

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT

International
Journal
of
Research
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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	EXISTENCE OF JANUARY EFFECT: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION ON INDIAN STOCK MARKET <i>PRAGYAN PARIMITA SARANGI, DR. N. C. KAR & DR. MUNMUN MOHANTY</i>	1
2.	THE POLICYHOLDERS' KNOWLEDGE ON INSURANCE AND TAKAFUL: AN EXPLORATORY RESEARCH IN INDIA <i>SYED AHMED SALMAN, HAFIZ MAJDI AB. RASHID & SHEILA NU NU HTAY</i>	10
3.	JOB SATISFACTION: A CASE STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO EMPLOYEES IN TIRUMALA MILK PRODUCTS PRIVATE LIMITED <i>DR. PATCHA BHUJANGA RAO</i>	18
4.	A STUDY ON FINANCIAL INCLUSION IN INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INDIAN BANK <i>DR. S. SELVAKUMAR & R. MUTHAMIZHSELVI</i>	23
5.	LEGAL AND TAX IMPLICATIONS OF BUY BACK OF SHARES <i>RUCHI & MAHESH KUMAR SAINI</i>	28
6.	A PROSPECT OF SUFI TOURISM CIRCUITS IN HARYANA <i>PARDEEP KUMAR & PARDEEP SINGH</i>	32
7.	A STUDY ON FINANCIAL STATEMENT ANALYSIS OF APPOLLO TYRES LIMITED, KOCHI <i>MOHAMMED ROSHIF U</i>	35
8.	MICROFINANCE: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN INDIA <i>SEEMA</i>	38
9.	A STUDY ON CONSUMER ATTITUDE TOWARDS ORGANISED RETAIL OUTLETS IN KANCHIPURAM DISTRICT, TAMILNADU <i>DR. RETHINA BAI.R</i>	43
10.	PERCEPTION OF THE RETAILERS TOWARDS MARKETING MIX STRATEGIES: A STUDY ON THE MINERAL WATER MARKET IN HYDERABAD, TELANGANA STATE (INDIA) <i>MD. RAZI ANWAR & V. V. RAMANA MURTHY</i>	48
11.	THE ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL LEVERAGE ON PROFITABILITY AND RISK OF RESTAURANT FIRMS <i>B. KAYATHIRI BAI & DR. V. BUVANESVARAN</i>	56
12.	AGRICULTURAL INNOVATIONS AND FOOD SECURITY IN SRI LANKA <i>DR. GUNAPALA MAHINDA. HENEGEDARA</i>	61
13.	TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PRIVATE SECTOR VS. PUBLIC SECTOR HOTELS IN CHANDIGARH <i>PRATIK GHOSH</i>	68
14.	THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY BASED DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN SOCIAL SERVICE DELIVERANCE IN MOSHI DISTRICT, KILIMANJARO REGION-TANZANIA <i>CYRIL KALEMBANA KOMBA, ASTERIA GABRIEL. NGAIZA, GEORGE GERMINOUS SIZYA & NATHANIEL TOWO</i>	80
15.	A STUDY ON THE ENTREPRENEURIAL INTEREST AMONG AMRITA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY IN AMRITA SCHOOL OF ARTS & SCIENCES MYSURU (MYSORE) <i>ASWATHY.N.V. & VIDYA .D.AVADHANI.</i>	87
16.	FACTORS INFLUENCING TAX COMPLIANCE BEHAVIOUR OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs): A SURVEY OF MOMBASA COUNTY, KENYA <i>MARTIN KIPYEGO MAYIEK & STELLAH CHEBET YEGO</i>	95
17.	CONSUMER PERSPECTIVES ON E-TAILING: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY AT HYDERABAD CITY <i>CH. CHANDRA SHEKAR</i>	98
18.	PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA: ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BASTAR DISTRICT <i>YOGENDRA SINGH</i>	104
19.	ROLE OF TALENT MANAGEMENT IN BUSINESS STRATEGY <i>HARDEEP</i>	107
20.	MICRO-FINANCE AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT <i>SABREEN FAROOQ</i>	109
	REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK & DISCLAIMER	115

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LEGAL AND TAX IMPLICATIONS OF BUY BACK OF SHARES

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ABSTRACT

Introduction of companies act 2013, amendment to securities and exchange board of india (buy back of securities) regulations 1998, as also insertion of section 115QA of the income tax act, 1961 have impacted the buy back scenario. Change in definition of free reserve, listed companies coming out with buy back have to ensure that at least 50% of the amount earmarked for buy back is utilised for buy back. Buy back also affects the fundamentals of the company resorting to buy – back. The buy – back provisions under companies act, 2013 allowed buy back of shares to limited extent and with the conditions like it can only be done if authorised by articles of associations. If buy back is 10% or less of paid up capital and free reserve then the board resolution will be sufficient. After completion of buy back the company cannot make any further issue of same kind of shares within a period of six months.

