

NITI AAYOG SET TO HOST FIRST MEETING ON FEBRUARY 6

NEW DELHI: The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog, which has now replaced the Planning Commission, is getting a face-lift to host the first meeting of the think tank early next month. Niti Aayog's chairman and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to preside over the meeting on February 6.



The event will be precursor to a larger meeting two days later. The institution's governing council will meet on February 8, which will be attended by all chief ministers, lieutenant governors and 11 members of the Aayog, government officials said.

"Prime Minister is taking keen interest in functioning of the Aayog, which will help the government in taking several policy initiatives in near future. It will also give inputs for the forthcoming budget," one official said requesting anonymity. Official sources said deliberations at the Aayog next month would provide a road map for the country's social and economic development.

The Aayog plans to draw the basis of long-term social and economic policies after consulting stakeholders. These policies will not be imported from developed countries, but will reflect India's ground reality.

For example, the Aayog will frame an integrated energy policy soon, which will cover all related aspects including climate change issues. Before framing a long-term vision and action plan for the country's energy security, the Aayog will float a discussion paper, which will help it in wider consultation on the matter, sources said. Similarly, the Aayog will help in framing comprehensive policies related to health, education and agriculture.

The Cabinet had on January 1 replaced the Planning Commission with the NITI Aayog. The government decided to revamp the institution after 65 years of its existence to cope up with India's growing needs as one of the world's largest economies, sources said. "The revamped Aayog is no longer a parking lot like the Planning Commission under the erstwhile UPA government. It is a lean organisation," the official quoted earlier said.

ARVIND PANAGARIYA NAMED VICE-CHAIRMAN OF NITI AAYOG

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi appointed Indian-American economist Arvind Panagariya as the first vice chairman of the Niti Aayog--an institution that came into being on January 1 and replaced the 65-year old Planning Commission--along with six members and three special invitees

Economist Bibek Debroy and former Defence Research and Development Organisation chief VK Saraswat were appointed as full-time members by the Prime Minister, who will be the chairman of the body, according to a release issued on Monday. Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Arun Jaitley, Suresh Prabhu and Radha Mohan Singh will be ex-officio members while Nitin Gadkari, Smriti Irani and Thawar Chand Gehlot will be special invitees to the institution that aims to embark on a "Bharatiya approach to development" to transform India.

Born on September 30, 1952, Panagariya is a professor of economics at New York's Columbia University, a former chief economist at Asian Development Bank and has also worked with International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organisation and World Bank.

Mentored by trade economist Jagdish Bhagwati, Panagariya, 62, had emerged as front runner for the top post at the Niti Aayog because of his staunch support for free-market economics and backing for the policies and vision of the Modi government.

The economist had in the past spoken of Modi's success as chief minister of Gujarat. He recently applauded the Prime Minister, saying he had brought unprecedented vigour to his office. "He (Modi) restored confidence among the bureaucracy, improved inter-ministerial coordination and greatly speeded up environmental clearances. The inspector raj was curtailed by the introduction of self-certification, with inspections limited to a small sample of randomly selected factories. Red tape was cut for new businesses via the introduction of a single-window facility," Panagariya had said.

A Rajasthan University alumnus, Panagariya is said to be the brain behind recent labour reforms in that state, in line with the vision of the Modi government. He was vice chairman of the Rajasthan chief minister's economic advisory council. The Niti Aayog—NITI stands for National Institution for Transforming India—will serve as a think tank for the central as well as state governments. It will have a governing council comprising all chief ministers and lieutenant governors and will work towards fostering "co-operative federalism" for providing a "national agenda" to the Centre and states rather than take the top-down approach of the erstwhile Planning Commission.



ARINDAM

Organisation Branches

Prime Minister
Narendra Modi will
head NITI Aayog

Governing council to
comprise CMs, L-Gs

Regional councils to be
formed based on need

Arvind Panagariya
will be vice-chairman

He will be assisted by
full-time members Bibek
Debroy, VK Saraswat

Ex-officio members
include Union ministers
Rajnath Singh, Jaitley