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India, ADB sign US\$300 million loan to improve primary health care in India

The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a US\$300 million loan to strengthen and improve access to comprehensive primary health care in urban areas of 13 states that will benefit over 256 million urban dwellers including 51 million from slum areas.

The programme supports the Government of India's key health initiatives - Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWC) and Pradhan Mantri Atmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana (PM-ASBY) - which has been renamed as Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) - by expanding availability and access to quality primary health care services particularly for vulnerable populations in urban areas.

Ayushman Bharat programme, launched in 2018, aims to improve access to comprehensive primary health care as a key strategy to achieve universal health coverage in India. With the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic that put additional pressure on the country's health system, the government launched PM-ASBY later renamed as PM-ABHIM in October 2021 to adopt a long-term approach to system strengthening to prepare for future pandemics and other emergencies.

The programme will be implemented in urban areas across 13 states: Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and West Bengal. Beside the pandemic response, interventions through the program promote increased utilization of urban HWCs with provision of comprehensive primary health care packages including noncommunicable diseases and community outreach services such as awareness raising activities on health care options, particularly for women. Delivery and health information systems for primary health care will be upgraded through digital tools, quality assurance mechanisms, and engagement and partnership with the private sector.

The programme is supported by a US\$2 million technical assistance grant from ADB's Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction to provide support for programme implementation and coordination, capacity building, innovation, knowledge sharing and application of scalable best practices across the healthcare system.

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Warm Regards,

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