Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)

Mains: *GS II – Health*

Why in News?

Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission Links Over 104 Crore Health Records.

What is ABDM?

- **ABDM** – Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)
- **Launched in** – September 2021.
- **Vision and Objectives –** To establish an integrated digital health ecosystem that enables seamless exchange of health information while ensuring privacy, consent, and interoperability.
- Creating lifelong digital health records for every citizen.
- Enabling secure sharing of health records based on patient consent.
- Improving efficiency in healthcare delivery.
- Reducing administrative burden and paperwork.
- Supporting evidence-based policymaking through anonymised health data.
- Promoting innovation in healthcare through open digital infrastructure.

> *As India advances towards the goal of **Universal Health Coverage (UHC)** under **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3,** the need for a robust digital health infrastructure has become increasingly important.*

What are the key components of ABDM?

- **Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) –** ABHA is a *14-digit unique health identifier* that functions as a digital identity for healthcare.
- Similar to Aadhaar in concept, it allows citizens to securely link their health records across hospitals, laboratories, pharmacies, insurers, and government health programmes through consent-based access.
- **Healthcare Professionals Registry (HPR) –** The HPR is a national digital repository of verified healthcare professionals, including doctors, dentists, nurses, and AYUSH practitioners.
- **Health Facility Registry (HFR) –** The HFR serves as a comprehensive digital directory of public and private healthcare institutions such as hospitals, clinics, laboratories, imaging centres, and pharmacies.
- **Unified Health Interface (UHI) –** Inspired by the success of UPI in digital payments,

the Unified Health Interface provides an open network that enables patients and healthcare providers to interact irrespective of the applications they use.
- **Aarogya Setu 2.0 –** Originally developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, Aarogya Setu has evolved into a comprehensive citizen-facing digital health application.

How abdm is transforming healthcare delivery?

- **Digital Health Records –** Healthcare providers can generate digital health records linked to ABHA and access previous medical records after obtaining patient consent.
- This enables continuity of care and improves clinical decision-making.
- **Scan and Share Service –** The National Health Authority introduced the Scan and Share service to simplify outpatient registration.
- Patients simply scan a QR code to generate digital queue tokens.
- **eSushrut@Clinic –** To support smaller healthcare facilities, the Government introduced *eSushrut@Clinic,* a lightweight Hospital Management Information System developed by C-DAC.

C-DAC *(Centre for Development of Advanced Computing) is a premier R&D organization under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India.*

- **Digital Health Incentive Scheme (DHIS) –** To encourage adoption, the Government has introduced the Digital Health Incentive Scheme.
- **National Health Claims Exchange (NHCX) –** Health insurance processing in India has traditionally involved delays and paperwork.
- The National Health Claims Exchange acts as a digital platform connecting insurers, hospitals, beneficiaries, and regulators.
- **ABDM and Artificial Intelligence –** An important feature of ABDM is its ability to generate anonymised health datasets that support public health planning and AI innovation.
- In 2026, the Government launched:
    - **SAHI (Strategy for Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare for India) –** It provides ethical and governance frameworks for AI deployment in healthcare, ensuring transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness.
    - **BODH (Benchmarking Open Data Platform for Health AI) –** It enables secure federated learning where AI models are trained without exposing raw patient data, thereby preserving privacy while fostering innovation.
- These initiatives position India as a leader in responsible AI-driven healthcare.
- **Privacy and Data Protection –** ABDM follows a *Privacy-by-Design* architecture.
- Its major safeguards include, health records remain with the original healthcare provider, no central government repository stores all patient data, data sharing occurs only through patient consent.

What are the remaining challenges?

- **Infrastructure & Connectivity** – Widespread shortages of reliable broadband and

digital devices in remote and rural regions make real-time data entry and access difficult.
- **Digital Literacy** – A lack of technological familiarity among citizens requires heavy reliance on community health workers and intermediaries to bridge the gap.
- **Privacy & Security Concerns** – Digitizing sensitive longitudinal health records raises significant fears regarding data privacy, cybersecurity, and the management of patient consent.
- **State-Level Fragmentation** – Healthcare is a state subject in India, leading to friction as states attempt to integrate preexisting, parallel digital health schemes with the central ABDM platform.
- **Public Awareness** – There are widespread communication gaps and misunderstandings about the core benefits of the program, slowing down voluntary patient enrollment.

What are the key strategies to strengthen ABDM?

- **Increase Private Sector Participation** – Expand the "Microsite Project" models in urban and semi-urban areas to onboard private clinics, standalone labs, and local pharmacies.
- Accelerate the adoption of the Digital Health Incentive Scheme by reimbursing private practitioners for digitizing their clinical workflows.
- **Enhance Digital Health Literacy** – Address the digital divide by deploying frontline community health workers (Asha and Anganwadi workers) as local ABDM navigators to help citizens create and link their ABHA Accounts.
- Simplify consent communication using regional audio-visual cues and revocable permissions.
- **Strengthen Infrastructure & Ease of Use** – Mandate the deployment of ABDM-compliant Hospital Management Information Systems (HMIS) across secondary and tertiary healthcare facilities.
- Standardize and promote QR-code-based "Scan & Share" OPD registrations to minimize wait times and data inaccuracies.
- **Bolster Privacy and Trust** – Continuously upgrade the Health Information Exchange Consent Manager (HIE-CM) and strictly enforce the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act.
- Guarantee that all third-party personal health record (PHR) apps pass rigorous security audits before they go live in the ecosystem.
- **Integrate Emerging Tech** – Further integrate Artificial Intelligence and interoperable protocols, such as the Strategy for Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare for India (SAHI)—to streamline preventative care and clinical decision-making.

What lies ahead?

- The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission represents a transformative shift in India's healthcare landscape by establishing a secure, interoperable, and citizen-centric digital health ecosystem.
- Through innovations such as ABHA, UHI, NHCX, Aarogya Setu 2.0, and digital health records, ABDM is reducing transaction costs, improving efficiency, and making

healthcare more accessible and transparent.

- As India expands this digital public infrastructure while safeguarding privacy and inclusivity, ABDM has the potential to become a global model for digital health governance and significantly advance the country's journey towards Universal Health Coverage.

To take mains test click *here*

Reference

PIB| ABDM

MoHFW| ABDM

