

Compliance, tax major challenges for direct listing abroad

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FINANCE MINISTER NIR-MALA Sitharaman's announcement that the government will allow listed/unlisted companies in India to list abroad via the IFSC exchanges seems to have come as a boost for startups.

However, the execution could be easier said than done, considering the multiple challenges and bottlenecks that to be cleared. For instance, it could require significant amount of harmonisation in terms of guidelines and taxation rules.

"There will challenges like announcement timings of price-sensitive information that directly impacts global investors. Further, there will guidelines required for money movement between countries and, of course, taxation issues. But these are not unsurmountable problems," said an investment banker.

Firms based in the UK and Germany have been listed in the US markets since ages, the banker pointed out. Even many Indian startups are registered in Singapore, as PE and VC investors are comfortable with the stable tax regime. When those countries have been able to resolve issues, there is no reason to believe we cannot do so, said the banker.

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KEY ISSUES

- Rupee convertibility will be a major hurdle as it is not a globally accepted currency
- Another challenge will be the difference in time zones, leading to different trading hours
- Another hurdle is addressing the issue of capital account convertibility in overseas listings

to be thought of by the regulators. Another challenge would be the difference in time zones, leading to different trading hours across markets," said Mahesh Singh, managing director of global investment banking firm Singh Advisors.

However, experts also say it is important for various bodies like the RBI, Sebi and the I-T department to come together for facilitating the process of direct listing. They called it a good step but one that needs sound guidelines.

At present, Indian companies looking to tap foreign capital via a listing have to first list on the domestic stock exchanges.

Overseas listings by entities listed in India are carried out through American depository receipts (ADRs) and global depository receipts (GDRs).

Aarin Capital's chairman T V Mohandas Pai has given his thumbs up to the move, saying it will give startups a platform to access international capital and getting listed stocks may also be beneficial for foreign investors. He also said the tax regime at IFSCs was friendlier than India.

Earlier this month to exclude two-thirds of the emissions linked to their capital markets businesses from being attributed to them in carbon accounting, the sources said.

If upheld, the decision would pit banks against environmental advocates, many of whom say the banking industry should assume full responsibility for the

emissions generated by activities financed through bonds and stock sales.

Almost half of the financing provided by the six biggest US banks for top fossil fuel companies came from capital markets rather than direct lending between 2016 and 2022, according to environmental group Sierra Club. — REUTERS

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develop global standards on accounting for carbon emissions in bond or stock sale underwriting have voted to exclude most of these emissions from their own carbon footprint, three people familiar with the matter said.

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