

Govt puts reforms on fast track

Subsidies and ID number top economic task force's agenda

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BUOYED BY the recent vanquishing of the Opposition in three important states, the Prime Minister's Office is resolutely pursuing the reform agenda. Under the helmsmanship of the economic adviser to the Prime Minister, S. Narayan, 31 priority and thrust items will be deliberated upon on Thursday.

The high-powered group which includes the revenue, commerce, information technology, urban development, economic affairs and home among others is supposed to take a view on a wide variety of issues. Former finance secretary Narayan was appointed the pointman on economic issues to the Prime Minister a short while ago.

Two of the more important issues that will be taken up for confabulation and policy making pertain to subsidies and the expeditious creation of an underlying cross-linked identification number for all possi-

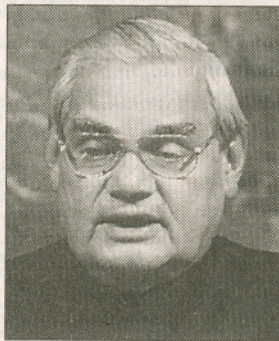
ble government intervention.

Several of these issues will then be distilled and put up for decision making by the cabinet committees on economic affairs and economic reforms. Among the more vital issues are going to be:

- Formulation of a national policy on subsidies which would identify target groups, goods and services, subsidy norms and an exit strategy for existing subsidies which are inconsistent with policy/ done under the aegis of finance and economic affairs ministries.

- Devise the content of the proposed machine-readable identity card scheme to enable linkages across sectors, databases to facilitate use of the number as the underlying cross-linked identification number for all possible government intervention. This will be on the lines of the social security number in the US and will be done under the aegis of IT and Home affairs.

- Revitalising north-



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eastern council to ensure territorial integrity of the states. Special developmental, administrative and security related programmes including fencing of remaining portion of Indo-Bangladesh border and construction of roads. To be done under the aegis of NE and home affairs.

- Civil service reforms to improve transparency, accountability, honesty, efficiency and sensitivity in public administration at all levels. Under the aegis of DOPT.

- Formulating appropri-

ate policy and creating enabling environment to increase India's share in world exports from the existing level of 0.6 per cent to 1 per cent. Long stated goal of the Commerce ministry.

- Develop the government's philosophy on regulation with necessary sectoral variants to be the underlying basis for regulatory arrangements across various sectors.

- Monitor and expedite finalisation and subsequent implementation of National Action Plan on e-governance.

- Comprehensive computerisation of the income tax system to benefit income taxpayers and improve tax administration.

- Finalisation of national policy on slums.

- Ensure finalisation of model municipal law and facilitate necessary follow up actions for adoption by states.

The aforementioned items are considered category 1 and will be monitored personally by the prime minister.