

TAXATION WATCH

RETURNS FILING

Deadline for Infosys over, but I-T portal issues stay: Refund, e-verification errors

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
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THE DEADLINE outlined by the government for Infosys to fix the issues in the income tax portal ended on Wednesday, but the taxpayers continued to raise concerns about the glitches. Tax experts and taxpayers flagged various continuing glitches while filing returns such as delayed pre-validation by the banks, troubles in registering digital signature certificate, inability to file adjournment in ongoing assessment cases, failure to reissue refund requests and errors in e-verification of the returns.

The Finance Ministry had on August 23 "summoned" Infosys CEO and MD Salil Parekh to explain the issues resulting in disruption of the portal developed by the software major. In the meeting with Parekh on August 23, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had expressed "deep disappointment" over persisting glitches for more than two months after portal launch and had given a deadline of September 15 to Infosys to resolve the issues.

After over three months of the launch on June 7, taxpayers continued to complain about the glitches on the portal. "Information is not updated on I-T Portal because of that we are unable to file refund reissue requests as the portal is showing that 'you have no refund failures to raise reissue requests.' Also, response to outstanding demand option is not working. We are not able to see the status of demand of the assessee. The message appearing on the portal is: the notice for demands prior to AY 2020-21 shall be made available shortly," Mukul Bagla, Chair, Direct Tax Committee, PHD Chamber of Commerce said. Bagla added there are difficulties in filing of ITR 2 and 3, rectification under Section 154 cannot be submitted electronically.

Taxpayers flagged various continuing glitches like delayed pre-validation by the banks, troubles in registering digital signature certificate

Nangia & Co LLP's partner Shailesh Kumar said though the government has indicated it is aware of the portal's challenges by extending the return filing deadlines, but there is a genuine hardship for taxpayers, who have paid self assessment tax, but not able to file ITR due to portal issues. "They are still required to pay interest at 1% per month (except senior citizens, who have paid entire taxes by 31st July) for delay in filing the ITR. The Government should give a waiver of interest to those taxpayers, who have already paid their entire tax liability, if they file their ITR within the extended time limit of 31 December," he said.

On some days, the portal works fine, on some other days, it faces technical glitches in some of the modules. Even though the functioning has improved over the past few weeks, still problems persist making it difficult for some taxpayers while filing the ITR," he added. Queries sent by *The Indian Express* to the Income Tax Department and Infosys on this matter went unanswered.

The income tax department had last week extended various filing deadlines, citing difficulties reported by taxpayers. The due date for ITRs for individuals whose accounts are not to be audited has been extended to December 31 from the earlier extended deadline of September 30, while that for companies has been extended to February 15, 2022. On September 8, the department said a number of technical issues on the new ITR portal are being progressively addressed.

Glitches in I-T portal remain after Infosys deadline ends

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Tax experts, who use the portal for various functions, said the website continues to face multiple glitches

The new income tax e-filing portal, which was unveiled with much fanfare, is not completely glitch-free even as the deadline set by the government for Infosys to fix the problems expired on Wednesday.

Tax experts, who use the portal for various functions, said the website continues to face multiple glitches.

Even after over three months of the portal's launch users are unable to submit rectification for returns filed, check refund status and file refund reissue request. They are also unable to see ITRs filed prior to Assessment Year (AY) 2013-14.

The new e-filing portal, www.incometax.gov.in, was launched on June 7. It had a bumpy start since the day of its launch, with taxpayers and professionals reporting glitches and difficulties in its functioning.

Infosys was in 2019 given the contract to develop the portal. The finance ministry had on August 23 "summoned" Infosys CEO Salil Parekh to explain why issues continued to plague the portal.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in the meeting with Parekh, expressed "deep disappointment" over persisting glitches and gave him time till September 15 to resolve all the issues.

Infosys and the income tax department did not respond to queries sent by PTI on the matter.

Nangia & Co LLP partner Shailesh Kumar said the government has indicated it is aware of the portal's persistent challenges when it extended the return filing deadlines by three months.

However, there is genuine

hardship for taxpayers who have paid self assessment tax but are not able to file ITR due to portal issues. They are still required to pay interest at 1 per cent per month (except senior citizens who have paid entire taxes by July 31) for delay in filing the ITR.

The government should give waiver of interest to those taxpayers who have already paid their entire tax liability, if they file their ITR within extended time limit of December 31, he said.

"The portal is still evolving with changes in modules of e-filing of ITR form. On some days, the portal works fine, on some other days, it faces technical glitches in some of the modules.

"Even though the functioning has improved over past few weeks, but still problems persist making it difficult for some taxpayers while filing the ITR," Kumar added.

Tax and consulting firm AKM Global's Director- Tax and Regulatory, Sandeep Sehgal said though there is some improvement in the portal now, there are still many problems.

These include ITRs filed prior to AY 2013-14 still not being available, no auto population of Form 16 in case of salary income, no option available for any rectification online, and even the outstanding demand is not visible in some cases.