

I-T dept to expedite systems for quick processing of returns

Encouraging results of the income tax department's efforts to promote electronic filing of returns have prompted the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) to accelerate the procedure and stabilise systems infrastructure so as to ensure quick processing of all I-T returns.

The Centralised Processing Centre (CPC) at Bengaluru, set up for processing of e-filed returns from across the country and manually filed returns of Karnataka and Goa region, has ensured a substantial jump in the number of returns filed this year through the electronic mode. The department is now in the process of setting up two more CPCs — one upcountry (Manesar in Haryana) and the other in the country's west (Pune) to process all the manually-filed returns. These two CPCs are expected to start functioning during the ongoing fiscal. One more CPC — at Kolkata in the east — is also on the anvil.

About 5.3 million returns were filed electronically for the 2011-12 assessment year till July 31 as compared to 2.2 million returns filed during this period last year. A senior income tax department official told Business Standard that electronic filing of returns and quick processing ensured speedy clearance of refunds and by the end of the current financial year. The department is expected to complete a major portion of the systems requirements for shifting all the I-T related work to the electronic platform.

He added that the work of creating the systems infrastructure for shifting to the Direct Taxes Code platform was also on. Said an official: "Speedy work on creation and stabilisation of the I-T platform is going to be one of the priority areas for the department in the coming months."

Refund is issued through real-time gross settlement or national electronic clearing system in the electronic mode. This allows credit of refunds directly to the taxpayer's bank account. In the paper mode, refund cheques are issued with the assessee's bank account particulars to the taxpayer.

To simplify electronic filing, the department has already introduced simple and technology enabled 'Sahaj' and Sugam' form this year. The idea is to facilitate error-free and faster scanning of the returns enabling faster processing. The taxpayers have also been provided the online facility for viewing the refund status.

The number of pending returns claiming refunds as on May 31, 2011, stood at 6.74 lakh as against 38.26 lakh on March 31 due to the efforts to clear refunds quickly with the help of electronic mode. (Business Standard)