

Rural healthcare to get tech savvy in UP with digital assistants

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WITH computerisation of medical records of various villages failing, medical personnel in 15 villages will now carry PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants), as part of a World Bank-funded pilot project.

The PDAs are mobiles with the power of a computer, and a capacity to store a huge amount of digital information. With access to Internet and improved productivity, the PDAs are also known as 'smartphones'.

The PDAs are a part of the World Bank funded Benefi-

ciary Tracking System project, which will track some 6000 potential beneficiaries in Kesarganj block of Bahraich district. With the community health centres unable to maintain updated records of the medical condition of thousands of residents due to the paucity of electricity, the PDAs will be of great help.

"There is no concrete process to verify and track the mushrooming number of beneficiaries in villages," said Sandeep Saxena, IT Consultant, Uttar Pradesh State Health Systems Development Project (UPHSDP).

PDAs are a viable alterna-

tive for logging data while on the field, with their longer battery lives and lower maintenance requirements.

"Manual collection of data across villages in the state is difficult. Each ANM handles upto 17 registers," said Rajeev Kapoor, mission director of National Rural Health Mission (NRHM).

The Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs) and four health visitors, associated with the primary health centers, are responsible for collecting information about the beneficiaries.

With a population of around 1.65 lakh, Kesarganj is served by 39 ANMs and

four health visitors.

Once they are equipped with the digital assistants, new schemes launched by the government will now reach the needy.

Unlike laptops or other devices, the PDA is reasonably priced at Rs 15,000 to Rs 20,000. This will enable the authorities to equip more people with the device as well as multiply the number of records fed into the system.

The project is currently facing a delay. But if it proves to be a success, the project will be implemented in the rest of the state, added Saxena.