

Restrictions on Cash Transactions

CHAPTER XX-B

REQUIREMENT AS TO MODE OF ACCEPTANCE, PAYMENT OR REPAYMENT IN CERTAIN CASES TO COUNTERACT EVASION OF TAX

Mode of taking or accepting certain loans, deposits and specified sum.

269SS. No person shall take or accept from any other person (herein referred to as the depositor), any loan or deposit or any specified sum, otherwise than by an account payee cheque or account payee bank draft or use of electronic clearing system through a bank account or through such other electronic mode as may be prescribed, if,—

(a) the amount of such loan or deposit or specified sum or the aggregate amount of such loan, deposit and specified sum; or

(b) on the date of taking or accepting such loan or deposit or specified sum, any loan or deposit or specified sum taken or accepted earlier by such person from the depositor is remaining unpaid (whether repayment has fallen due or not), the amount or the aggregate amount remaining unpaid; or

(c) the amount or the aggregate amount referred to in clause (a) together with the amount or the aggregate amount referred to in clause (b),

is twenty thousand rupees or more:

Provided that the provisions of this section shall not apply to any loan or deposit or specified sum taken or accepted from, or any loan or deposit or specified sum taken or accepted by,—

(a) the Government;

(b) any banking company, post office savings bank or co-operative bank;

(c) any corporation established by a Central, State or Provincial Act;

(d) any Government company as defined in clause (45) of section 2 of the Companies Act, 2013 (18 of 2013);

(e) such other institution, association or body or class of institutions, associations or bodies which the Central Government may, for reasons to be recorded in writing, notify in this behalf in the Official Gazette:

Provided further that the provisions of this section shall not apply to any loan or deposit or specified sum, where the person from whom the loan or deposit or specified sum is taken or accepted and the person by whom the loan or deposit or specified sum is taken or accepted, are both having agricultural income and neither of them has any income chargeable to tax under this Act.

Explanation.—For the purposes of this section,—

(i) "banking company" means a company to which the provisions of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 (10 of 1949) applies and includes any bank or banking institution referred to in section 51 of that Act;

(ii) "co-operative bank" shall have the same meaning as assigned to it in Part V of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 (10 of 1949) ;

(iii) "loan or deposit" means loan or deposit of money;

(iv) "specified sum" means any sum of money receivable, whether as advance or otherwise, in relation to transfer of an immovable property, whether or not the transfer takes place.

Penalty for failure to comply with the provisions of section 269SS.

271D. (1) If a person takes or accepts any loan or deposit or specified sum] in contravention of the provisions of section 269SS, he shall be liable to pay, by way of penalty, a sum equal to the amount of the loan or deposit or specified sum so taken or accepted.

(2) Any penalty imposable under sub-section (1) shall be imposed by the Joint Commissioner.

Mode of repayment of certain loans or deposits.

269T. No branch of a banking company or a co-operative bank and no other company or co-operative society and no firm or other person shall repay any loan or deposit made with it or any specified advance received by it otherwise than by an account payee cheque or account payee bank draft drawn in the name of the person who has made the loan or deposit or paid the specified advance, or by use of electronic clearing system through a bank account or through such other electronic mode as may be prescribed if—

(a) the amount of the loan or deposit or specified advance together with the interest, if any, payable thereon, or

(b) the aggregate amount of the loans or deposits held by such person with the branch of the banking company or co-operative bank or, as the case may be, the other company or co-operative society or the firm, or other person either in his own name or jointly with any other person on the date of such repayment together with the interest, if any, payable on such loans or deposits, or

(c) the aggregate amount of the specified advances received by such person either in his own name or jointly with any other person on the date of such repayment together with the interest, if any, payable on such specified advances,

is twenty thousand rupees or more:

Provided that where the repayment is by a branch of a banking company or co-operative bank, such repayment may also be made by crediting the amount of such loan or deposit to the savings bank account or the current account (if any) with such branch of the person to whom such loan or deposit has to be repaid :

Provided further that nothing contained in this section shall apply to repayment of any loan or deposit or specified advance taken or accepted from—

- (i) Government;
- (ii) any banking company, post office savings bank or co-operative bank;
- (iii) any corporation established by a Central, State or Provincial Act;
- (iv) any Government company⁹⁰ as defined in section 617 of the Companies Act, 1956 (1 of 1956);
- (v) such other institution, association or body or class of institutions, associations or bodies which the Central Government may, for reasons to be recorded in writing, notify in this behalf in the Official Gazette.