KEYWORDS

buy back of shares, SEBI.

INTRODUCTION

Buy back of shares means the repurchase of its own shares by the company. When a company has sufficient cash resources, it may like to buy its own shares from the market, when the prevailing rate of its equity shares in the market is much lower than the face value. The shares thus bought back have to be cancelled. Companies will buy back shares either to increase the value of shares still available (reducing supply), or to eliminate any threats by shareholders who may be looking for a controlling stake.

Prior to the amendment of the Companies Act, 1956, buyback of shares in India was prohibited. Section 77 of the Act, imposed a blanket ban on companies from buying their own shares. Section 77A, 77AA and 77B have been introduced in 1999 in the Companies Act, 1956 to enable companies to purchase their own shares or other specified securities. However, Section 77A of the Companies Act, 1956 which was inserted in the Companies Act, 1956 by the Companies (Amendment) Act, 1999 with retrospective effect from 31.10.1998 is an exception to the prohibition under Section 77 and Section 100. Section 77A allows companies to buy-back their own shares as well as 'other specified securities'.

OBJECTIVES OF BUY BACK OF SHARES

The decision to buy-back is also influenced by various other factors relating to the company, such as growth opportunities, capital structure, sourcing of funds, and cost of capital and optimum allocation of funds generated.

The reasons for buy-back may be one or more of the following:

- To improve earnings per share;
- To improve return on capital, return on net worth and to enhance the long-term shareholder value
- To provide an additional exit route to shareholders when shares are under valued or are thinly traded;
- To enhance consolidation of stake in the company;
- To prevent unwelcome takeover bids;
- To return surplus cash to shareholders;
- To achieve optimum capital structure;
- To support share price during periods of sluggish market conditions;
- To service the equity more efficiently.

OTHER LEGAL PROVISIONS FOR BUY-BACK OF SHARES

If the buyback is more than 10% of paid up capital and free reserves of the company, then special resolution should be passed. The special resolution and the explanatory statement annexed to the notice of general meeting must disclose certain specific information as mentioned below:-

- A special resolution can be passed either at annual general meeting or at the extra ordinary general meeting of the company.
- In the special resolution, power can be granted to the board of directors either to buy back shares by using methods of tender offer or open offer at their discretion at appropriate time.
- The company shall send to its shareholders along with the notice of the meeting at which a special resolution is proposed an explanatory statement which shall contain the following:-
 - Full and complete disclosures of all material facts.
 - The class of security proposed to be bought back.
 - The total amount to be invested under the buy- back.
 - The time limit for completion of buy- back.

If the buyback of securities are to be made by way of tender offer, then the explanatory statement should contain additional disclosures as mentioned in regulation 7 of SEBI.

PROCEEDS OF ISSUE

Buy-back may be made out of the proceeds of an issue of securities other than the same kind of securities as are proposed securities as are proposed to be bought back. The proceeds of an earlier issue of one kind of securities may be used for the purpose of buy-back of any other kind of securities. The proceeds of

an issue of preference shares may be used to buy-back equity shares and the proceeds of an issue of equity shares may be used to buy-back preference shares. However, the proceeds of issue of preference shares carrying differential rights as to dividend, voting etc. cannot be utilized inter se for the purpose of buy-back. For instance, the proceeds of issue of 10% preference shares cannot be utilized for buy-back of 8% preference shares, as these are of the same kind, though of different classes of shares. There should be no direct nexus between the proceeds of an issue and buy-back of securities of a company.

PROHIBITION FOR BUY BACK OF SHARES

As per section 70 of the companies act, 2013 a company shall not buy back its shares or other specified securities:

- Through any subsidiary company, including its own subsidiary company;
- Through any investment company or group of investment companies;
- If default subsists in repayment of public deposits accepted or interest payable thereon, redemption of debentures or preference shares or payment of dividend to any shareholders or repayment of term loan or interest payable thereon to any financial institution or bank;
- No company shall directly or indirectly purchase its own shares or other specified securities in case such company has not complied with the provisions of section 92, 123, 127 and section 129 of the companies act, 2013.
- As per section 70 of the companies act, 2013 now a company can make buy back even if it had at any time default in repayment of deposit or interest thereon, redemption of debentures or preference shares or payment of dividend to shareholder the default must have been remedied and a period of three years must have elapsed after such default ceased to subsist. Under the old provisions the prohibition was to cease immediately when default cease to exist.

