

M&A Hotline

November 20, 2009

SEBI OVERHAULS THE TAKEOVER CODE

Pursuant to its board meeting on September 22, 2009¹, Securities and Exchange Board of India ("SEBI") has sprung into action by bringing out a notification number F.No.LAD-NRO/GN/2009-10/20/182131 dated November 6, 2009 ("Amendment Regulations") to amend the SEBI (Substantial Acquisition of Shares and Takeovers) Regulations, 1997 ("Takeover Code"). We hereby examine the changes made to the Takeover Code by the Amendment Regulations.

ANALYSIS AND IMPACT OF THE REGULATIONS AMENDED:

Regulation 3(2) – Under the erstwhile Regulation 3(2) of the Takeover Code, acquisition of American Depository Receipts ("ADR") / Global Depository Receipts ("GDR") were exempted from open offer requirement² until the time of their conversion into the underlying equity shares carrying voting rights. SEBI has now clarified that an exemption from open offer would be available only as long as the ADR / GDR holders remain passive investors without any kind of voting arrangement on the underlying equity shares whatsoever. Hence, any customary voting arrangement between the Depository and the ADR / GDR holders providing direct or indirect voting benefits to the ADR / GDR holders could trigger the open offer requirement if such indirect voting right together with direct equity, if any, exceeds the prescribed threshold.

However, the consequence of such an amendment remains unclear in respect to all the existing ADR / GDR issued prior to this amendment. Further, a proviso has been added to Regulation 14(2) of the Takeover Code which provides that public announcement on acquisition of such depository receipts having voting benefits shall be made within four working days of such acquisition.

Regulation 7(1A) – Earlier, an acquirer who acquired shares or voting rights of a company under Regulation 11(1) i.e. equal to or more than 15% but less than 55%, was required to make a disclosure on purchase or sale aggregating two percent or more of the share capital of the target company to the target company and to the stock exchanges.

In addition to the above, with the Amendment Regulations, any acquirer who acquires shares under the terms of Regulation 11(2) i.e. between 55% to 75% or 90%, as the case may be, shall also be required to make disclosure under Regulation 7(1A). This move by SEBI is likely to aim at providing more transparency with respect to public market deals. However, this is not a major shift in the disclosure requirements since such reporting is anyways covered under the disclosure norms of the SEBI (Prohibition of Insider Trading Regulations), 1992.

Regulation 11(1) – By the Amendment Regulations, the much debated ambiguity under Regulation 11(1) has been cleared by SEBI. It has now been clarified that an acquirer (together with persons acting in concert) holding shares between 15% (inclusive) to 55% (under the terms of Regulation 11(1)) can acquire further 5% shares in any given financial year without triggering an open offer (known as 'creeping acquisition') and take its shareholding to a maximum ceiling limit of 55% and not beyond it. For instance, assuming that an acquirer is holding 52% in a target company, the creeping acquisition would be permissible under Regulation 11(1) of the Takeover Code provided that post acquisition, the shareholding / voting rights of the acquirer together with persons acting in concert does not exceed 55% of the equity capital of the target company.

However, under Regulation 11(1), it remains unclear whether the creeping acquisition of 5% in a financial year is to be calculated on a gross basis (only acquisition) or can be netted off against the sales during the financial year. However, in a recent circular dated August 6, 2009 issued by SEBI, it was provided that under Regulation 11(2) the spirit and intention is to cover and allow the 5% margin on gross basis and it may be prudent to adopt the same practice for Regulation 11(1).

Second proviso to Regulation 11(2) – It has been clarified that the creeping acquisition of 5% allowed under the terms of second proviso to Regulation 11(2) i.e. between 55% to 75% would be allowed to the acquirer irrespective of the earlier acquisition made under Regulation 10 or Regulation 11(1) of the Takeover Code.

This raises an interesting question – whether an acquirer can acquire 5% shares under Regulation 11(1) and subsequently take shelter of Regulation 11(2) to acquire further 5% shares in the same financial year?

CONCLUSION

With quite a few ambiguities prevailing in the Takeover Code, its provisions became prone to several interpretations; leading to several non-compliances and penalties. Having wide implications, the changes made by SEBI under the Amendment Regulations have cleared a few loose ends under the Takeover Code. With the special committee constituted for review of the Takeover Code and it being open to suggestions from the public at large, SEBI may

Research Papers

FAQs on Setting Up of Offices in India

December 13, 2024

FAQs on Downstream Investment

December 13, 2024

Gaming Law 2024

December 12, 2024

Research Articles

The Revolution Realized: Bitcoin's Triumph

December 05, 2024

The Bitcoin Effect

November 14, 2024

Acquirers Beware: Indian Merger Control Regime Revamped!

September 15, 2024

Audio

Securities Market Regulator's Continued Quest Against "Unfiltered" Financial Advice

December 18, 2024

Digital Lending - Part 1 - What's New with NBFC P2Ps

November 19, 2024

Renewable Roadmap: Budget 2024 and Beyond - Part I

August 26, 2024

NDA Connect

Connect with us at events, conferences and seminars.

NDA Hotline

Click here to view Hotline archives.

Video

"Investment return is not enough" Nishith Desai with Nikunj Dalmia (ET Now) at FIIB event in Riyadh

October 31, 2024

Analysing SEBI's Consultation Paper on Simplification of registration for FPIs

follow more simplified regulations in the times to come.

- Sambhav Ranka, Vaidhyanadhan Iyer & Siddharth Shah

(M&A Practice Group Members)

DISCLAIMER

The contents of this hotline should not be construed as legal opinion. View detailed disclaimer.

This Hotline provides general information existing at the time of preparation. The Hotline is intended as a news update and Nishith Desai Associates neither assumes nor accepts any responsibility for any loss arising to any person acting or refraining from acting as a result of any material contained in this Hotline. It is recommended that professional advice be taken based on the specific facts and circumstances. This Hotline does not substitute the need to refer to the original pronouncements.

This is not a Spam mail. You have received this mail because you have either requested for it or someone must have suggested your name. Since India has no anti-spamming law, we refer to the US directive, which states that a mail cannot be considered Spam if it contains the sender's contact information, which this mail does. In case this mail doesn't concern you, please unsubscribe from mailing list.

September 26, 2024

Scope of judicial interference and inquiry in an application for appointment of arbitrator under the (Indian) Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996

September 22, 2024