Explanation.—For the purposes of this section,—

- (i) "banking company" shall have the meaning assigned to it in clause (i) of the Explanation to section 269SS;
- (ii) "co-operative bank" shall have the meaning assigned to it in Part V of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 (10 of 1949);

(iii) "loan or deposit" means any loan or deposit of money which is repayable after notice or repayable after a period and, in the case of a person other than a company, includes loan or deposit of any nature;

(iv) "specified advance" means any sum of money in the nature of advance, by whatever name called, in relation to transfer of an immovable property, whether or not the transfer takes place.

Penalty for failure to comply with the provisions of section 269T.

271E. (1) If a person repays any loan or deposit or specified advance referred to in section 269T otherwise than in accordance with the provisions of that section, he shall be liable to pay, by way of penalty, a sum equal to the amount of the loan or deposit or specified advance so repaid.

(2) Any penalty imposable under sub-section (1) shall be imposed by the Joint Commissioner.

Mode of undertaking transactions.

269ST. No person shall receive an amount of two lakh rupees or more—

- (a) in aggregate from a person in a day; or
- (b) in respect of a single transaction; or
- (c) in respect of transactions relating to one event or occasion from a person, otherwise than by an account payee cheque or an account payee bank draft or use of electronic clearing system through a bank account or through such other electronic mode as may be prescribed:

Provided that the provisions of this section shall not apply to—

- (i) any receipt by—
 - (a) Government;
 - (b) any banking company, post office savings bank or co-operative bank;
- (ii) transactions of the nature referred to in section 269SS;
- (iii) such other persons or class of persons or receipts, which the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, specify.

Explanation.—For the purposes of this section,—

- (a) "banking company" shall have the same meaning as assigned to it in clause (i) of the Explanation to section 269SS;
- (b) "co-operative bank" shall have the same meaning as assigned to it in clause (ii) of the Explanation to section 269SS.

Penalty for failure to comply with provisions of section 269ST.

271DA. (1) If a person receives any sum in contravention of the provisions of section 269ST, he shall be liable to pay, by way of penalty, a sum equal to the amount of such receipt:

Provided that no penalty shall be imposable if such person proves that there were good and sufficient reasons for the contravention.

(2) Any penalty imposable under sub-section (1) shall be imposed by the Joint Commissioner.

Expenses or payments not deductible in certain circumstances.

40A. (1) The provisions of this section shall have effect notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in any other provision of this Act relating to the computation of income under the head "Profits and gains of business or profession".

(2) ---

(3) Where the assessee incurs any expenditure in respect of which a payment or aggregate of payments made to a person in a day, otherwise than by an account payee cheque drawn on a bank or account payee bank draft, or use of electronic clearing system through a bank account or through such other electronic mode as may be prescribed, exceeds ten thousand rupees, no deduction shall be allowed in respect of such expenditure.

(3A) Where an allowance has been made in the assessment for any year in respect of any liability incurred by the assessee for any expenditure and subsequently during any previous year (hereinafter referred to as subsequent year) the assessee makes payment in respect thereof, otherwise than by an account payee cheque drawn on a bank or account payee bank draft, or use of electronic clearing system through a bank account or through such other electronic mode as may be prescribed, the payment so made shall be deemed to be the profits and gains of business or profession and accordingly chargeable to income-tax as income of the subsequent year if the payment or aggregate of payments made to a person in a day, exceeds ten thousand rupees:

Provided that no disallowance shall be made and no payment shall be deemed to be the profits and gains of business or profession under sub-section (3) and this sub-section where a payment or aggregate of payments made to a person in a day, otherwise than by an account payee cheque drawn on a bank or account payee bank draft, or use of electronic clearing system through a bank account or through such other electronic mode as may be prescribed, exceeds ten thousand rupees, in such cases and under such circumstances as may be prescribed, having regard to the nature and extent of banking facilities available, considerations of business expediency and other relevant factors :

Provided further that in the case of payment made for plying, hiring or leasing goods carriages, the provisions of sub-sections (3) and (3A) shall have effect as if for the words "ten thousand rupees", the words "thirty-five thousand rupees" had been substituted.

(4) Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force or in any contract, where any payment in respect of any expenditure has to be made by an account payee cheque drawn on a bank or account payee bank draft or use of electronic clearing system through a bank account or through such other electronic mode as may be prescribed in order that such expenditure may not be disallowed as a deduction under sub-section (3), then the payment may be made by such cheque or draft or electronic clearing system or such other electronic mode as may be prescribed; and where the payment is so made or tendered, no person shall be allowed to raise, in any suit or other proceeding, a plea based on the ground that the payment was not made or tendered in cash or in any other manner.

Definitions of certain terms relevant to income from profits and gains of business or profession.