BUY BACK WHEN FEASIBLE

- High net cash position
- High dividend yield
- Low debt/equity ratio
- Low capital expenditure requirements

SOURCES OF BUY BACK

According to Section 77A(1) of the Companies Act, 1956 a company may purchase its own shares or other specified securities (hereinafter referred to as "buy-back") out of:

- Its free reserves; Or (ii) the securities premium account; or iii) the proceeds of any shares or other specified securities. However, no buy-back of any kind of shares or other specified securities can be made out of the proceeds of an earlier issue of the same kind of shares or same kind of other specified securities. Thus, company must have at the time of buy-back, sufficient balance in any one or more of these.
- Accounts to accommodate total value of buy-back

FREE RESERVES AND SECURITIES PREMIUM ACCOUNT

While the surplus in the profit and loss account can be used for buy-back of securities, in case the profit and loss account shows a debit balance, such debit balance should first be deducted from free reserves. Capital redemption reserve, revaluation reserve, investment allowance reserve, profit on reissue of forfeited shares, profits prior to incorporation of the company and any other specific reserve are not available available for distribution as dividend and hence do not form part of free reserves for the purpose of buy back. Even though Section 77A(1) provides that a company may buy-back its securities out of securities premium account, Sub-section(2) of Section 78 does not mention buy back of securities as one of the purposes for which the balance in the securities premium account may be utilised. However, by virtue of the non obstante clause in Section 77A, namely 'Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act...' Section 77A prevails over Section 78. Therefore, the securities premium account can be utilised for buy back of securities.

MODES OF BUY BACK

The company can buy back the shares differently such as a) odd lots, however the dematerialisation of shares, the concept of odd lot has lost its significance b) proportionately from the shareholders, c) from the employees of the company and d) from the secondary market.

BUY BACK: PRACTICAL ASPECTS

TABLE – 1: HYPOTHETICAL BALANCE SHEET OF BUY- BACK LTD. AS ON 31-03-2014 - BEFORE BUY BACK

	Pre buy – back	Post buy - back
Shareholders' fund		
Equity share capital (nominal value Rs. 100 per share)	70,00,000	57,50,000
10% preference share capital	10,00,000	10,00,000
Reserves & surplus		
Free reserve	30,00,000	15,00,000
Securities premium	10,00,000	10,00,000
Revaluation reserve	15,00,000	15,00,000
Capital redemption reserve	-	12,50,000
Non-current liabilities		
Debt	1,85,00,000	1,85,00,000
Current liabilities	14,50,000	14,50,000
Total	3,34,50,000	3,19,50,000
Assets		
Non – current Assets	2,90,50,000	2,90,50,000
Current Assets		
Stock	14,50,000	14,50,000
Bills receivable	4,00,000	4,00,000
Cash and bank	25,50,000	10,50,000
Total	3,34,50,000	3,19,50,000

TABLE 2: STATEMENT SHOWING COMPUTATION OF EARNINGS AFTER INTEREST AND TAX OF BUY – BACK LTD.

PARTICULARS	AMOUNT (pre buy back) (Rs. In lakhs)	AMOUNT (post buy back) (Rs. In lakhs)
Sales	900	900
Less: variable cost @60%	(-) 720	(-)720
contribution	180	180
Less : fixed cost	(-)138	(-)138
EBIT	42	42
Less : interest	(-)18.50	(-)18.50
Earnings after interest	23.50	23.50
Less : tax @ 33.99%	(-)7.99	(-)7.99
Earnings after int.& tax	15.51	15.51
Preference dividend including DDT	(-)1.16	(-)1.16
Earnings available for equity shareholders	14.35	14.35
No of shares (in lakhs)	70	57.50
EPS	20.5	24.96
P/E Ratio (assumed)	5	5
Market price per share	102.5	124.8

However , P/E ratio comes down with increase in debt equity ratio due to increase in risk to shareholders. In this example it has been maintained at 5 because it was already not very high , also because 2:1 debt equity is normal.

DETERMINING THE NUMBER OF SHARES TO BE BOUGHT BACK

To determine the maximum number of shares to be bought back, compliance of all the following test is required. The least the number of shares only can be bought back.

STEP 1: PAID UP CAPITAL AND FREE RESERVES TEST

(Capital (Equity + Preference)) + Free Reserves)	X	(80 lakhs + 30 lakhs + 10 lakhs)
	25%	x25% =30,000 shares
Buy-back Price	=	120

STEP 2: PAID UP EQUITY CAPITAL TEST

No. of paid-up equity Shares x 25%	=	70,000 x 25% = 17,500 shares
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Thus, the shares to be bought should be bought down to 17,500 instead of 30,000.

STEP 3: DEBT – EQUITY TEST

After buy back of shares the debt equity ratio should not exceed 2:1, if it exceeds the standard of 2:1, the amount of buy back of shares may be brought down to the level of 2:1 , under step 2, the number of shares to be bought back has been determined as 17,500. Here the ratio comes to 2.08:1; therefore the number of shares to be bought should be brought down to 14,580 shares as computed below:

Debt = Rs. 185 lakhs (given)

Equity required to bring down the debt equity ratio to 2:1, $185 / 2 = 92.5$ lakhs

Existing equity and pref. Capital = Rs. 110 lakhs

Required equity = Rs. 92.50 lakhs.

