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NAC favours universal health coverage

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Council for allowing greater flexibility in spending on health to States

The Sonia Gandhi-led National Advisory Council (NAC) accepted its Working Group's recommendations on universal health coverage (UHC) on Friday: these will soon be communicated to the government.

As for the proposals made by its Working Group on reforms in governance, strengthening of institutional capacity and effective implementation of the flagship programmes, it approved the suggestions made on bridging the human resource deficit and on setting up a system for knowledge management.

NAC sources said the council will try to get these recommendations — after incorporating some suggestions made by members — initially implemented by the Union Ministries of Rural Development, Health, Water Resources.

However, the Working Group's suggestions on improving fund and information flows still need to be fine-tuned and discussions with the Union Ministries of Rural Development and Finance will be held before a final view is taken, the sources told *The Hindu*.

If there was, therefore, fair progress on the NAC's proposals on the UHC and governance reforms, the suggestions made by the Narendra Jadhav-led Working Group on Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) are not yet in a form which can be communicated to the government. The sources said members felt the proposal needed a fair amount of work to sharpen its suggestions.

At Friday's meeting, Mirai Chatterjee, presenting the UHC recommendations, stressed that public spending on health be increased, greater flexibility in spending on health be allowed to State governments, suggested that the Centre set up an Incentive Fund to encourage the States and create an overarching National Health Regulatory and Development Framework to ensure quality healthcare by both public and private providers and developing community-based monitoring and a grievance redressal system. The Working Group suggested a focus on urban health with decentralised

planning by the urban local bodies and promotion of community action for better outreach and health information and education. The Centre and the Planning Commission, the Working Group said, should encourage the States to examine various options and pilot the UHC models that are closely monitored and evaluated for effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

Net-based workflow

Mihir Shah presented draft recommendations on reforming fund and information flow; human resource deficit; and knowledge management. On fund flow he suggested a transparent 'Internet-based workflow system' mechanism to enable real-time visibility of movement of flagship programme funds to citizens. On human resources, he suggested that young professionals be trained for each flagship programme, local youth be recruited as community professionals and a responsive HR policy for professionals be instituted. He also advocated an adaptive system for knowledge management that values people's knowledge, professional domain knowledge and implementer knowledge.

Dr. Jadhav's recommendations focused on evolving a sensitive and appropriate policy framework for PVTGs to help protect their livelihoods, cultural identity and habitats while facilitating their access to development programmes and services while improving their quality of life.

Apart from Ms. Gandhi, those who attended the meeting were Dr. Jadhav, Dr Mihir Shah, Pramod Tandon, Farah Naqvi, Anu Aga, Naresh Saxena, Ms. Chatterjee, Deep Joshi and Virginius Xaxa.

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