

By Vidya.S in New Delhi

**T**HE National Informatics Centre is set to take over from the Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) the preparation of an E-way bill system, crucial to transport goods across state borders under the GST regime to be rolled out from July 1.

The NIC, which handles the websites of most government agencies, has been roped in to speed up the process once it became clear that GST's IT backbone would be busy with technology implementation for GST and would need longer to build the E-way bill platform.

"NIC has set up an E-way bill system for Karnataka which has been functioning for 2-3 years. The idea is to scale up the same thing because it will be faster than setting up something from scratch. That's the reason behind the idea. NIC is willing to do it," said GSTN chairman Navin Kumar in an exclusive interview to Mail Today.

The E-way bill is an electronic permit generated by the GSTN for transporting goods registered with it across state borders. It is applicable on goods worth over Rs 50,000. The bill will be valid for one to



GSTN CEO  
Navin Kumar

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- GSTN CEO Navin Kumar says the organization has more than 300 servers which can easily handle the 320 crore invoices to be field by taxpayers. "The load we'll be handling is comparable to what IRCTC or some of the big banks do. So, technologically it's not that difficult," Kumar explained

# NIC to fast track e-way bill system

## GST Council meeting on Sunday to give final go-ahead

15 days, depending on the distance over which the goods are to be transported.

A one-day permit will be for up to 100 km, while a 15-day permit will allow more than 1,000-km transit. Tax officials can inspect the E-way bill any time during the journey to check for tax evasion.

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GST Council, the apex decision making body for the tax regime chaired by finance minister Arun Jaitley and comprising his state-level counterparts, is scheduled to meet on Sunday to hammer out E-way bill details.

"Most likely the specific rules

will come out on Sunday. When that happens, the NIC can perhaps start working on the project," said Kumar.

Had the GSTN executed it, the project would have taken 4-5 months, the chairman added. "We would have to hold a tendering process, select an agency, develop the software and test it. Now, it should be faster."

He said the GSTN had prepared a scope for the project when the council had initially asked them to do it. "But E-way bill rules were not finalised, so our proposal did not materialize. We

will convey to them what we have prepared."

However, Kumar said it was hard to estimate the project cost as they had never reached that stage. "When NIC prepares the proposal we will know."

As businesses across the country file GST and returns every month starting July 1 through the GSTN portal, 320 crore invoices will be uploaded. As GST payers gear up for tax reform, doubts have been raised about the GSTN's IT capacity to handle the voluminous data.

"We have adequate technologi-

cal infrastructure. We have more than 300 servers which can easily handle this load. We have storage capacity for over three years' data to start with. The load we'll be handling is comparable to what IRCTC or some of the big banks do. So, technologically it's not that difficult," Kumar explained.

Besides, he said, the 320 crore invoices is the GSTN estimation. "We found that the average number of invoices per taxpayer is 127 a month. We have accounted for 400 invoices per taxpayer a month. Only when the system starts functioning we'll know the exact requirement."

**NIC has to get into action with only 15 days to go for GST**