



# Out With Planning Panel, In with NITI Aayog

By Express News Service

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Narendra Modi government ushered in 2015 by unveiling blueprint of “cooperative federalism” in reorienting the Planning Commission, into NITI Aayog, getting all chief ministers on board to draw on best practices of the states.

NITI Aayog, billed as a ‘think-tank’, will provide the Centre and the state with “strategic and technical advice” on policy. The ruling party’s own think-tank PPRC (Public Policy Research Centre), which seeks to give policy suggestions to its government, has come out with a study saying the BJP-ruled states performed much better on various parameters of governance than those ruled either by the Congress, Left front or the regional parties ruled states.

Released by Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month, the 50-page document—‘Politics of Performance, a comparative study of delivery of good governance by different political parties in India’—says BJP’s governance model was based on “Gandhian socialist values” combined with the consistent and “market-friendly economic policies”.

Arguing that 2014 has established electoral politics changed to politics of performance, the study says party ruled states have done much better in areas like ease of doing business, infrastructure, e-governance, agriculture, social indicators. The study lists number of schemes run by its state governments which should be replicated at national levels.

Though, the study paints a rosy picture of the BJP-ruled states, it also reports parameters like corruption perception index, manufacturing and financial inclusion on which the non-BJP state governments had performed better.

The study lists the size of cabinet, as a difference between the Congress and BJP governance models - UPA II had 78 ministers, BJP-government has 66 ministers. Deriding the GoMs (group of ministers) and EGoMs (empowered group of ministers) during the UPA regime, the study added that it meant that the PMO could not assert functional power in decision-making.

“The PMO (in BJP government) is empowered to actively participate in decision-making and implementing decisions as the PM is in charge of ‘all important policy issues’. This model brings about a concentration of de-centralised power, while increasing accountability at all levels of administration,” the study argues.

Quoting the economic freedom of the world report, PPRC study says India did better under NDA rule than under UPA. While quoting from Cato Institute Report which studied 20 Indian states from 2005-2013, the study says, “The average state wise score under BJP-rule was 0.41, under Regional Party-rule and Congress-rule, the average score under regional party-rule and the Congress was 0.3 and under the Left Front-rule it was 0.2625.”

According to the World Bank’s WGI, India’s average percentile rank was higher in control of corruption under NDA (43) than it was under UPA (40).

However, there were other states that performed better. Quoting the Transparency International’s “India Corruption Study” of 2008, PPRC report said, states ruled by regional parties were found to be the most corrupt with an average score of 2.67 followed by Congress-ruled states (2.4), BJP-ruled states (2.28) and Left Front-ruled states were the least corrupt with a score of 1.33.

Terming subsidies as populist measures, the PPRC report says the UPA government spent an average of 1.9 per cent of the GDP on doling out subsidies, while the NDA spent 1.5 per cent. Similarly, states run by regional parties gave maximum subsidies on power, while the BJP state governments gave the least.

In terms of infrastructure, the report says the UPA government increased electricity generation by 3334 MW per year, while the previous NDA regime added 1667 MW per year. However, in case of building national highways the NDA had a better score with 12 km per day, against UPA’s 4 km per day.

The BJP study quoting census and World Bank data patted itself on its back for the increase in number of households that used electricity as primary source of lighting rather any other sources like battery operated or fuel dependant.

The regional parties ruled states did better than BJP states in terms of manufacturing. Quoting Crisil study, the BJP report said the Left front-ruled state governments had higher financial inclusion index (delivery of financial services at affordable rates to low income segments of the society).

In terms of e-governance, the report lauds Modi government for conducting 50 lakh transactions per day against UPA’s 22 lakh per day.

Though, the e-governance transactions in the BJP ruled states were the highest, but the average number of services available for e-transactions were highest for the regional parties ruled states at 150.

BJP-ruled states also performed better on social indicators like maternal mortality and infant mortality rates; access to safe drinking water; education; agriculture, the PPRC study said, adding that even states under other parties have also shown improvement in these accounts.

The study hits at the Left front governments for higher rates of unemployment, while the regional parties performed better; rate have been unchanged for Congress, but lower for the saffron states.