

Hiccups in GST portal

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Now a year old, the goods and services tax (GST) portal has drawn both praise and criticism.

Made operational on November 8 last year, it had covered all the states by March 2017 in terms of registration and given out provisional identifications to taxpayers, much before the GST roll-out in July, say officials.

However, tax filers had to face a number of issues with the portal. The system crashed a couple of times in September, which led to the setting up of a group of ministers (GoM) to examine why and what to do, led by Bihar Finance Minister Sushil Modi.

"The journey has been both exciting and challenging," says Prakash Kumar, chief executive of GSTN, the information technology network for the new levy. Many blame continuous change in the GST laws for gaps on the portal, not GSTN itself. The GoM had identified 27 technical glitches on the portal, which it want-

ed Infosys, which had won a contract to maintain GSTN for five years, to fix by end-October.

However, only 18 of these had been operationalised by the deadline. Kumar refuses to call these glitches. He tells *Business Standard*, "First of all, these are not glitches. There were lots of functionalities they (GoM) asked us to incorporate or make available. They wanted certain new things to be added or certain others to be expedited on the portal."

He terms these as priority items the GoM had identified. "Of that, two-third were completed by that date. Most of the remaining ones will be completed by the time the GoM meets next," says Kumar.

Others say GSTN should be given more time to prepare itself. Bipin Sapra of consultancy EY says GSTN has had to provide a compliance portal for an evolving and complex law; more time is required to get the system right. "It makes sense to give GSTN the due time by maximising the compliances for the next six months and allowing the portal to reach its

GST advisory group in favour of expanding composition scheme

The advisory group set up to suggest changes to the goods and services tax (GST) Act on Wednesday deliberated on how to expand the scope of the composition scheme as well as rationalise the reverse charge mechanism process.

This was the first meeting of the advisory group after it was formed earlier this week to suggest changes to the GST laws to make it more simple for taxpayers.

Industry sources said that

the deliberations were on issues like doing away with Section 9(4) of Central goods and services tax (CGST) Act which deals with reverse charge mechanism.

The section deals with payment of tax by registered dealers in cases where he procures goods from unregistered businesses.

Also, the group felt that manufacturers engaged in job works be allowed to opt for composition scheme. **PTI**

true potential," he adds.

Rshmi Khetrapal, founder of Countmagic, a GST software company, says though creation of the portal and implementation of the taxation system created initial hiccups, the move has over time been accepted and appreciated by accountants and businesses, across sectors. GSTN had crashed in September when the initial deadline of the July returns were approaching.

GSTN officials explained that a tax filer had submitted around 2.5 million invoices; in each, he gave the receivers' numbers. The GSTN system had a mechanism whereby filers have to first put the tax identification number (TIN) and then details of all invoices relating to that number. For instance, if you have 5,000 invoices relating to a particular buyer, you put the TIN of that buyer and then those invoices.