43. In sections 28 to 41 and in this section, unless the context otherwise requires—

(1) "actual cost" means the actual cost of the assets to the assessee, reduced by that portion of the cost thereof, if any, as has been met directly or indirectly by any other person or authority:

Provided that ---

Provided further that where the assessee incurs any expenditure for acquisition of any asset or part thereof in respect of which a payment or aggregate of payments made to a person in a day, otherwise than by an account payee cheque drawn on a bank or an account payee bank draft or use of electronic clearing system through a bank account or through such other electronic mode as may be prescribed, exceeds ten thousand rupees, such expenditure shall be ignored for the purposes of determination of actual cost.

SOME CASE LAWS

Where an assessee repays a loan merely by passing adjustment entries in its books of account, can such repayment of loan by the assessee be taken as a contravention of the provisions of section 269T to attract penalty u/s 271E?

CIT v. Triumph International Finance (I.) Ltd. (2012) 345 ITR 270 (Bom.)

In the present case, the assessee is a public limited company, registered as category-I merchant banker with SEBI, engaged in the business of stock broking, investment and trading in shares and securities. The assessee had taken a loan from the Investment Trust of India. During the previous year in question, the assessee had transferred shares of a company held by it to the Investment Trust of India. Therefore, in the current assessment year, the assessee was liable to pay the loan amount to the Investment Trust of India and had a right to receive the sale price of the shares transferred to Investment Trust of India. In order to avoid the unnecessary circular transfer of shares, both the parties agreed to set-off the amount payable and receivable by way of passing journal entries and the balance loan amount was paid by the assessee by way of an account payee cheque. The amount of loan settled by way of passing journal entries exceeds Rs. 20,000.

The Assessing Officer passed the assessment order levying penalty u/s 271E for the contravention of the provisions of section 269T on the argument that since section 269T put an obligation on the assessee to pay loan only by way of an account payee cheque or an account payee draft, the settlement of a portion of the loan by passing journal entry would be a mode otherwise than by way of an account payee cheque or an account payee draft and therefore, the penal provisions u/s 271E shall be attracted.

The assessee argued that the transaction of repayment of loan or deposit by way of adjustment through book entries was carried out in the ordinary course of business and the genuineness of the assessee's transaction with the Investment Trust of India was also accepted by the Tribunal.

It is a bonafide transaction. The assessee further contended that section 269T mentions that in a case where the loan or deposit is repaid by an outflow of funds, the same has to be by an account payee cheque or an account payee demand draft. However, in case the discharge of loan or deposit is in a manner otherwise than by an outflow of funds, as is the situation in the present case, the provisions of section 269T would not apply.

Considering the above mentioned facts and arguments, the Bombay High Court held that, the obligation to repay the loan or deposit by account payee cheque/bank draft as specified in section 269T is mandatory in nature. The contravention of the said section will attract penalty u/s 271E.

The argument of the assessee cannot be accepted since section 269T does not make a distinction between a bonafide or a non-bonafide transaction neither does it require the fulfillment of the condition mentioned therein only in case where there is outflow of funds. It merely puts a condition that in case a loan or deposit is repaid, it should be by way of an account payee cheque/ draft. Therefore, in the present case the assessee has repaid a portion of loan in contravention of provisions of section 269T.

However, the cause shown by the assessee for repayment of the loan otherwise than by account payee cheque/bank draft was on account of the fact that the assessee was liable to receive amount towards the sale price of the shares sold by the assessee to the person from whom loan was received by the assessee. It would have been mere formality to repay the

loan amount by account payee cheque/draft and receive back almost the same amount towards the sale price of the shares. Also, neither the genuineness of the receipt of loan nor the transaction of repayment of loan by way of adjustment through book entries carried out in the ordinary course of business has been doubted in the regular assessment. Therefore, there is nothing on record to suggest that the amounts advanced by Investment Trust of India to the assessee represented the unaccounted money of the Investment Trust of India or the assessee and also it cannot be said that the whole transaction was entered into to avoid tax. This is accepted as a reasonable cause u/s 273B.

In effect, the assessee has violated the provisions of section 269T by repaying the loan amount by way of passing book entries and therefore, penalty u/s 271E is applicable. However, since the transaction is bona fide in nature being a normal business transaction and has not been made with a view to avoid tax, it was held that the assessee has shown reasonable cause for the failure u/s 269T, and therefore, as per the provisions of section 273B, no penalty u/s 271E could be imposed on the assessee for contravening the provisions of section 269T.

