GSTN glitch frets taxpayers, vanished data being restored

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New Delhi, August 4

A TECHNICAL GLITCH at the Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) portal led to a scramble among taxpayers and tax consultants to save data related to monthly returns on their own storage systems after the designated portal stopped showing tax returns details for July 2017. GSTN on Monday clarified that it was a technical glitch, which would be resolved in a day, and not a deliberate removal of data, as was being feared.

However, before the clarification was issued, taxpayers had construed the missing July 2017 data as a sign that GSTN would start deleting any details older than three years. On August 1, the July 2017 data came into this category.

A tax consultant said that while the law and rules do not allow GSTN to remove data older than 3 years, the impression that this was being done was created because a taxpayer viewing the electronic liability register on the portal could see the message ‘maximum period for viewing ledger is 3 years’.

When Ficci contacted GSTN, its CEO Prakash Kumar said: “July 2017 is not appearing in the dropdown of FY18. This is a tech glitch which is getting resolved. Tech team is working on it.”

The portal had also started flashing the message on Monday: “Dear taxpayer, the team is working to restore the facility to file and view GSTR-3B and GSTR-1 return for July 2017. We expect it to be available in a day.” The message is still visible as the glitch is yet to be resolved.

Another tax consultant said that they started advising businesses to start taking data backup for earlier periods as it would be quite helpful during the assessment stage. They said that that it appeared that GSTN may have taken the action for lack of storage space.

“Removal of taxpayer data from the user dashboard would signal either a technical snag or limited space in data centres of GSTN, both of which would raise questions on maturity of the government’s digital initiatives,” Rajat Mohan, senior partner at AMRG & Associates, said.