

3 Maharashtra GST officials involved in fake raid dismissed through newspaper ad

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RARE STEP

Mumbai: The state goods and service tax department led by senior bureaucrat Rajeesh Mittal on Tuesday dismissed three GST inspectors after it was confirmed they were involved in a fake raid and decamped with Rs 11 lakh from a leading trader.

It was for the first time in the history of the state administration that it issued an advertisement to announce dismissal of errant officials.

Mittal confirmed to **TOI** that after completing the entire administrative and legal procedure, the three were dismissed from service with immediate effect. "Police probe against the three in-

spectors will continue; on our side, we initiated a departmental probe against them, a show cause notice was issued to them and after hearing their contention, it was decided to dismiss them to protect the image of the department," said Mittal.

In the run-up to the dismissal of three GST inspectors—Hitesh Vasaikar, Machindra Kangane and Prakash Shegar—a probe had revealed that they had con-

ducted a fake raid on the premises of a leading trader, were in the process of extortion and left the premises with Rs 11 lakh cash, a senior state official said.

The LT Marg police had on September 17, 2021, arrested three GST inspectors and one private person for cheating and extortion. The three inspectors had inspected the premises of a businessman in Kalbadevi on June 14, 2021. They entered the office of businessman Lalchand Wanigota and identified themselves as GST inspectors. The owner was asked to place the entire cash in the office before them on the table. Accordingly, the office staff placed Rs 30 lakh before them. The officials then asked Wanigota for

relevant GST documents and subsequently took Rs 11 lakh from him, saying it will be deposited as GST.

Wanigota then approached the GST office in Mazgaon, but was told that there was no such raid and it appears that he had been cheated. Later, he approached the LT marg police station. Based on CCTV footage in the area, all the four were identified and arrested. After completion of the departmental probe, they were dismissed from service.

"Mittal has taken a bold step; it will go a long way in providing result-oriented administration and restore the confidence of the people in government departments," a senior bureaucrat said.