FACELESS ASSESSMENT AND APPEAL

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PROCEDURE, HANDLING AND ISSUES
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BUDGET SPEECH FOR INTRODUCING FACELESS PROCEEDINGS

- Budget 2018-19 "We had **introduced e-assessment in 2016** on a pilot basis and in 2017, extended it to 102 cities with the objective of reducing the interface between the department and the taxpayers. With the experience gained so far, we are now ready to roll out the E-assessment across the country, **which will transform the age-old assessment procedure** of the income tax department and the manner in which they interact with taxpayers and other stakeholders. Accordingly, I propose to amend the Income-tax Act to notify a new scheme for assessment where the assessment will be done in electronic mode which will almost eliminate person to person contact leading to greater efficiency and transparency"
- Budget 2019 20 (I) Within the next two years, almost all verification and assessment of returns selected for scrutiny will be done electronically through anonymised back office, manned by tax experts and officials, without any personal interface between taxpayers and tax officers

BUDGET SPEECH FOR INTRODUCING FACELESS PROCEEDINGS

Budget 2019-20 (II) — "The existing system of scrutiny assessments in the Income-tax Department involves a high level of personal interaction between the taxpayer and the Department, which leads to certain undesirable practices on the part of tax officials. To eliminate such instances, and to give shape to the vision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister, a scheme of faceless assessment in electronic mode involving no human interface is being launched this year in a phased manner. To start with, such e-assessments shall be carried out in cases requiring verification of certain specified transactions or discrepancies. I25. Cases selected for scrutiny shall be allocated to assessment units in a random manner and notices shall be issued electronically by a Central Cell, without disclosing the name, designation or location of the Assessing Officer. The Central Cell shall be the single point of contact between the taxpayer and the Department. This new scheme of assessment will represent a paradigm shift in the functioning of the Income Tax Department.

Inserted Section	Sections converted to Faceless	Proceedings converted to Faceless	Functional or not
92CA(8)	92CA(8)	Determination of Arm's Length Price	Not functional
142B	142(1), 142(2), 142(2A)	Notice for filing of Return, inquiry before Assessment and directing for getting Accounts Audited, estimation of value by valuer	Partly Functional
144B	143(3) and 144	Assessment Proceedings	Functional
144C (14B)	144C (14B)	Proceedings for Directions issued by the Dispute Resolution Panel	Not functional

Inserted Section	Sections converted to Faceless	Proceedings converted to Faceless	Functional or not
151A	147, 148,151	Assessment or Reassessment under section 147	Not functional
157A	154,155, 156,157	Rectification, amendment of orders and issue of demand notice and issue of intimation of loss	Not Functional
231	197, 201(1), 206C(6A), 206C(9), 210(4) or(3), 220(2A),220(3), 220(6), 220(7),221, 222, 223,225	Lower or Nil TDS certificate, determining an Assessee to be in default, Lower or Nil TCS certificate, order requiring a person to pay advance tax, reduction or waiver of interest, Allowing payments by installment, penalty on tax in default, Certificate by TRO, Jurisdiction of TRO, Stay of proceedings by TRO	Not Functional

Inserted Section	Sections converted to Faceless	Proceedings converted to Faceless	Functional or not
245D(11)	245D(11)	Disposal of pending application by Interim Board of Settlement	Not Functional
245MA(9)	245MA(9)	Proceedings before Dispute Resolution Committee	Not Functional
245R(9)	245R(9)	Proceedings before Board of Advance Rulings	Not Functional
264A	263 and 264	Revision by CIT of orders prejudicial to revenue and revision by CIT of order prejudicial to the Assessee	Not Functional
264B	264B	Effect to order passed under section 250, 254, 260,262,263 and 264	Not Functional

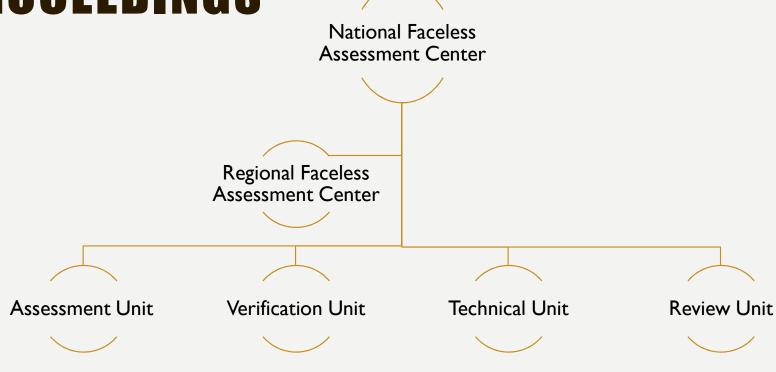
Inserted Section	Sections converted to Faceless	Proceedings converted to Faceless	Functional or not
279(4)	279	Grant of sanction for prosecution or compounding of prosecution	Not Functional
293D	293D	Any approval or registration by any Income Tax Authority	Not Functional
250(6B)	246A	Faceless Appeal before CIT (appeal)	Functional

By March 2022 or By March 2023 as the case may be the above proceedings shall be converted to Faceless.

