

PM-ABHIM: COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH INITIATIVE

The Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) is a landmark initiative by the Government of India aimed at strengthening the healthcare infrastructure across the country. With a total outlay of Rs. 64,180 Crores for the period 2021-22 to 2025-26, the mission seeks to build a robust health system that is capable of providing comprehensive care to citizens at all levels-primary, secondary, and tertiary-while also ensuring that India is well-prepared to handle future pandemics and health crises.

The PM-ABHIM consists of several critical components aimed at decentralizing healthcare services and improving accessibility in rural, urban, and underserved regions. The core features include construction of 17,788 Building-less Sub-Centres as Ayushman Bharat Health & Wellness Centres (AAM). One of the primary goals of PM-ABHIM is to establish 17,788 building-less sub-centres under the banner of Ayushman Bharat Health & Wellness Centres (AAM).

As part of strengthening the diagnostic infrastructure, the mission provisions the establishment of 730 District Integrated Public Health Labs across the country.

To improve critical care infrastructure, the PM-ABHIM also provisions the establishment of 602 Critical Care Hospital Blocks in districts with populations of more than 5 lakhs. These blocks will be equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, including Intensive Care Units (ICUs), ventilators, and other critical care equipment, to provide specialized care to patients in need. This initiative will significantly improve India's capacity to handle serious medical conditions and emergencies, especially in densely populated regions.

The implementation of the PM-ABHIM is carried out by the State Governments in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW). The MoHFW provides both technical and financial support to the States and Union Territories (UTs) to ensure effective implementation. Given that health and public health are State subjects under the Constitution of India, the State Health Departments are responsible for the operational aspects of the scheme, including awareness generation, awareness campaigns, and the effective delivery of healthcare services at the grassroots level.

The scheme follows the existing frameworks, institutions, and mechanisms of the National Health Mission (NHM), leveraging its infrastructure to streamline implementation. Public awareness campaigns, including Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities, are conducted periodically by the State health departments to inform the public about the benefits and services available under the PM-ABHIM.

PM-ABHIM represents a visionary step towards building a stronger, more resilient healthcare system in India. By focusing on the integration of health services, strengthening infrastructure at every level, and ensuring that health systems are equipped to handle future challenges, the mission is poised to bring about significant improvements in the healthcare delivery system. The scheme's focus on public health infrastructure, disease prevention, and universal access to healthcare will undoubtedly contribute to India's long-term health goals and its ability to face future public health emergencies with confidence.

A decade of service and empowerment for Divyangjan

■ NARENDRA MODI

Dear sisters and brothers,

Today, the 3rd of December, is a very important day. Today, we mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. This is a day to salute the courage, determination and achievements of persons with disabilities.

For India, this day is sacred. Respect for Divyangjan is deeply embedded in our cultural ethos. Our scriptures and ancient texts teach us to respect everyone and their innate potential.

A verse from the Ramayana states:

उत्साहो बलवानार्य, नास्त्युत्साहात्परं बलम्
सोत्साहस्यस्ति लोकेऽस्मिन्, न किञ्चिदपि दुर्लभम्

It means that for those with determination and zeal, nothing in the world is impossible. Today, our Divyangjan exemplify this spirit, becoming a source of strength and pride for the nation.

This year, the occasion is even more special as we celebrate 75 years of the Constitution. Our Constitution inspires us to work for equality and to reach the person at the last mile.

Inspired by the values enshrined in our Constitution, we have laid a strong foundation for the progress of Divyangjan over the past 10 years. In this period, numerous policies have been formulated, and several significant decisions have been taken for their welfare.



These decisions illustrate that our government is guided by the values of inclusion, sensitivity and commitment to all-round development. In this spirit, today serves as an occasion to reaffirm our dedication to the well-being of our Divyang brothers and sisters.

Since my early days in public life, I have always strived to make the lives of Divyangjan easier. After becoming Prime Minister, I have worked to transform this spirit of service into a national mission. One of our first actions in 2014 was to replace the term "Viklang" with "Divyang". This was not merely a change in terminology; it ensured their dignity and recognised their contributions. This decision sent a clear message that the government envisions an inclusive environment where physical challenges do not become barriers, and every individual is given the respect and opportunities they deserve to contribute to nation-building according to their talents. On various occasions, my Divyang brothers and sisters have blessed me for this decision. Their blessings have become my greatest strength in working towards their welfare.

Every year, numerous programs are organised across the country to mark Divyang Diwas. I still vividly remember that nine years ago, on this very day, we launched the Sugamya

Bharat Abhiyan. Over the years, the way this initiative has empowered Divyangjan fills me with immense satisfaction. Powered by the resolve of 140 crore Indians, this initiative has paved the way for a more inclusive India.

