

See if vacant govt offices can house the poor: PM

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has asked the housing ministry to explore the possibility of utilising vacant government houses, unutilised or abandoned offices and land of public sector undertakings to provide a roof to the needy, top government sources said.

While chairing a review meeting on the infrastructure sector recently, Modi took stock of the progress of government's flagship housing schemes under PM Awas Yojna (PMAY), both in urban and rural areas. It has set the target of building two crore houses in villages and one



crore in urban areas by 2022.

Sources said the PM has asked the urban housing ministry to expedite how a huge chunk of abandoned PSU land in cities such as

Mumbai can be utilised for meeting the requirement of people who don't have roofs over their head. Modi has also directed the rural development ministry, which is in-charge of

the rural component of PMAY, to expedite the allotment of land to 3.94 lakh families, who are landless, by December. Such identified beneficiaries can get the financial assistance to build houses only when they have land.

Considering that approximately 1.1 crore houses in

urban areas are lying vacant, the urban housing ministry has been asked to finalise the model Tenant Act by October and ensure states amend and legislate their own act. This law aims at protecting the interest of both the tenants and house owners against harassment.

The PMO has also set an October deadline for finalisation of the National Urban Rental Policy, which targets to put a framework in place for people to get rental houses at affordable rate. This primarily aims at meeting the requirement of migrant workers and employees.

Both the Rental Housing Policy and the Model Tenancy Act conceived soon after the government came to power has been languishing.