For All the Proceedings which are proposed to be **made Faceless** and are not functional following is the amendment in their respective section

The Central Government may make a scheme, by notification in the Official Gazette, for the purpose of _____ under this chapter/section/subsection, so as to impart greater efficiency, transparency and accountability by Eliminating the interface between the _____ and the Assessee in the course of _____ to the extent Technologically feasible
 Optimising utilisation of the resources through economies of scale and functional specialisation
 Introducing a with dynamic jurisdiction

STRUCTURE OF DEPARTMENT CONDUCTING ASSESSMENT PROCEEDINGS



AUTHORITIES FOR CONDUCTING ASSESSMENT PROCEEDINGS

- Assessment Unit, Verification Unit, Technical Unit and the Review Unit
 - Additional Commissioner or Additional Director, or Joint Commissioner or Joint Director
 - Deputy Commissioner or Deputy Director or Assistant Commissioner or Assistant Director or Income Tax officer
 - Such other Income Tax Authority, ministerial staff executive or consultant
- For the purpose of Section 143(2), Rule 12E defines the Prescribed Income Tax Authority. Vide Notification No. 79/ 2021 the CBDT has authorized Assistant Commissioner/Deputy Commissioner (National E-Assessment Centre) to act as the prescribed authority.

MODE OF COMMUNICATION - FACELESS ASSESSMENT PROCEEDINGS

- All communication between Assessee and department will be between Assessee and National Faceless Assessment Center.
- All the Communication between the Assessee and the NFAC shall be in electronic mode.
- All internal communication between NFAC and either Assessment Unit, Verification Unit, Technical Unit or Review Unit will be in electronic mode.
- Electronic record should be authenticated by
 - NFAC through it's DSC
 - Assessee through it's DSC or EVC
- Service of Notice (Followed by a real time alert)
 - Placing authenticated copy in Assessee's registered Account with Income tax website
 - Sending an email to the Email Address of the Assessee
 - Uploading a copy on Assessee's Mobile App

APPEARANCE

- Assessee shall file his response to the Notice through the Registered Account i.e. after logging in and reaching out to the respective notice in the E-Proceeding Tab.
- The Assessee or Authorized Representative are not allowed to appear personally at NFAC or RFAC or any unit.
- Video Conferencing (Not allowed Generally)
 - Variation is proposed through the Draft Assessment Order or Final Draft Assessment order or Revised Draft Assessment Order
 - Notice regarding above is served on the Assessee
 - Assessee or AR makes a request for personal hearing so as to make oral submission or present his case before Income Tax Authority or any unit
 - Chief commissioner or Director General in charge of RFAC are the authorities required to approve the request
 - Powers of CBDT in regard to Video Conferencing
 - To establish Suitable Facility for Video Conferencing or video Telephony including Telecommunication software which supports
 Video Conferencing or video telephony
 - At such locations as may be necessary
 - So as to ensure that the Assessee are not denied the benefit of faceless assessment merely on that consideration that such Assessee does not has any access to Video Conferencing or Video Telephony at his end.
 - Examination or recording of Assessee's statement shall be by any unit or Income Tax Authority exclusively through video conferencing or video telephony or including any telecommunication software application.

