

## **Government looking at mid 2016 rollout of GST**

The government on Thursday indicated that it was reworking the goods and services tax ( GST) rollout deadline to October 1, 2016, and might advance the winter session of Parliament to achieve this objective.

A day after the government dropped plans to call an extended monsoon session of Parliament to pass the GST Constitution amendment, NITI Aayog ViceChairman Arvind Panagariya told a business news channel that he was still hopeful of the GST rollout by middle of the financial year of 2016- 17, that is by October 1, if not the proposed deadline of April 1, 2016.

On whether the April deadline can still be achieved, Panagariya said: “ In politics you can never say anything is over. Things can change, turn around. I would not rule out that as a possibility,” Panagariya said. He, however, added: “ On the other hand, if it delays... it’s okay. It is a process. It started 10 years ago. If not in April, may be six months later it can be rolled out,” he said.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister M Venkaiah Naidu also doled out hope that the winter session of Parliament could be advanced to immediately after the Bihar polls to pass the key tax reform. The minister said he was disappointed at the “ negative politics” of the Congress and that the government couldn’t call the special session. “ Still there is scope. Once the Bihar elections are over, we can make one more effort. We have the winter session. It can be advanced. We can still meet the deadline,” Naidu said.

The October 1, 2016 deadline has been on the government radar ever since it became clear that the Congress will not allow the GST Constitution amendment to be passed in the monsoon session.

At least half the states need to ratify a Constitution amendment after it is passed by Parliament. A mid- 2016 deadline will the government at least until the Budget session,

that concludes in May, to ensure passage of other GST related Bills both by Parliament as well as state assemblies.