

## **BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT**

### **UNIT-2**

### **PART-IX**



**Goods and Services Tax (GST)** is an indirect tax (or consumption tax) used in India on the supply of goods and services. It is a comprehensive, multistage, destination-based tax: comprehensive because it has subsumed almost all the indirect taxes except a few state taxes. Multi-staged as it is, the GST is imposed at every step in the production process, but is meant to be refunded to all parties in the various stages of production other than the final consumer and as a destination-based tax, it is collected from point of consumption and not point of origin like previous taxes.

Goods and services are divided into five different tax slabs for collection of tax: 0%, 5%, 12%, 18% and 28%. However, petroleum products, alcoholic drinks, and electricity are not taxed under GST and instead are taxed separately by the individual state governments, as per the previous tax system. There is a special rate of 0.25% on rough precious and semi-precious stones and 3% on gold. In addition a cess of 22% or other rates on top of 28% GST applies on few items like aerated drinks, luxury cars and tobacco products. Pre-GST, the

statutory tax rate for most goods was about 26.5%, Post-GST, most goods are expected to be in the 18% tax range.

The tax came into effect from 1 July 2017 through the implementation of the One Hundred and First Amendment of the Constitution of India by the Indian government. The GST replaced existing multiple taxes levied by the central and state governments.

The tax rates, rules and regulations are governed by the GST Council which consists of the finance ministers of the central government and all the states. The GST is meant to replace a slew of indirect taxes with a federated tax and is therefore expected to reshape the country's \$2.4 trillion economy, but its implementation has received criticism. Positive outcomes of the GST include the travel time in interstate movement, which dropped by 20%, because of disbanding of interstate check posts.

### **Objectives Of GST**

To achieve the ideology of 'One Nation, One Tax'

GST has replaced multiple indirect taxes, which were existing under the previous tax regime. The advantage of having one single tax means every state follows the same rate for a particular product or service. Tax administration is easier with the Central Government deciding the rates and policies. Common laws can be introduced, such as e-way bills for goods transport and e-invoicing for transaction reporting. Tax compliance is also better as taxpayers are not bogged down with

multiple return forms and deadlines. Overall, it's a unified system of indirect tax compliance.

### **To subsume a majority of the indirect taxes in India**

India had several erstwhile indirect taxes such as service tax, Value Added Tax (VAT), Central Excise, etc., which used to be levied at multiple supply chain stages. Some taxes were governed by the states and some by the Centre. There was no unified and centralised tax on both goods and services. Hence, GST was introduced. Under GST, all the major indirect taxes were subsumed into one. It has greatly reduced the compliance burden on taxpayers and eased tax administration for the government.

### **To eliminate the cascading effect of taxes**

One of the primary objectives of GST was to remove the cascading effect of taxes. Previously, due to different indirect tax laws, taxpayers could not set off the tax credits of one tax against the other. For example, the excise duties paid during manufacture could not be set off against the VAT payable during the sale. This led to a cascading effect of taxes. Under GST, the tax levy is only on the net value added at each stage of the supply chain. This has helped eliminate the cascading effect

of taxes and contributed to the seamless flow of input tax credits across both goods and services.

### **To curb tax evasion**

GST laws in India are far more stringent compared to any of the erstwhile indirect tax laws. Under GST, taxpayers can claim an input tax credit only on invoices uploaded by their respective suppliers. This way, the chances of claiming input tax credits on fake invoices are minimal. The introduction of e-invoicing has further reinforced this objective. Also, due to GST being a nationwide tax and having a centralised surveillance system, the clampdown on defaulters is quicker and far more efficient. Hence, GST has curbed tax evasion and minimised tax fraud from taking place to a large extent.

### **To increase the taxpayer base**

GST has helped in widening the tax base in India. Previously, each of the tax laws had a different threshold limit for registration based on turnover. As GST is a consolidated tax levied on both goods and services both, it has increased tax-registered businesses. Besides, the stricter laws surrounding input tax credits have helped bring certain unorganised sectors under the tax net. For example, the construction industry in India.

### **Online procedures for ease of doing business**

Previously, taxpayers faced a lot of hardships dealing with different tax authorities under each tax law. Besides, while return filing was online, most of the assessment and refund procedures took place offline. Now, GST procedures are carried out almost entirely online. Everything is done with a click of a button, from registration to return filing to refunds to e-way bill generation. It has contributed to the overall ease of doing business in India and simplified taxpayer compliance to a massive extent. The government also plans to introduce a centralised portal soon for all indirect tax compliance such as e-invoicing, e-way bills and GST return filing.

### **An improved logistics and distribution system**

A single indirect tax system reduces the need for multiple documentation for the supply of goods. GST minimises transportation cycle times, improves supply chain and turnaround time, and leads to warehouse consolidation, among other benefits. With the e-way bill system under GST, the removal of interstate checkpoints is most beneficial to the sector in improving transit and destination efficiency. Ultimately, it helps in cutting down the high logistics and warehousing costs.

### **To promote competitive pricing and increase consumption**

Introducing GST has also led to an increase in consumption and indirect tax revenues. Due to the cascading effect of taxes under the previous regime, the prices of goods in India were higher than in global markets. Even between states, the lower VAT rates in certain states led to an imbalance of purchases in these states. Having uniform GST rates have contributed to overall competitive pricing across India and on the global front. This has hence increased consumption and led to higher revenues, which has been another important objective achieved.

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