MISCELLANEOUS

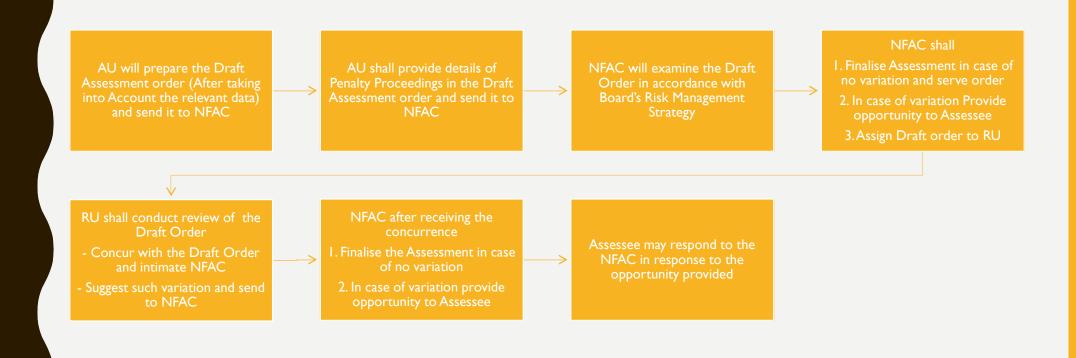
- The Pr. CCIT or PDGIT in charge of NFAC may at any stage of Assessment, transfer the case to the Assessing officer having jurisdiction over the Assessee after getting the prior approval of the Board. (Not faceless)
- Cases other than which are transferred to Jurisdictional AO if not completed with the due procedure laid above then the assessment shall be non est i.e. non existent.
- The request for verification shall be assigned by NFAC to any Verification unit set up in any other Regional Faceless Assessment Centre.
- Important definitions
 - · Registered Account means electronic filing account registered by Assessee in the designate portal
 - Registered E-Mail Address Available in E-filling account in designated portal/ available in Income Tax Return/ Available in PAN database/ Available with the UIDAI database/ Available with MCA
 - Registered Mobile Number of the Assessee or Authorized Representative as registered on the Income Tax portal
 - Video Conferencing or video telephony means the technological solutions for the reception and transmission of audio video signals by users at different locations for communication between people in real time.

- Subject Proceedings 143(3) and 144 (Except Central Charge cases and International Tax Cases)
- Steps of Assessment
 - NFAC serves a notice u/s 143(2) + Assessee responds to the notice within 15 days
 - Scenarios when notice shall be served
 - Return filed u/s. 139 or in response 142(1) or 148 and notice u/s. 143(2) issued by AO
 - Return not filed in response to notice u/s. 142(1)
 - Return not filed under section 148 and a notice under section 142(1) has been issued
 - NFAC shall assign the case to a specific AU under any RFAC through Automated allocation
 - Assessment Unit shall request the NFAC for obtaining info, documents, evidence
 - Conduct enquiry or verification by Verification unit
 - Seeking Technical assistance from Technical unit

• Steps of Assessment (Continued)

Request by Assessment unit to NFAC for	Authority to whom request shall be transferred by NFAC	Response / Report
Obtaining Further information or document or evidence	NFAC shall themselves requisition	Assessee shall file his response (No time limit Specified)
Conducting certain enquiry or verification	Verification unit	Report by VU received by NFAC to be sent to AU
Technical Assessment from Technical unit	Technical unit	Report by TU received by NFAC shall be sent to AU

Assessee fails to comply with Notice under section 142(1) or direction under section 142(2A) →
Notice under section 144 shall be served → Assessee has to respond to this notice within the given
time and if he fails then on intimation by NFAC to AU, AU shall proceed with the proceedings
under section 144.



In case of no response from Assessee to the Draft order the NFAC shall Finalise the Assessment as per the Draft Order and serve a copy of the order to Assessee

In case response is received the response shall be sent to the AU and AU shall prepare a draft Assessment order and send it to NFAC

The NFAC after receiving the revised draft Order

 In case variations are not prejudicial to the Assessee – Finalize Assessment and send Order to Assessee

In case variations are prejudicial (144) to the Assessee – Serve a Show cause notice on Assessee

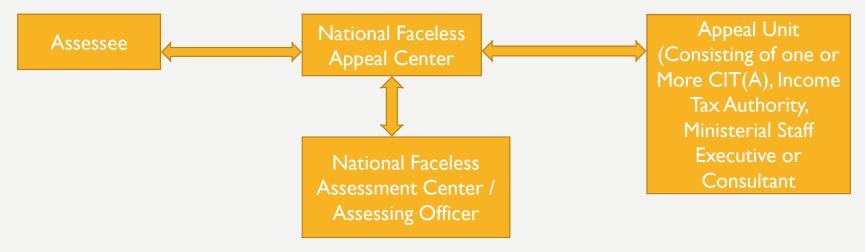
In case no response is received from the Assessee in response to the Show cause Notice the Order shall be finalized by NFAC

(6B) The Central Government may make a scheme, by notification in the Official Gazette, for the purposes of disposal of appeal by Commissioner (Appeals), so as to impart greater efficiency, transparency and accountability by—

