

GST: President Pranab Mukherjee praises Narendra Modi govt for 1 July rollout

Kolkata: Praising the central government's move to roll out the Goods and Services Tax (GST) from 1 July, President Pranab Mukherjee on Thursday said it will put an end to the burden of multiplicity of taxes that the citizens had to pay so far.



File image of Pranab Mukherjee. PTI

Thanking Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley for pushing through a single tax system for the country's 130 crore people, Mukherjee said so long consumers had to shell out 30 to 40 percent more on the cost of production of goods and services.

Mukherjee, who was addressing a Global Summit organised by The Institute of Cost Accountants of India here, recalled how he and other finance ministers in the past had made futile attempts to introduce the GST.

"From the days of Yashwant Sinha, who was finance minister in Vajpayee government, to my days in finance ministry before I assumed the office of president, we tried to have the GST. I introduced in 2011 a Constitutional Amendment Bill to facilitate the GST. But it could not go through," he said.

The president said he at times wondered why the process of change was slow, but then remembered that the ethos of India lay in its philosophy of unity in diversity.

The country has wide-ranging diversity, with a population of 1.3 billion, and people speaking around 200 languages, 1,800 dialects, practising seven major religions and belonging to three major ethnic groups.

"Yet we remain under one system, one flag and one Constitution. This is the ethos of India."

The president said while the country must change, the entire people should move forward as a whole and not in isolation.

"We have delayed to change with consent, to get people along with us, to accommodate various opinions in the democratic process," he said.

Mukherjee also praised the Modi government for advancing the budget session to the first day of February and presenting in Parliament the first combined budget of Independent India by including the Railways.

Besides, Mukherjee referred to the government floating the idea of changing the financial year to January-December instead of the present April-March timeline.