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Government of India

Ministry of Finance

Department of Revenue

Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs

GST Policy Wing

New Delhi, dated 23rd February, 2021

To,

The Principal Chief Commissioners/Chief Commissioners/Principal
Commissioners/ Commissioners of Central Tax (All)

The Principal Director Generals/ Director Generals (All)

Madam/Sir,

Subject: Guidelines for provisional attachment of property under section 83 of the CGST Act, 2017-Reg.

I am directed to refer to the section 83 of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017 (hereinafter referred to as "the Act"). This section provides for provisional attachment of property for the purpose of protecting the interest of revenue during the pendency of any proceeding under section 62 or section 63 or section 64 or section 67 or section 73 or section 74 of the Act.

2. Doubts have been raised by the field formations on various issues pertaining to provisional attachment of property under the provisions of section 83 of the Act read with rule 159 of Central Goods and Services Tax Rules, 2017 (hereinafter referred to as the "CGST Rules"). Besides, in a number of cases, Hon'ble Courts have also made observations on the modalities of implementation of provisions of section 83 of the Act by the tax officers. In view of the same, the following guidelines are hereby issued with respect to the exercise of power under section 83 of the Act.

3.1 Grounds for provisional attachment of property

3.1.1 Section 83 of the Act is reproduced hereunder:

“83. Provisional attachment to protect revenue in certain cases.—

(1) Where during the pendency of any proceedings under section 62 or section 63 or section 64 or section 67 or section 73 or section 74, the Commissioner is of the opinion that for the purpose of protecting the interest of the Government revenue, it is necessary so to do, he may, by order in writing attach provisionally any property, including bank account, belonging to the taxable person in such manner as may be prescribed.

(2) Every such provisional attachment shall cease to have effect after the expiry of a period of one year from the date of the order made under sub-section (1).”

3.1.2 Perusal of the above provision of the law suggests that the followings grounds must exist for resorting to provisional attachment of property under the provisions of section 83 of the Act:

- (i) There must be pendency of a proceeding against a taxable person under the sections mentioned in section 83 of the Act;
- (ii) The Commissioner must have formed the opinion that provisional attachment of the property belonging to the taxable person is necessary for the purpose of protecting the interest of the Government revenue.

3.1.3 For forming an opinion under section 83, it is important that Commissioner must exercise due diligence and duly consider as well as carefully examine all the facts of the case, including the nature of offence, amount of revenue involved, established nature of business and extent of investment in capital assets and reasons to believe that the taxable person, against whom the proceedings referred in section 83 are pending, may dispose of or remove the property, if not attached provisionally.

3.1.4 The basis, on which, Commissioner has formed such an opinion, should be duly recorded on file.

3.1.5 It is reiterated that the power of provisional attachment must not be exercised in a routine/mechanical manner and careful examination of all the facts of the case is important to determine whether the case(s) is fit for exercising power under section 83. The collective evidence, based on the proceedings/ enquiry conducted in the case, must indicate that prima-facie a case has been made out against the taxpayer, before going ahead with any provisional attachment. The remedy of attachment being, by its very nature, extraordinary, has to be resorted to with utmost circumspection and with maximum care and caution.

3.2 Procedure for provisional attachment of property

3.2.1 In case, the Commissioner forms an opinion to attach any property, including bank account, of the taxable person in terms of section 83, he should duly record on file the basis, on which he

has formed such an opinion. He should, thereafter, pass an order in **FORM GST DRC-22** with proper Document Identification Number (DIN) mentioning therein the details of property being attached.

3.2.2 A copy of the order of attachment should be sent to the concerned Revenue Authority or Transport Authority or Bank or the relevant Authority to place encumbrance on the said movable or immovable property. The property, thus attached, shall be removed only on the written instructions from the Commissioner.

3.2.3 A copy of such attachment order shall be provided to the said taxable person as early as possible so that objections, if any, to the said attachment can be made by the taxable person within the time period prescribed under rule 159 of the CGST Rules. If such objection is filed by the taxable person, Commissioner should provide an opportunity of being heard to the person filing the objection. After considering the facts presented by the person in his written objection as well as during the personal hearing, if any, the Commissioner should form a reasoned view whether the property is still required to be continued to be attached or not, and pass an order in writing to this effect. In case, the Commissioner is satisfied that the property was or is no longer liable for attachment, he may release such property by issuing an order in **FORM GST DRC- 23**.

3.2.4 Even in cases where objection is not filed within the time prescribed under rule 159(5) of CGST Rules, the Commissioner may take the grounds mentioned in the said objection/representation on record and pass a reasoned order. Where the Commissioner is satisfied that the property was or is no longer liable for attachment, he may release such property by issuing an order in **FORM GST DRC- 23**.

3.2.5 Each such provisional attachment shall cease to have effect after the expiry of a period of one year from the date of the order of attachment.