- (a) eliminating the interface between the Commissioner (Appeals) and the appellant in the course of appellate proceedings to the extent technologically feasible;
- (b) optimising utilisation of the resources through economies of scale and functional specialisation;
- (c) introducing an appellate system with dynamic jurisdiction in which appeal shall be disposed of by one or more Commissioner (Appeals).
- (6C) The Central Government may, for the purposes of giving effect to the scheme made under sub-section (6B), by notification in the Official Gazette, direct that any of the provisions of this Act relating to jurisdiction and procedure for disposal of appeals by Commissioner (Appeals) shall not apply or shall apply with such exceptions, modifications and adaptations as may be specified in the notification:

Provided that no direction shall be issued after the 31st day of March, 2022.

(6D) Every notification issued under sub-section (6B) and sub-section (6C) shall, as soon as may be after the notification is issued, be laid before each House of Parliament.



Process of Appeal Proceedings

- The National Faceless Appeal Center shall assign the appeal to a specific Appeal unit in any Regional Faceless Appeal Center
- In case of delayed filing of appeal, the Appeal unit may decide upon the condonation and intimate the National Faceless Appeal Center
- In case of exemption from section 249(4)(b) is sought, the Appeal Unit shall decide upon the reasons provided and intimate the NFAC

Process of Appeal Proceedings (Continued)

- The NFAC shall intimate the admission or rejection of appeal to the Appellant
- In case the Appeal is Admitted

Appeal unit may request NFAC for the following	NFAC shall obtain from/ direct to
to obtain such further information, document or evidence	Assessee
To obtain a report on the Grounds of Appeal, information or document or evidence	National E-Assessment Center or the Assessing officer
Further inquiry to be conducted	National E-Assessment Center or the Assessing officer
Notice to submit such information, document, evidence or report as specified by A	Appellant/ Any other person/ National E-Assessment Center/ Assessing officer

• The Appellant or NeAC shall file response to the notice or report from National Faceless Appeal Centre to the National Faceless Appeal Centre and it shall forward it to Appeal Unit.

Process of Appeal Proceedings (Continued)

- The NFAC shall intimate the admission or rejection of appeal to the Appellant
- In case the Appeal is Admitted

Appeal unit may request NFAC for the following	NFAC shall obtain from/ direct to
to obtain such further information, document or evidence	Assessee
To obtain a report on the Grounds of Appeal, information or document or evidence	National E-Assessment Center or the Assessing officer
Further inquiry to be conducted	National E-Assessment Center or the Assessing officer
Notice to submit such information, document, evidence or report as specified by A	Appellant/ Any other person/ National E-Assessment Center/ Assessing officer

• The Appellant or NeAC shall file response to the notice or report from National Faceless Appeal Centre to the National Faceless Appeal Centre and it shall forward it to Appeal Unit.

Process of Appeal Proceedings (Continued)

Additional Grounds

- Assessee, if wishing to file Additional Grounds, will have to file in the form as specified by NFAC alongwith the reason for omission of such ground while filing the appeal
- NFAC shall send the additional grounds to NeAC and to the Appeal unit
- NeAC or Assessee shall furnish their comments to NFAC as the case may be shall furnish their comments within the specified date and time.
- The NFAC shall send the comments to the Appeal Unit and the Appeal unit shall admit or reject the additional grounds of appeal alongwith the reasons of rejection. The NFAC shall further intimate the admission or rejection of the Appeal.

Additional Evidences

- Assessee shall file additional Evidence to NFAC and NFAC shall send the same alongwith a notice and provide opportunity of being heard to NeAC or AO for rebuttal, examine evidence or cross examine evidences or to produce counter evidences or documents. The NeAC or AO shall file report in response to the Evidence filed before the NFAC.
- The NFAC shall send the report received from NeAC or AO to Appeal Unit and if no report is received inform the Appeal Unit.
- The Appeal unit shall admit or reject the additional evidence and intimate the same to NFAC. NFAC shall intimate the Assessee about the admission or rejection.

Process of Appeal Proceedings (Continued)

Direction to produce or examination of any document or evidence

- NeAC or AO shall send request for any additional evidence or cross examination of witness to NFAC. The NFAC shall further send this to Appeal Unit.
- The Appeal unit shall consider this request and direct the Assessee to submit such document or evidence as it may specify or examine any person on witness. The Appeal unit shall send this notice to NFAC. The NFAC shall further send this notice to the Appellant or Assessing officer.
- The NFAC shall further send the response of Assessee to the Appeal unit.

