

Taxman's missive makeover: Politeness is the new mantra for the Income Tax department

Politeness is the new mantra for the Income Tax department which has asked its officials to be more courteous while approaching taxpayers with queries regarding their financial transactions or returns.

The I-T department had begun the practise of writing such clarification-seeking letters to taxpayers few years back as part of its drive to collect additional revenue lying untapped, especially in cases of suspected non-disclosure or avoidance of tax by an individual or entity.

The decision to sound more polite, courteous and sincere in its communications to taxpayers was recently discussed and agreed upon by the top brass of the department during a two-day conference held in the national capital.

"The practise of writing letter to a taxpayer who has not reported his or her transaction to the I-T authorities is here to stay and we know its importance. It has been decided that letters from the taxman should be more polite and courteous in tone and tenor. In all cases, the department would take it initially that the taxpayer made an inadvertent mistake in not reporting the transaction under question," a senior I-T officer said.

The official letters which are sent by respective Assessing Officers (AOs) of I-T, henceforth, would use some adjectives like 'please', 'warm regards' and 'gentle reminder' even as the taxpayer is addressed by name with proper salutations.

"It is not that our communications with the taxpayer were not polite till now. But, there is always room for improvement and a more simplified and courteous behaviour on the taxman's part bodes well for an organisation that is not only a tax collector but also a facilitator," the officer said.

Hence, apart from the facts of the case like PAN card number, details of investments or purchases made, the letter would sound more as a reminder that the particular instance should be reported to the I-T as incumbent on a responsible citizen of the country.

The new norms would be applicable to letters sent under the non-filers, stop-filers and scrutiny assessment cases including others, the officer said.

It has also been decided to make I-T offices across the country more welcoming and customer friendly in nature by putting up some additional basic facilities like chairs, drinking water dispensers and help-desk kiosks.

These measures were discussed and endorsed during the July 21-22 annual meeting of I-T Directors General (DsG) and Chief Commissioners (CCs) held here.

The department, during last financial year, had sent more than 3 lakh letters to taxpayers in case of non-filer instances.

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