

## **GST Bill unlikely to be discussed before Dec 14**

The goods and services tax (GST) Constitution amendment Bill is likely to be listed for discussion in the Rajya Sabha not before December 14, which would leave the government with eight days of the winter session to get the key tax reform passed by the Upper House and subsequently the amended Bill by the Lok Sabha before the session ends on December 23.

Central ministers said they haven't lost hope about the GST Bill being passed in the ongoing session, despite no clear indications emerging from the Congress leadership, particularly from Congress President Sonia Gandhi and Vice-President Rahul Gandhi.

The Congress has conveyed to the government that while it had agreed that the Rajya Sabha's Business Advisory Committee allocate four hours for a discussion on the Bill, the Bill should only be listed in the day's business after the Upper House discusses other issues of urgent public importance, especially the drought situation in large parts of the country and the price rise. The government has postponed the discussion on the Real Estate Bill also for the next week.

Though the Congress staged a protest against Union minister VK Singh for his alleged "anti-Dalit" remarks, it took place outside the Rajya Sabha. Rahul Gandhi led the protest. Congress leader in the Lok Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge raised the issue in the Lower House. He complained that some of his statements on the issue have been deleted from the records of House proceedings.

Both the Houses functioned without any disruptions.

The Rajya Sabha passed the Negotiable Instruments Bill, 2015 without any debate. The Bill provides for filing of cheque bounce cases at the place where a cheque is presented for clearance and not the place of issue. The Lok Sabha had passed the Bill in the monsoon session. The amendments to the Bill will affect the over 1.8 million cheque bounce cases pending in various courts, minister of state for finance Jayant Sinha said.

The Rajya Sabha also decided to send the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2013, to a House Select Committee for consideration. This was after members objected to certain clauses of the Bill.

They said these overlapped with the provisions of the Lokpal Act.

## **CEA defends GST rates, quells fears on 'sin' tax**

Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian on Monday defended a three rate structure for GST, including a demerit or sin tax of 40 percent on products like tobacco and luxury cars, saying the recommendation is based on the current tax structure. The panel headed by Subramanian had on Friday recommended a three rate goods and services tax (GST) structure of 12- 17/ 18- 40 percent, the last category being for luxury cars. He said currently many of the luxury goods "are already taxed at very high rates" and the recommendations are "just a status quo." "I do not think there should be any concern on that," he said, adding that the panel has

recommended" a very narrow list of things" for the so- called sin tax. Stating that his committee was in favour of keeping such a list limited with clearly- defined items, he said the issue will be discussed in the GST Council.

*(Business Standard)*