In case Appeal unit intends to enhance the assessment or reduce the refund the Appeal unit shall

- Prepare show cause notice alongwith reasons for enhancement or reduction and send this notice to NFAC.
- NFAC shall serve notice to Assessee. The Appellant shall file his response to the NFAC. The NFAC shall further send the response received from the Assessee to the Appeal Unit.

Draft Order

- The Appeal Unit after taking into consideration the relevant material as collected above prepare a draft Appeal Order and send the notice alongwith the details of penalty proceedings.
- In case the tax levied alongwith the interest, penalty or fee, surcharge and cess is more than the specified
 amount the NFAC shall send the draft Assessment order for review to a different Appeal Unit in any
 Regional Faceless Appeal Center.

Process of Appeal Proceedings (Continued)

- In case the tax amount along with fees, interest, fee etc. is lesser than the specified amount then
 - The NFAC shall finalise as per the draft order
 - Or Send the Draft order for review to an Appeal Unit, other than the unit which prepared the Draft Order, in any one RFAC
- The Appeal Unit shall review the draft order and decide as follows:-
 - To concur with the Draft Order and intimate the NFAC about such concurrence
 - Or suggest variations to the Draft Orders

And send the order or intimate the NFAC

- In case the Appeal unit concurs with the draft order, the NFAC shall finalise the appeal as per draft order
- In case of any suggestion for variation to the Draft Order, the NFAC shall assign the appeal to another Appeal unit (Other than the one which prepared it). The Appeal unit shall after considering the suggested variations prepare a revised draft order and send to NFAC along with the penalty order.
- After finalizing the Revised Draft order it shall be sent to
 - Appellant
 - Pr. CCIT or CCIT or PCIT or CIT
 - NeAC

ASSESSMENT PROCEEDINGS — TIPS AND TRAPS

Tips

- Write your submissions clearly.
- Number the Annexures and describe them properly
- Give evidences as much as possible to substantiate the claims
- Write response as if you are telling a story to the Assessing officer
- Pinpoint the mistakes in the Questions asked by the Assessing officer without getting aggressive.
- Use simple and legit language
- · Properly respond to the Questions asked by the Assessing officer
- In case an addition is proposed, seek video conferencing and give valid reasons for the same.
- Keep all the responses and the acknowledgements documented and saved properly.
- Scanning must be clear and please don't leave any marks on the Evidences scanned.
- Try to avoid adjournments and be prepared with the scanned copy atleast a day before the date of hearing.
- Keep a track of the date of hearing and submit your response on that day.
- Reconcile all the evidences among themselves to avoid any further notice in relation to any deficiency.
- Produce invoices or ledgers of an amount more than the a certain materiality level and which should be defined in the Submission.
- Do not accept any addition proposed by the Draft assessment order and specify objections clearly regarding it.

ASSESSMENT PROCEEDINGS — TIPS AND TRAPS

- Traps
- It has been observed that the Assessing officer often ask very irrelevant questions. An example is given alongwith the answer

Question 3. Please reconcile with 26AS, with the details large expenses i.e. contracting expenses, and other expenses under TDS, as in explanation it is not seen whether TDS made on professional payments.

Response-

It is to submit and clarify before your goodself that Form 26AS is a consolidated statement issued by Income Tax Department under section 203AA of the Act and Rule 31AB of the Income Tax Rules. The form 26AS is a proof of the amount which has been earned by the Assessee and the tax that has been collected or deducted from the respective income of the Assessee by the deductor/payer. It is therefore stated that only income earned by the Assessee can be reconciled from the Form 26AS and there is no mention of the expenses incurred by the Assessee in the Form 26AS. Only in cases where TDS is deducted from the income of the Assessee, such receipts /income of theAssessee can be reconciled with Form 26AS as provided by the Income Tax Department.Copy of 26AS and reconciliation of the income with 26AS is provided as Annexure 3A and 3B.

