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Niti Aayog nod to panel for denotified, semi-nomadic, nomadic tribes

Denotified tribes are those that were labelled as criminals through a legislation by British government and were denotified post-independence.

Even as the Bill to accord constitutional status to the OBC commission is awaiting passage in Parliament, the NITI Aayog has backed a proposal by a panel constituted by the Ministry of Social justice and Empowerment to set up a permanent commission for Denotified (DNT), Semi Nomadic (SNT), and Nomadic Tribes (NT). In its letter to the ministry, the NITI Aayog has also offered to set up a working group to come up with policy suggestions on many issues of the communities found by the ministry panel to be the “most deprived”.

In May this year, the ministry had written to the NITI Aayog, asking for its stand on the report of the Bhiku Ramji Idate Commission on DNT, SNT, and NT communities. In response, the NITI Aayog has agreed with the recommendation to set up a permanent commission for the communities on the lines of similar commissions for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. In its report submitted to the social justice ministry in January 2018, the Idate Commission said such a permanent commission should have a prominent community leader as its chairperson, and a senior Union government bureaucrat, an anthropologist, and a sociologist as members.

The ministry had also written to the NITI Aayog, asking whether it would set up a Working Group for framing Vision 2030 for development of these communities as per the UN

Sustainable Development Goals. Stating that a working group of the NITI Aayog could be set up to look into various policy issues relating to the communities, the think tank's letter also supports lowering tuition fees and relaxing admission conditions for children from the communities, and easy allotment of land and housing for members of the community in which 90 per cent or more are landless.

The DNT, NT, SNT communities have been identified as the most marginalised by several commissions set up since Independence. An official from social justice ministry said, "The community has for long not been enumerated in the Census data. The Renke Commission report of 2008 had arrived at a rough estimate of their population being between 10-12 crore but none of its recommendations were implemented. Following the Idate Commission report, Social Justice Minister Thaawarchand Gehlot wrote to 22 ministries for their response to the panel report as it includes 20 proposed policy changes across all spheres."

Niti Aayog's response was part of the whole exercise, the official added. The Niti Aayog has also supported the panel's suggestion to form a dedicated National Finance Development Corporation for DNT, SNT and NTs.

Denotified tribes are those that were labelled as criminals through a legislation by British government and were denotified post-independence, the Nomadic tribes maintain constant geographical mobility while semi-nomads are those who are on the move but return to a fixed habitations once a year, mainly for occupational reasons.

While ministries of HRD, Finance, Culture, Rural Development, and Health have wrote back on recommendations concerning their ministries, the rest are yet to respond. Some of the major recommendations of the panel include granting Constitutional protection to these communities under a separate third schedule after Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, making them eligible for reservation, and extending the protective cover of Prevention of Atrocities Act to them.