Value wise maximum amount for which shares can be brought = Rs. 110 – 92.50 = Rs. 17.50 lakhs.

Buy back rate Rs. 120 per shares

No. of shares to be bought back = Rs. 17.50 lakhs = 14,583 shares.

STEP 4: LIQUIDITY TEST

There should be adequate funds with the company to buy back 14,580 shares. Company can not avail loans for buy back of shares. Bank balance of the company is rs. 28,50,000.but the whole of it cannot be utilised to finance the buy back. Suppose.

Cash available for buy back / buy back price = $15,00,000 / 120 = 12,500$ shares.

After buy back of shares the company will be left with bank balance of Rs. 10,50,000. Which is sufficient for meeting working capital needs of company. After buy back current ratio would be 2:1. And quick ratio will be 1:1. Finally the number of shares to be brought back is 12,500 shares.

ACCOUNTING TREATMENT OF BUY BACK OF SHARES

Company act states that, company purchases its own shares out of free reserves or securities premium, then a sum equal to nominal value of shares so purchased shall be transferred to capital redemption reserve account, sec 77A of co.act 1956 did not include the word securities premium. This is possible to adjust against free reserve. Nominal amount redeemed out of free reserve or securities premium account should be earmarked as capital redemption reserve by transfer from the respective sources.

Free Reserve A/c Dr.	12,50,000	
To Capital Redemption Reserve A/c		12,50,000
(Being transfer of free Reserve to CRR)		
Free Reserve A/c Dr	2,50,000	
Equity share capital Dr.	12,50,000	
To Equity Share holder's A/c		15,00,000
(Being the amount payable to equity holderson buy-back)		
Equity Shareholders A/c Dr.	15,00,000	
(being payment of buy-back amount to equity holders)		15,00,000

TAX IMPLICATIONS OF BUY BACK – DIVIDEND DISTRIBUTION TAX

The company has to pay dividend tax on buying shares back. Buy back of shares may prove to be a boon to many companies provided they have adequate funds. The following benefits may accrue to the company resorting to buy back. After buy back reduction in dividend distribution tax liability , which is given below:

Dividend distribution tax – after buy back reduction in tax would be as follow:

Particulars	DDT before Buy-back	DDT afterTax
No. of Equity Shares Outstanding	70,000	58,500
Face value per share (Rs)	100	100
Rate of dividend	10%	10%
Divident distributed	Rs. 7 lakhs	Rs. 5.85 lakhs
Rate of dividend distribution tax	16.222%	16.222%
Divident Distribution tax	1.14 laks	0.95 lakhs
Tax Saving	Rs. 19,000	

POSITIVE EFFECTS OF BUY-BACK OF SHARES

The company can use its surplus cash which is lying unutilised and there are no proper investment opportunities.

It improves the return on capital, net profitability and also earning per share.

Shareholders have a choice of deciding whether or not to receive the payout by selling or holding their shares, unlike dividend payout.

Increase in shareholders wealth.

Decrease in dividend distribution tax amount.

Fractional share holdings and odd lots can be avoided since the company encourages the shareholders to sell odd lot shares.

It brings liquidity in hands of the investors.

It rationalises the capital structure of the company.

NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF BUY BACK OF SHARES

It is feared that the buy-back may be misused by the corporate entities at the cost of innocent investors. The inherent dangers may be listed as :

The repurchase of its own shares may conversely have a negative signalling effect as the market may think that the company has fewer growth opportunities after a share buy – back due to erosion of cash resources. Management may not seek to utilise any existing excess cash effectively by acquiring new investment or developing profitable markets.

A return of funds by way of a share buy- back is less certain than an annual dividend stream.

Buy-back may lead to artificial manipulations of stock prices.

It provides an ample opportunity for inside trading.

CONCLUSION

As per section 70 of companies act, 2013 now a company can make buy – back even if it had at any time default in repayment of deposit or interest thereon, redemption of debentures or preference shares or payment of dividend to any shareholder or interest payable thereon to any financial institution provided the default must have been remedied and a period of three years must have elapsed after such default ceased to subsist . if the company has idle cash resources which is not required in company, the same can be used in buying back the shares provided the internal rate of return on capital employed in business is lesser than the market rate of return , shareholders would be benefited by investing their funds received through buy – back by the company. Income arising to shareholders from such buy back would be exempted, where the company is liable to pay additional income tax on buy back of shares. But benefit in hands of company there is decrease in dividend distribution tax amount.

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