

PM asks states to speed up clearance of GST Bills

Views sought on changing financial year to Jan-Dec, simultaneous polls



(From left) Prime Minister Narendra Modi with BJP President Amit Shah, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and party leaders in New Delhi on Sunday. Apart from the NITI Aayog Governing Council meet, Modi also met chief ministers of 13 BJP-ruled states, who gave presentations on work done by their governments, especially in implementation of social welfare schemes

PHOTO:PTI

SANJEEB MUKHERJEE & INDIVJAL DHASMANA
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Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday asked states to work with the Centre as "Team India" to introduce the goods and services tax (GST) in time. He also sought their views on changing the financial year to January-December (from April to March), as well as simultaneous general and Assembly polls.

Chairing the NITI Aayog's Governing Council meeting, which also comprises chief ministers, he sought their views on the three-year agenda prepared by the body. This lays emphasis on reforms in governance and taxes, with higher spending on health and education. Its 15-year vision document envisages tripling the country's real (adjusted for inflation) gross domestic product (GDP) and per capita income by 2031-32.

If GDP grows at this rate, every one should ideally have access to at least a

NITI AAYOG'S INDIA PROJECTIONS



*At 2015-16 prices
 Source: NITI Aayog

two-wheeler and an air conditioner in 15 years, the document says.

The PM was also in favour of putting in place the same start and closing dates for a Pay Commission and a Finance Commission. He also suggested states that they check institutions from encroaching on each other's domain.

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Modi said the legislative arrangements at the state level for GST should see no delay. Revenue Secretary Hasmukh Adhia, who made a presentation, added his urging. Parliament has cleared four GST Bills but states are yet to clear their respective ones. Modi termed the final consensus on GST as being in the spirit of cooperative federalism. He said the vision of a "New India" could be realised only through the combined effort and cooperation of all states. He gave credit to all CMs for finally coming together on the issue, keeping aside ideological and political differences.

He said there were suggestions to have the financial year from January to December. He wanted

states' reactions and also suggested they take initiative on the idea.

The PM said old ways of governance must change. He asked states to hasten on capital expenditure and infrastructure development, with the Union Budget for the current financial year already effected on allocation, thanks to the presentation of accounts having been pushed forward.

He also mentioned the ending of the distinction between Plan and non-Plan expenditure, based on the recommendation of the Rangarajan committee report of 2011. Several important items of expenditure were included as non-Plan and hence neglected, he said. The emphasis would now be on distinguishing between development and welfare expenditure on the one hand and administrative overheads on the other.

He said there had been a 40 per cent increase in overall fund allo-

cation to states from 2014-15 and 2016-17, while the proportion tied to central schemes had declined from 40 per cent earlier to 25 per cent of the enhanced total. The PM said the theme of regional imbalance was raised by a number of CMs. This had to be addressed on priority, both nationally and within states. He urged states, local governments, and non-government bodies to decide goals for 2022 and work in a mission mode to achieve these. The PM also told the Aayog to look at issues like how to reduce urea usage by 10 per cent by 2022. He called upon states to use the Government e-Marketplace initiative to reduce corruption and increase transparency in procurement. He said the use of technologies such as BHIM and Aadhaar would result in significant savings for states.

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