Note: In order to mitigate the hardship caused by certain penalty provisions in case of genuine business transactions, section 273B provides that no penalty under, inter alia, section 271E shall be imposed on a person for any failure referred to in the said section, if such person proves that there was reasonable cause for such failure.

**Is penalty under section 271D imposable for cash loans/deposits received from partners?
 CIT v. Muthoot Financiers (2015) 371 ITR 408 (Del)**

Facts of the case: The assessee-firm, engaged in business of banking and money lending, had received huge amounts from the partners in the assessment years 1996-97 and 1998-99 by way of cash. The Assessing Officer levied penalty under section 271D. The Commissioner (Appeals) upheld the levy of penalty. The Tribunal observed that the advance made to the firm by the partners cannot be regarded as loan accepted by the firm. It held that the amount advanced and accepted is capital of the firm and not loans which cannot be subjected to penalty under section 271D. The Revenue filed an appeal before High Court.

The assessee contended before the High Court that the amount advanced by the partners cannot be regarded as loan but is a capital of the firm. As the partnership firm has no separate legal entity, nor is there a separate identification between the firm and the partners, there is no violation of section 269SS in this case.

High Court's Opinion & Decision: The High Court referred to the case CIT v. R.M. Chidambaram Pillai (1977) 106 ITR 292, where the Apex Court was of the view that the firm is not a legal person even though it has some of the attributes of a personality. It held that the „firm“ is a collective noun, a compendious expression to designate an entity not a person. It also referred to CIT v. Sivakumar. V (2013) 354 ITR 9 (Mad), where the High Court upheld the conclusion of the Tribunal to hold that there is no separate legal entity for the partnership firm and the partner is entitled to use the funds of the firm. In CIT v. Lokpat Film Exchange (Cinema) (2008) 304 ITR 172 (Raj), it was held that a partnership firm not being a juristic person, the inter se transaction between the firm and partners are not governed by the provisions of sections 269SS and 269T.

The High Court also noted the different view expressed by the Supreme Court in CIT v. A.W. Figgies & Co. (1953) 24 ITR 405, where it was held that the partners of the firm are distinct as civil entities while the firm as such is a separate and distinct unit for the purpose of assessment.

The High Court observed that the position that emerges is that there are three different Courts, which have held that section 269SS would not be violative when money is exchanged inter se between the partners and the firm.

The High Court further observed that, in this case, there was no dispute as regards the money brought in by the partners of the assessee-firm. The source of money was also not doubted. The transaction was bona fide and not aimed to avoid any tax liability. The credit worthiness of the partners and genuineness of the transactions coupled with relationship between the „two persons“ and two different legal interpretations put forward, could constitute a reasonable cause in a given case for not invoking sections 271D /271E read with section 273B. The High Court held that the issue being a debatable one, there was reasonable cause for not levying penalty.

Can loan, exceeding the specified limit, advanced by a partnership firm to the sole-proprietorship concern of its partner be viewed as a violation of section 269SS to attract levy of penalty?

CIT v. V. Sivakumar (2013) 354 ITR 9 (Mad.)

Facts of the case: In the present case, the assessee was a partner in four firms and also had a sole-proprietary business. In the relevant previous year, the partnership firms had advanced loan to the assessee in cash exceeding the specified amount mentioned in section 269SS. The Assessing Officer initiated penalty proceedings under section 271D in view of violation of section 269SS. The Assessing Officer recorded a factual finding that the said money had been advanced by the partnership firm as a loan and were debited to the accounts of the proprietary concern; therefore, it was evident that the assessee had taken loan from the firms in cash in the capacity of the proprietor and not as a partner. Consequently, the provisions of section 269SS had been violated.

Assessee's contention: The assessee contended that the amount is taken in the capacity of the partner and it cannot be taken as an independent transaction and therefore, there is no violation of section 269SS. Also, the assessee contended that the partnership firm has no separate legal entity and there is no separate identification between the firm and the partner.

Tribunal's view: The Tribunal, relying upon the various court decisions, confirmed the finding of the Commissioner (Appeals) that partnership firm is not a juristic person and there is no separate identity for the firm and the partners; Being a partner, the assessee had withdrawn amounts from the firms and there were no reasons to doubt the genuineness of the transactions. Consequently, the transactions between the firm and the partner cannot be brought within the meaning of section 269SS.

High Court's Decision: The High Court, relying upon the various court decisions, upheld the decision of the Tribunal holding that there is no separate identity for the partnership firm and that the partner is entitled to use the funds of the firm. In the present case, the assessee has acted bona fide and that there was a reasonable cause within the meaning of section 273B. Therefore, the transaction cannot be said to be in violation of section 269SS and no penalty is attracted in this case.