

Govt fails to re-launch 'Jan Aushadhi' stores

Plan aims at selling drugs at an affordable cost to people

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NEW DELHI, DHNS: The government has missed the June 21 deadline of re-launching the "Jan Aushadhi" stores for selling cheap medicines in six states including Karnataka.

"When we made the commitment, we did not fully understand the nuances of re-launching the 'Jan Aushadhi' stores because of which the

slip-off happened. We need more time - may be another two-three months before we are ready," pharmaceutical secretary V K Subburaj told *Deccan Herald* here.

The plan is to sell 549 inexpensive non-branded drugs from these outlets. The department of pharmaceuticals, under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers, outlined the roll out plan including a specific launch date to the

Initially, the outlets would come up in hospitals run by state governments, charitable organisations and trusts. The centrally-sponsored scheme was launched in 2008. But it failed to pick up due to poor supply chain management.

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Chemicals and Fertilisers that submitted its report in April. "The scheme is being revised for providing medicines

at an affordable cost to the people. Currently, there are only 98 functional 'Jan Aushadhi' stores all over the country. We want to launch 3,000 such stores," said Ananth Kumar, Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertiliser here.

Initially, the outlets would come up in hospitals run by state governments, charitable organisations and trusts. "We have signed memoranda of understanding with seven states," Kumar said.

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ment. An analysis by the Public Health Foundation of India found five reasons for the scheme's failure.

They are: Over-dependence on state support; poor supply chain management; non-prescription of generic medicine; states having their own free drug schemes and lack of public awareness.

The executing agency - Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India - was too weak to run the scheme. "It had only four people. What can it do with four persons! We have now appointed a chief executive officer for the Bureau and asked him to

recruit skilled manpower for the job," Subburaj said.

The plan is to set up distribution centres at the state or district level to improve the supply and using IT-based information management system to ascertain availability of medicines in stores in real time. The supply chain will be patterned almost on the model of Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation.

As several states already distribute low-cost generic drugs in government hospitals, the pharmaceutical department is fine-tuning the scheme further to avoid duplication.

Jan Aushadhi