Niti to Update AI Tech Quotient of Ministries

Ministries to learn about high-end tech for socio-economic growth on PM's instructions

Yogima Seth Sharma & Prachi Verma Dadhwal

New Delhi: In a concerted effort towards making India a leading nation in the field of artificial intelligence, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has asked Niti Aayog to familiarise all ministries with the high-end technology and explain how it can be leveraged to address the country's socio-economic problems.

Central ministries will be required to set up dedicated artificial intelligence cells and eventually they will all be integrated to help scale up the performance of all social indicators. Following this directive from the PM, the government's think-tank is likely to periodically review the progress made on AI across ministries.

The Aayog has already initiated pilot projects on adoption of AI across health, education and agriculture. By May end, it will formulate a national strategy/policy on AI, outlining the scope of research, adoption and commercialisation of the technology.

A dedicated taskforce will oversee the rollout of AI and its implementation. A senior government official told **ET** on condition of anonymity that the government is apprehensive of China's rising commitment towards AI. "China is way ahead of India in a lot of areas but the government does not want to miss the bus this time when it comes to research and adoption of this technology," the official said.

According to the official, the PM wants NITI Aayog to adopt a comprehensive strategy for commercialisation of AI so that the nation collectively benefits from the technology. "The Aayog has been asked to undertake all possible pilots happening elsewhere in the world, if it addresses India's problems, so government departments and states are willing to use AI in their day-to-day functioning," he added.

"Participation of all the ministries is important in solving socio-economic problems in the country using AI techniques. In order to do this, there is a need for all the ministries to set up their own individual AI divisions," said a member of the taskforce on AI.

The taskforce had recommended that the ministries should coordinate to accelerate development and commercialisation of AI-based products and technology through public-private partnership models and startups.