In respect of theexpenses/large expenses, it is submitted that the Assessee is required to deduct TDS only on the expenses which are more than the respective minimum amount stated in the chapter XVII of the Income Tax Act. The TDS deducted while making the payment or booking of expenses whichever is earlier is reported alongwith the amount of expense in the TDS return under section 206 of the Act. It is therefore stated that large expenses, a cost, professional payments and other expenses as reported in the Profit and Loss Account can be reconciled from the TDS return under 206 as filed by the Assessee and not from Form 26AS because Form 26AS shows incomes of the Assessee and not the expenses incurred. A reconciliation of the above expenses as per Profit and loss Account and TDS return as filed is attached as Annexure and the relevant lower deduction certificates obtained by the payees to whom payments are made by the Assessee is attached as Annexure. In addition

ASSESSMENT PROCEEDINGS — TIPS AND TRAPS

- Traps
- Questions asked by the officer might give an impression that AO has not read the file.
- Notice might not open when it is received and there might be difficulties in accessing it.
- Few important functionalities like the date when the AO has viewed the application is not yet functional.
- The file size is 5 mb and this is a potential factor while compiling the evidences stretched like sea.
- Adjournment or Video Conferencing request will not be entertained.
- An adverse order might be passed by Assessing officer and that too without a draft Assessment order.
- Objections filed in response to the Draft Assessment order might not be entertained.

• Kbb Nuts Private Limited vs. National Faceless Assessment Center (W.P.) (C) 5234/2021 (Delhi High Court)

Facts - the Petitioner's case was that the said show cause notice was received by it via e-mail on 20.04.2021 at 03:06 hours and was required to submit response by 21.04.2021 23:59 Hours. Since the time for compliance was short, the petitioner, filed an application on 21.04.2021 via the e-portal, seeking a day's adjournment, i.e., till 22.04.2021. The petitioner claims that no response was received by it with respect to the request for adjournment. The NFAC passed the impugned assessment order on 22.04.2021. The petitioner stated that it had not received a response for the request for adjournment, the objections to the aforementioned show-cause notice were filed on 22.04.2021 at 15.22 hours.

Court held – The Assessment order was set aside. The NFAC was directed to issue notice via e-mail to the petitioner and grant a personal hearing before proceeding to pass the order

YCD Industries vs. National Faceless Assessment Center (W.P.) C. 5552/2021 (Delhi High Court)

- Facts contrary to the mandate of Section 144B of the Income Tax Act, 1961 (in short, 'the Act'), and the Faceless Assessment Scheme, 2019 (in short, 'the Scheme'), no show cause notice-cum-draft assessment order was served on the petitioner, before the passing of the impugned assessment order dated 20.04.2021.
- Court held 16.1. The statute [i.e., Section 144B(1)(xiv), (xv), (xvi)(b) and (xxii)] provides for issuance of a show cause notice-cum-draft assessment order, and an opportunity to the petitioner/assessee to respond to the same where income of the assessee is varied by the respondent/revenue.****. As a matter of fact, had the show cause notice cum draft assessment been served on the petitioner, its authorised representative could have requested for a personal hearing in the matter. The respondent/ revenue, to our minds, could not have side-stepped such safeguards put in place by the legislature.
- The Assessment order was set aside. The NFAC was directed to give a personal hearing via videoconferencing to the Authorized representative.

Prakash Nanji Patel vs. National E-Assessment Centre (Civil Writ Petition 1973 of 2021) (Bombay High Court)

- Facts On 20th April, 2021, a show-cause notice and draft assessment order was issued to the petitioner wherein a disallowance of Rs.5,27,73,764/- was made on the differential amount of total value of stamp value and the sale consideration. Pursuant to the show-cause notice and the draft assessment order, a detailed submission dated 21st April, 2021 was filed on behalf of petitioner. A final Assessment order enhancing the disallowance to Rs. 71839172 was passed.
- Court held Interim relief is granted to the Assessee till the date of 30.06.2021 and was further extended on 01.07.2021.

- Sanjay Aggarwal vs. National Faceless Assessment Centre (WP) (C. 5741/2021) (Delhi high Court)
- Show cause Notice cum Draft Assessment Order dated 13th April 2021 was served. Dept. Proposed a disallowance of Rs. 1,00,26,692 under section 57 of the Act. Petitioner filed request for personal hearing on 15.04.2021 and 20.04.2021. The Dept did not pay any heed to the requests and issued a second show cause notice cum draft assessment order on 23.04.2021 and the petitioner was directed to respond by 25.04.2021 (23:59 Hours). Objections were filed by 24.04.2021. Dept's Counsel contended that the request was at the discretion of the Officer and word may was highlighted.
- Court Held "usage of the word may, to our minds, cannot absolve the respondent/revenue from the obligation cast upon it, to consider the request made for grant of personal hearing." Case was set aside and Revenue was allowed to proceed afresh in the matter

THANK YOU



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