

F. No. 2/1/2020-CL-V
Government of India
Ministry of Corporate Affairs

5th Floor, 'A' Wing, Shastri Bhawan,
Dr. R. P. Road, New Delhi-110001
Dated: 8th April, 2020

To
All Regional Directors,
All Registrar of Companies,
All Stakeholders.

Subject: Clarification on passing of ordinary and special resolutions by companies under the Companies Act, 2013 and rules made thereunder on account of the threat posed by Covid-19.

Sir/Madam,

Several representations have been received in the Ministry for providing relaxations in the provisions of Companies Act, 2013 (the Act) or rules made thereunder to allow companies to pass ordinary and special resolutions of urgent nature, in view of the difficulties faced by the stakeholders on account of the threat posed by Covid-19. The issues raised in the said representations have been examined considering the overall situation at present.

2. The Act does not contain any specific provision for allowing conduct of members' meetings through video conferencing (VC) or other audio visual means (OAVM). It has been noted that section 108 of the Act and rules made thereunder provide for relevant companies to allow e-voting (including remote e-voting) in case of general meetings convened by them. Section 110 of the Act, on the other hand, allows the companies to pass resolutions (except items of ordinary business and items where any person has a right to be heard) through postal ballot (which includes electronic ballot and electronic voting under section 108). In view of the current extraordinary circumstances due to the pandemic caused by COVID-19 prevailing in the country, requiring social distancing, companies are requested to take all decisions of urgent nature requiring the approval of members, other than items of ordinary business or business where any person has a right to be heard, through the mechanism of postal ballot/e-voting in accordance with the provisions of the Act and rules made thereunder, without holding a general meeting, which requires physical presence of members at a common venue.

3. However, in case holding of an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) by any company is considered unavoidable, the following procedure needs to be adopted for conducting such a meeting on or before 30.06.2020, in addition to any other requirement provided in the Act or the rules made thereunder:

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A. For companies which are required to provide the facility of e-voting under the Act, or any other company which has opted for such facility -

- I. EGMs, wherever unavoidable, may be held through VC or OAVM and the recorded transcript of the same shall be maintained in safe custody by the company. In case of a public company, the recorded transcript of the meeting, shall as soon as possible, be also made available on the website (if any) of the company.
- II. Convenience of different persons positioned in different time zones shall be kept in mind before scheduling the meeting.
- III. All care must be taken to ensure that such meeting through VC or OAVM facility allows two way teleconferencing or webex for the ease of participation of the members and the participants are allowed to pose questions concurrently or given time to submit questions in advance on the e-mail address of the company. Such facility must have a capacity to allow at least 1000 members to participate on a first-come-first-served basis. The large shareholders (i.e. shareholders holding 2% or more shareholding), promoters, institutional investors, directors, key managerial personnel, the chairpersons of the Audit Committee, Nomination and Remuneration Committee and Stakeholders Relationship Committee, auditors, etc. may be allowed to attend the meeting without restriction on account of first-come-first-served principle.
- IV. The facility for joining the meeting shall be kept open at least 15 minutes before the time scheduled to start the meeting and shall not be closed till the expiry of 15 minutes after such scheduled time.
- V. Before the actual date of the meeting, the facility of remote e-voting shall be provided in accordance with the Act and the rules.
- VI. Attendance of members through VC or OAVM shall be counted for the purpose of reckoning the quorum under section 103 of the Act.
- VII. Only those members, who are present in the meeting through VC or OAVM facility and have not cast their vote on resolutions through remote e-voting and are otherwise not barred from doing so, shall be allowed to vote through e-voting system or by a show of hands in the meeting.
- VIII. Unless the articles of the company require any specific person to be appointed as a Chairman for the meeting, the Chairman for the meeting shall be appointed in the following manner:
 - a. where there are less than 50 members present at the meeting, the Chairman shall be appointed in accordance with section 104;
 - b. in all other cases, the Chairman shall be appointed by a poll conducted through the e-voting system during the meeting.

- IX. The Chairman present at the meeting shall ensure that the facility of e-voting system is available for the purpose of conducting a poll during the meeting held through VC or OAVM. Depending on the number of members present in such meeting, the voting shall be conducted in the following manner:
- a. where there are less than 50 members present at the meeting, the voting may be conducted either through the e-voting system or by a show of hands, unless a demand for poll is made in accordance with section 109 of the Act, in which case, the voting shall be conducted through the e-voting system;
 - b. in all other cases, the voting shall be conducted through e-voting system.
- X. A proxy is allowed to be appointed under section 105 of the Act to attend and vote at a general meeting on behalf of a member who is not able to attend personally. Since general meetings under this framework will be held through VC or OAVM, where physical attendance of members in any case has been dispensed with, there is no requirement of appointment of proxies. Accordingly, the facility of appointment of proxies by members will not be available for such meetings. However, in pursuance of section 112 and section 113 of the Act, representatives of the members may be appointed for the purpose of voting through remote e-voting or for participation and voting in the meeting held through VC or OAVM.
- XI. At least one independent director (where the company is required to appoint one), and the auditor or his authorized representative, who is qualified to be the auditor shall attend such meeting through VC or OAVM.
- XII. Where institutional investors are members of a company, they must be encouraged to attend and vote in the said meeting through VC or OAVM.
- XIII. The notice for the general meeting shall make disclosures with regard to the manner in which framework provided in this Circular shall be available for use by the members and also contain clear instructions on how to access and participate in the meeting. The company shall also provide a helpline number through the registrar & transfer agent, technology provider, or otherwise, for those shareholders who need assistance with using the technology before or during the meeting. A copy of the meeting notice shall also be prominently displayed on the website of the company and due intimation may be made to the exchanges in case of a listed company.
- XIV. In case a notice for meeting has been served prior to the date of this Circular, the framework proposed in this Circular may be adopted for the meeting, in case the consent from members has been obtained in accordance with section 101(1) of the Act, and a fresh notice of shorter duration with due disclosures in consonance with this Circular is issued consequently.

