

Govt assigns Asst Secys to Ayushman Bharat rollout

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The newly appointed Assistant Secretaries of the 2016 IAS batch have a task at hand. Each has been assigned to one aspirational district and tasked with rolling out the proposed health and wellness centres there.

These centres are one of the components of Ayushman Bharat Mission, the other component being the ambitious National Health Protection Scheme which is already under works.

As the government targets August 15 deadline for the announcement of the Mission by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Health

Ministry has been given tough targets to meet. Sources in the ministry said the target was to ensure that by August 15, two health and wellness centres start functioning in each of the 115 aspirational districts which have been outlined by the PM for focused development.

Accordingly, 176 Assistant Secretaries just posted with government ministries have been allocated work under the Ayushman Bharat project under PMO instructions.

The government allocation letter says, "Apart from the ministries assigned to them, all Assistant Secretaries may also be involved in work relating to the aspirational districts programme. Each Assistant Sec-

retary may be made particularly responsible for ensuring operationalisation of the wellness centres in the district and UT allotted to him or her under the Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission."

The Assistant Secretaries will also need to make presentations about their work at the end of the three-month posting with the Centre.

Meanwhile, Health Minister JP Nadda said, "Twenty-five states have joined the health protection scheme. Odisha is not joining for some reason. Identification of the real beneficiary is a major challenge. Aadhaar card is not must for a beneficiary and its absence will not lead to denial of the financial protection."