(1)(i) is claimed, is treated as income from business.

These provisions are applicable in respect of asset on which depreciation is allowed under section 32(1)(i) i.e., depreciation in respect of generation or generation and distribution of power ('specified asset').

When the specified asset is transferred, gain to the extent of depreciation allowed under section 32(1)(i) (balancing charge) is treated as business income under Section 41(2).

On the other hand, Section 50 states that gain arising from transfer of capital asset on which depreciation is allowed under any provisions of the Act is treated as short term in nature. On reading of these two provisions, it seems that there is an overlap between the provisions of Section 41(2) and Section 50 in respect of taxing the gain arising from transfer/sale of specified assets.

The harmonious interpretation is that Section 50 and Section 41(2) cannot apply to the same amount. This view has been upheld by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of *Urmila Ramesh*⁴. The court has observed that provisions of Section 41(2) are incorporated to withdraw the excess depreciation allowed more than normal wear and tear under the Act in respect of specified asset. The amount more than such balancing charge has to be considered as capital gain under section 50.

⁴[1998] 96 Taxman 533 (SC)

Issue #4 - Claiming of Exemption under Section 54, Section 54F or Section 54EC:

As stated above, gain arising from transfer of depreciable asset is treated as short term in nature. The question that arises is whether assessee can claim exemption under section 54/54F/54EC on transfer of depreciable capital asset which is held for period more than 24/36 months.

Section 54/54F/54EC states that *“the capital gain arises from the transfer of a long-term capital asset...”*.

However, the provisions of Section 50 start with *“Notwithstanding anything contained in clause (42A) of section 2...”* which means that without considering the provisions of section 2(42A), the gain is deemed to be the gain arising from short term capital asset.

This fiction has been incorporated to consider the gain arising from depreciable capital asset as short term in nature, despite, such asset being a long-term capital asset by virtue of section 2(42A). The legal fiction created under section 50 has to be restricted to tax the gain and cannot be extended to other provisions of the Act.

The Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of V.S. Dempo Company Ltd⁵. has agreed with the Bombay High Court⁶ where in the High Court has observed that Section 50 of the Act which is a special provision for computing the capital gains in the case of depreciable assets is not only restricted for the purposes of Section 48 or Section 49 of the Act as specifically stated therein and the said fiction created in sub-section (1) & (2) of Section 50 has limited application only in the context of mode of computation of capital gains contained in Sections 48 and 49 and would have nothing to do with the exemption that is provided in a totally different provision i.e. Section 54E of the Act. After referring to the Bombay High Court judgment in the above case and after considering the judgement of Gujarat High Court⁷ and Guahati High Court⁸, the Supreme Court has held that exemption cannot be denied on gain arising from depreciable capital asset.

Issue #5 - Setoff of loss from Long Term Capital Asset against gain under Section 50:

The next issue that arises is, whether loss arising from long term capital asset can be setoff against gain arising from transfer of depreciable asset under Section 50.

In this regard, following the principles laid in the case of Ace Builders (supra), the Mumbai Tribunal in the case of Koma Investments & Finance (P.) Ltd⁹ has held that although the gain is short-term capital gain due to the fiction created by provisions of section 50(2), the asset remained as long-term capital asset. Hence, loss arising from the transfer of long-term capital asset can be set off against gain arising from

⁵[2016] 74 taxmann.com 15 (SC)

⁶ACE Builders (P.) Ltd. [2006] 281 ITR 210

⁷Polestar Industries [2014] 41 taxmann.com 237

⁸Assam Petroleum Industries (P.) Ltd. [2003] 262 ITR 587

⁹[2011] 13 taxmann.com 185 (Mumbai)

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LABOUR LAW

INSIGHTS INTO ABRY

Contributed by S V Ramachandra Rao |

The Scheme proposes to incentivize employers, registered with Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), for giving employment to new employees. The Scheme commenced from 1st October 2020 and remain open for registration of eligible employers and new employees up to 31 March 2022.

Reference Base:

The number of employees with Universal Account Number (UAN) for whom employer has remitted EPF/EPF contributions through ECR filed for wage month of September 2020 shall be taken as reference base number of employees. Establishment will be eligible only if the ECR for wage month September 2020 is filed on or before 15th December 2020. For any new establishment getting registered under EPF from 1.10.2020 to 31.3.2022, the reference base shall be treated as zero.

Eligibility Criteria of Establishments:

Establishments shall have to employ, over and above the reference base, minimum two new employees (if the reference base of employee is less than or equal to 50) and minimum five new employees (if the reference base of employees is more than 50).

The establishment must continue to maintain minimum number of additional new employees (over and above reference base) for availing the benefit and also continue to maintain the base number of employees.

New Employee:

Any employee drawing EPF wages less than Rs. 15,000 per month, not working in any establishment and did not have a UAN prior to 1st October 2020 and joins in any establishment on or after 01st October 2020 up to 31 March 2022.

If a new employee whose wages are less than Rs.15,000 per month and subsequently his wages are above Rs 15,000 per month, such employee will become ineligible.

Benefit under the Scheme:

Maximum 24 months in respect of new employees.

- (a) Establishments employing up to 1,000 employees (contributing EPF members with UAN) in the wage month of September 2020 will be eligible for both employer and employee contribution that is 12 + 12 percent. The Government will credit the ***employer and employee*** share and no collections are made from employer or employee.

- (b) Establishments employing more than 1,000 employees (contributing EPF members with UAN) in the wage month of September 2020 only **employees** contribution of 12% will be eligible. That means employee share should not be deducted from employee wages and the Government would credit such share. However, employer's share should be borne by the employer.
- (c) If the employer deducts the employee's share from his/her wages and claims the amount from Government, the employer is liable for legal action.
- (d) If an establishment is making compliance under various code numbers obtained from EPFO, then for the purpose of counting the number 50 or 1,000 employees, all employees in the establishment as a whole shall be included.

Process:

- In the EPFO employer portal, establishments have to declare reference base of employees and update Form 5A to register the establishment and register its "new employees" on the portal.
- Form 5A should contain particulars of all branches and departments of the establishment and also code numbers, if any, taken for the branches.
- Every month at the time of submission of ECR employer shall be required to certify correctness of information furnished electronically in ECR in the certificate and declaration deployed with ECR.

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