- XV. All resolutions passed in accordance with this mechanism shall be filed with the Registrar of Companies within 60 days of the meeting, clearly indicating therein that the mechanism provided herein alongwith other provisions of the Act and rules were duly complied with during such meeting.

B. For companies which are not required to provide the facility of e-voting under the Act -

- I. EGM, wherever unavoidable, may be held through VC or OAVM and the recorded transcript of the same shall be maintained in safe custody by the company. In case of a public company, the recorded transcript of the meeting, shall as soon as possible, be also made available on the website (if any) of the company.
- II. Convenience of different persons positioned in different time zones shall be kept in mind before scheduling the meeting.
- III. All care must be taken to ensure that such meeting through VC or OAVM facility allows two way teleconferencing or webex for the ease of participation of the members and the participants are allowed to pose questions concurrently or given time to submit questions in advance on the e-mail address of the company. Such facility must have a capacity to allow at least 500 members or members equal to the total number of members of the company (whichever is lower) to participate on a first-come-first-served basis. The large shareholders (i.e. shareholders holding 2% or more shareholding), promoters, institutional investors, directors, key managerial personnel, the chairpersons of the Audit Committee, Nomination and Remuneration Committee and Stakeholders Relationship Committee, auditors, etc. may be allowed to attend the meeting without restriction on account of first-come-first-served principle.
- IV. The facility for joining the meeting shall be kept open at least 15 minutes before the time scheduled to start the meeting and shall not be closed till the expiry of 15 minutes after such scheduled time.
- V. Attendance of members through VC or OAVM shall be counted for the purpose of reckoning the quorum under section 103 of the Act.
- VI. Unless the articles of the company require any specific person to be appointed as a Chairman for the meeting, the Chairman for the meeting shall be appointed in the following manner:
 - a. where there are less than 50 members present at the meeting, the Chairman shall be appointed in accordance with section 104;
 - b. in all other cases, the Chairman shall be appointed by a poll conducted in a manner provided in succeeding sub-paragraphs.

- VII. Atleast one independent director (where the company is required to appoint one), and the auditor or his authorized representative, who is qualified to be the auditor shall attend such meeting through VC or OAVM.
- VIII. A proxy is allowed to be appointed under section 105 of the Act to attend and vote at a general meeting on behalf of a member who is not able to attend personally. Since general meetings under this framework will be held through VC or OAVM, where physical attendance of members in any case has been dispensed with, there is no requirement of appointment of proxies. Accordingly, the facility of appointment of proxies by members will not be available for such meetings. However, in pursuance of section 112 and section 113 of the Act, representatives of the members may be appointed for the purpose of voting through remote e-voting or for participation and voting in the meeting held through VC or OAVM.
- IX. Where institutional investors are members of a company, they must be encouraged to attend and vote in the said meeting through VC or OAVM.
- X. The company shall provide a designated email address to all members at the time of sending the notice of meeting so that the members can convey their vote, when a poll is required to be taken during the meeting on any resolution, at such designated email address.
- XI. The confidentiality of the password and other privacy issues associated with the designated email address shall be strictly maintained by the company at all times. Due safeguards with regard to authenticity of email address(es) and other details of the members shall also be taken by the company.
- XII. During the meeting held through VC or OAVM facility, where a poll on any item is required, the members shall cast their vote on the resolutions only by sending emails through their email addresses which are registered with the company. The said emails shall only be sent to the designated email address circulated by the company in advance.
- XIII. Where less than 50 members are present in a meeting, the Chairman may decide to conduct a vote by show of hands, unless a demand for poll is made by any member in accordance with section 109 of the Act. Once such demand is made, the procedure provided in the preceding sub-paragraphs shall be followed.
- XIV. In case the counting of votes requires time, the said meeting may be adjourned and called later to declare the result.

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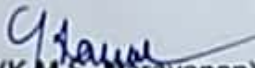
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- XV. The notice for the general meeting shall make disclosures with regard to the manner in which framework provided in this Circular shall be available for use by the members and also contain clear instructions on how to access and participate in the meeting. The company should also provide a helpline number through the registrar & transfer agent, technology provider, or otherwise, for those shareholders who need assistance with using the technology before or during the meeting. A copy of the notice shall also be prominently displayed on the website of the company.
- XVI. In case a notice for meeting has been served prior to the date of this Circular, the framework proposed in this Circular may be adopted for the meeting in case the consent from members has been obtained in accordance with section 101(1) of the Act, and a fresh notice of shorter duration with due disclosures in consonance with this Circular is issued consequently.
- XVII. All resolutions passed in accordance with this mechanism shall be filed with the Registrar of Companies within 60 days of the meeting clearly indicating therein that the mechanism provided herein alongwith other provisions of the Act and rules were duly complied with.

4. The companies referred to in paragraphs 3 (A) and 3 (B) above, shall ensure that all other compliances associated with the provisions relating to general meetings viz making of disclosures, inspection of related documents by members, or authorizations for voting by bodies corporate etc as provided in the Act and the articles of association of the company are made through electronic mode.

5. This issues with the approval of the competent authority.

Yours faithfully,


(K.M.S. Narayanan)
Assistant Director

Copy to:-

1. e-Governance Section and Web Contents Officer to place this circular on the Ministry's website
2. Guard File