3.2.6 If the provisionally attached property is of perishable/hazardous nature, then such property shall be released to the taxable person by issuing order in **FORM GST DRC-23**, after taxable person pays an amount equivalent to the market price of such property or the amount that is or may become payable by the taxable person, whichever is lower, and submits proof of payment. In case the taxable person fails to pay the said amount, then the said property of perishable/hazardous nature may be disposed of and the amount recovered from such disposal of property shall be adjustable against the tax, interest, penalty, fee or any other amount payable by the taxable person. Further, the sale proceeds thus obtained must be deposited in the nearest Government Treasury or

branch of any nationalised bank in fixed deposit and the receipt thereof must be retained for record, so that the same can be adjusted against the amount determined to be recoverable from the said taxable person.

3.3 Cases fit for provisional attachment of property

3.3.1 As mentioned above, the remedy of attachment being, by its very nature, extraordinary, needs to be resorted to with utmost circumspection and with maximum care and caution. It normally should not be invoked in cases of technical nature and should be resorted to mainly in cases where there is an evasion of tax or where wrongful input tax credit is availed or utilized or wrongfully passed on. While the specific facts of the case need to be examined in detail before forming an opinion in the matter, the following are some of type of cases, where provisional attachment can be considered to be resorted to, subject to specific facts of the case:

Where taxable person has:

- a. supplied any goods or services or both without issue of any invoice, in violation of the provisions of the Act or the rules made there under, with an intention to evade tax; or
- b. issued any invoice or bill without supply of goods or services or both in violation of the provisions of the Act, or the rules made there under; or
- c. availed input tax credit using the invoice or bill referred to in clause (b) or fraudulently availed input tax credit without any invoice or bill; or
- d. collected any amount as tax but has failed to pay the same to the Government beyond a period of three months from the date on which such payment becomes due; or
- e. fraudulently obtained refund; or
- f. passed on input tax credit fraudulently to the recipients but has not paid the commensurate tax

3.3.2 The above list is illustrative only and not exhaustive. The Commissioner, may examine the specific facts of the case and take a reasoned view in the matter.

3.4 Types of property that can be attached

3.4.1 It should be ensured that the value of property attached provisionally is not excessive. The provisional attachment of property shall be to the extent it is required to protect the interest of

revenue, that is to say, the value of attached property should be as near as possible to the estimated amount of pending revenue against such person.

3.4.2 More than one property may be attached in case value of one property is not sufficient to cover the estimated amount of pending revenue against such person. Further, different properties of the taxpayer can be attached at different points of time subject to the conditions specified in section 83 of the Act.

3.4.3 It may be noted that the provisional attachment can be made only of the property belonging to the taxable person, against whom the proceedings mentioned under section 83 of the Act are pending.

3.4.4 Movable property should normally be attached only if the immovable property, available for attachment, is not sufficient to protect the interests of revenue.

3.4.5 As far as possible, it should also be ensured that such attachment does not hamper normal business activities of the taxable person. This would mean that raw materials and inputs required for production or finished goods should not normally be attached by the Department.

3.4.6 In cases where the movable property, including bank account, belonging to taxable person has been attached, such movable property may be released if taxable person offers, in lieu of movable property, any other immovable property which is sufficient to protect the interest of revenue. Such immovable property should be of value not less than the tax amount in dispute. It should also be free from any subsisting charge, liens, mortgages or encumbrances, property tax fully paid up to date and not involved in any legal dispute. The taxable person must produce the original title deeds and other necessary information relating to the property, for the satisfaction of the concerned officer.

3.5 Attachment Period

3.5.1 Every provisional attachment shall cease to have effect after the expiry of a period of one year from the date of the provisional attachment order.

3.5.2 Besides, the provisional attachment order shall also cease to have effect if an order in **FORM GST DRC-23** for release of such property is made by the Commissioner.

3.6 Investigation and Adjudication

As the provisional attachment of property is resorted to protect the interests of the revenue and may also affect the working capital of the taxable person, it may be endeavored that in all such cases, the investigation and adjudication are completed at the earliest, well within the period of attachment, so that the due liability of tax as well as interest, penalty etc. arising upon adjudication can be recovered from the said taxable person and the purpose of attachment is achieved.

3.7 Share in property

Where the property to be provisionally attached consists of the share or interest of the concerned taxable person in property belonging to him and another as co-owners, the provisional attachment shall be made by order to the concerned person prohibiting him from transferring the share or interest or charging it in any way.

3.8 Property exempt from attachment

All such property as is by the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (5 of 1908), exempted from attachment and sale for execution of a Decree of a Civil Court shall be exempt from provisional attachment

4. It may be noted that an amendment to section 83 has been proposed in Finance Bill 2021. However, such proposed amendment shall come into effect only from a date to be notified in future. The present guidelines, which are based on the existing provisions of section 83 of the Act, shall stand modified according to the amended provisions of section 83, once the said amendment comes into effect.

5. Difficulty, if any, in the implementation of the above guidelines may please be brought to the notice of the Board.

Sanjay Mangal
23/2/2021

(Sanjay Mangal)

Commissioner (GST)

Copy to:

1. The Joint Secretary, GST Council Secretariat, New Delhi. He may consider circulating the same to all States for information and necessary action at their end.