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Even NITI Aayog members are clueless about its role



Almost a year after the announcement of its formation, NITI (National Institution for Transforming India) Aayog has come out with an initiative to improve governance in states.



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The Aayog will advise states to reduce the number of ministries and departments, rationalise schemes, revamp laws, and improve social indicators.

The initiative is called Niyatam - NITI initiative to yield aspirational targets and actionable means.

It will begin with Kerala, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh.

The law restricts the size of a council of ministers to 15 per cent of the total number of members in Parliament or a state legislature.

For a state, there was no need for more than 20 departments, sources said.

The Aayog would collect information on all state-level plans, not just centrally-funded ones, a senior government source said.

It will then suggest how to rationalise these schemes.

This initiative will also start with Kerala, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh.

The Aayog also said it is in advanced stages of finalising the mid-term appraisal of the 12th Five-Year Plan (2012-17); so also are the reports of the task-force on

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Sources said after recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission, the Aayog would help states formulate their budget next year.

The Finance Commission has recommended 42 per cent devolution to the states from the divisible pool of central taxes during 2015-16 to 2019-20.

The recommendations have been implemented by the Centre.

The sources said many state-level schemes had small budgetary outlays, indicating these could be clubbed with larger schemes or done away with.

A sub-panel headed by Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan had recommended reducing centrally-sponsored schemes to 30 from 72.

The Aayog's advice will go beyond that to include state-level schemes as well. The panel has also recommended increasing the share of flexi-funds to 25 per cent from 10 per cent now.

The Aayog will also advise the states on repealing old laws, rationalising and consolidating the ones that remain, introducing legislation where there is a vacuum, and examining the degree of state intervention.

The only state where work has commenced is Rajasthan, where the repealing work is almost over. The repealing law will have to be passed by the legislative assembly, in September.

Besides, the Aayog will choose a set of indicators -education, health, roads, water, electricity, mobile penetration - to monitor a state's improvement over time.

There are 25 indicators for health, 13 for education, and five each for electricity and water. The Aayog is still trying to obtain data on roads and mobile phone use.

Sanjeeb Mukherjee

Source:

Business Standard

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