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3 Years of Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission

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Why in News?

The **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)** recently marked its **third anniversary on 27th September**, with the goal of **transforming India's digital healthcare system by improving accessibility, efficiency, and transparency** in the sector.

What is Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)?

About:

- Launched in **2021**, ABDM aims to **issue digital health IDs** to all citizens, allowing seamless **access to medical records for hospitals, insurance companies**, and individuals.
- The **National Health Authority (NHA)**, under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, is responsible for implementing the mission.

Key Features:

Unique Health Identifier: The **ABHA ID**, a unique health identifier, enables **individuals to securely store and manage their health data**.

Healthcare Professionals Registry (HPR): A detailed **repository of healthcare professionals** from both **modern and traditional medical systems**, linking them to India's digital health network.

Health Facility Registries (HFR): A **comprehensive list of public and private healthcare facilities**, including hospitals, clinics, labs, and pharmacies across various systems of medicine.

Unified Health Interface (UHI): **Streamlines the delivery of health services**, enhancing accessibility and efficiency.

Data Privacy and Security: Aligned with the DPDP Act 2023, ABDM ensures that patient health information is securely stored and shared with confidentiality.

Transparency: It provides access to both public and private health services, ensuring pricing transparency and accountability.

Key Initiatives:

Scan and Share: A QR code-based OPD registration system where patients can share their demographic details by scanning a facility's QR code, reducing queues and data inaccuracies.

Digital Health Incentive Scheme (DHIS): Encourages digitization in healthcare through financial incentives to hospitals, diagnostic labs, and digital health solution providers.

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Microsites for Private Sector Adoption: These microsites focus on addressing adoption challenges for private sector healthcare providers, with 106 microsites operationalized, exceeding the original goal of 100.

End-to-End ABDM Adoption Pilot: This pilot project seeks to digitize both public and private healthcare facilities across the country, establishing benchmark model facilities.

New Portals: NHA has launched platforms like the National Medical Register (NMC) for the National Medical Commission and the National Dental Register (NDR) for the National Dental Council.

The **National Health Authority (NHA)** is India's apex body for implementing public health insurance/assurance schemes.

It was **established on 2nd January 2019** under the **Society Registration Act, 1860**.

Achievements of Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM):

ABHA ID: By **September 2024**, over **67 crore ABHA IDs** had been created, allowing citizens to securely access and share their health records.

- More than **42 crore health records have been linked to ABHA**, enhancing *access to medical histories and improving healthcare delivery*.

Integration: Over **236 private entities**, including labs, pharmacies, and digital health solution providers, have joined the ABDM ecosystem, supporting system interoperability.

- **Public institutions** such as **AIIMS Delhi and AIIMS Bhopal** have been *major contributors to the success of Scan and Share OPD registrations*.

Leading private healthcare chains have also played a crucial role in ABDM's success.

National Healthcare Providers Registry (NHPR): **NHPR** has **registered 3.3 lakh health facilities** and **4.7 lakh healthcare professionals**, creating a comprehensive repository of registered healthcare entities and professionals.

Major Concerns Related to Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM):

1 Limited Digital Infrastructure:

In rural and remote areas, unreliable internet connectivity and low digital literacy hinder effective engagement with the ABDM system.

2 Data Privacy and Security Issues:

The digitization of health records raises concerns about data privacy, cybersecurity, and consent management, challenging the protection of sensitive health data.

3 Cost and Resource Allocation:

High implementation costs and insufficient government funding for infrastructure, training, and capacity-building make it difficult for smaller healthcare facilities and practitioners to adopt ABDM.

4Regulatory and Legal Framework:

The evolving regulatory environment for digital health, including unclear data protection and patient consent guidelines, creates ambiguity in accountability regarding health data management.

Way Forward:

- **Strengthening Digital Infrastructure:** There is a need to invest in improving internet connectivity and digital literacy in rural and remote areas to ensure equitable access to ABDM. Collaboration with telecom providers can help establish strong digital networks.
- **Enhancing Data Privacy and Security:** Implementing comprehensive data protection laws and cybersecurity measures, alongside strict consent management frameworks, will help address privacy concerns and build public trust.
- **Increased Funding and Resource Allocation:** Adequate government funding is essential to support the rollout of ABDM, particularly for smaller healthcare providers. This includes infrastructure development, training, and capacity-building efforts.
- **Establishing a Clear Regulatory Framework:** A well-defined regulatory structure that addresses data protection, patient consent, and accountability is needed to foster a secure and trustworthy digital health ecosystem.