The policies of previous governments often left Divyangjan lagging in accessing opportunities for government jobs and higher education. We changed that scenario. Reservation policies were reformed and over the past 10 years, the expenditure on the welfare of Divyangjan has been tripled, reflecting our deep commitment to addressing their needs and unlocking new opportunities.

These decisions have opened new pathways of opportunity and progress for Divyangjan. Today, our Divyang companions are proudly contributing as dedicated partners in nation-building.



I have personally witnessed the immense potential of young Divyangjan in India. The honour our athletes have brought to the nation in the Paralympics reflects this incredible energy. To channel this energy into driving the nation's progress, we have connected our Divyang friends with skill development programs, aiding their potential to contribute meaningfully to India's growth.

These training programs are not merely government initiatives. They have boosted the confidence of our Divyangjan and empowered them with the spirit of self-reliance to seek employment and build their lives with dignity.

The core principle of our government is to ensure that the lives of my Divyang brothers and sisters are easier, more con-



venient, and dignified. It was with this spirit that we implemented the Persons with Disabilities Act. This historic legislation expanded the definition of disability from 7 to 21 categories. For the first time, acid attack survivors were also

included under its ambit. Today, this law is serving as a powerful tool for empowering Divyangjan to lead more self-reliant and empowered lives.

These laws have also transformed societal perceptions of Divyangjan. Today, our Divyang brothers and sisters are fully contributing to the development of a prosperous India.

Indian philosophy teaches us that every individual in society possesses unique talents; we only need to bring them to light. I have always believed in the remarkable abilities of my Divyang friends, and I say with immense pride that over the past decade, my faith in them has only deepened. It fills me with great joy to see how their achievements are reshaping our society's aspirations and giving it a new direction.



When our athletes, adorned with Paralympic medals, visit my home, my heart swells with pride. Every time I share the inspiring stories of my Divyang brothers and sisters during Mann Ki Baat, I am overwhelmed with joy. Whether it is education, sports, or startups, they are breaking barriers, reaching new heights, and actively contributing to the nation's development.

I firmly believe that when we celebrate 100 years of independence in 2047, our Divyangjan will stand as a source of inspiration for the entire world. Let us resolve today to work toward this goal.

Together, let us create a society where no dream is too big and no goal is out of reach. Only then can we truly build an inclusive and developed India. I see a crucial role for my Divyang brothers and sisters in achieving this vision.

Once again, I extend my best wishes to all Divyangjan on this special day.

(The writer is Prime Minister of India)

It's time to celebrate the new global narratives of cinema that IFFI could create, with India being at the centre of attention!



■ VANI TRIPATHI TIKOO

The 55th International Film Festival of India, popularly known as IFFI, just ended last week, on 28th November, 2024. India's own film festival had been exhaustive and exploratory this year, with many new, innovative things for the cine goers from all across the world. India's renowned film maker Shekhar Kapur was the brand new festival director and the mammoth steering committee included industry's reputed names Bobby Bedi, Khushboo Sundar, Prasoon Joshi and Jerome Pillard. I was also a member of the steering committee.

The 18th edition of the Film Bazaar this year, which is presently the largest film market of South Asia, had 350+ film projects featured in the various verticals of the Film Market. The Bazaar team worked tirelessly under the guidance of Jerome Pillard, ex-Market Head of 'Marche du Cannes', who has taken over as the Advisor of Film Bazaar. Lots of producers participated in Film Bazaar, which was about mentoring mid-career success level producers on how to pitch a film, budget it and make it a global success. This year's film bazaar was one of the largest yet. The bazaar was a buzz, bringing in about 2000 delegates! Countries including Australia, Bhutan, Belarus, Hong Kong, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, and the United Kingdom were represented, demonstrating the broad international appeal of the event. These nations, with their unique filmmaking cultures and approaches, underscored the importance of cross-border collaboration in a rapidly evolving industry. The participation of these diverse countries highlighted Film Bazaar's role as an international platform that not only facilitates dialogue but also promotes film industry exchanges that are key to the growth and sustainability of cinema worldwide. The discussions covered a wide range of topics, including film policy development, filming incentives, and the economic benefits of film production, ensuring that all participants, both international and local, could contribute to shaping

the future of global cinema.

Better Man, one of the biggest global releases of this year, was the opening film for the festival. The semi-biographical film about British pop singer Robbie Williams, directed by Australian film-maker Michael Gracey, will release in theatres on 26th December. The closing film was 'Dry Season' by Czech Director Bohdan Sláma, who is known for his innovative works in European films and his take on urban civilizational crises seen in societies. The Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement Award went to one of the iconic masters of cinema - Phillip Noyce. The Australian film director is recognized globally for films like Bone Collector, Dead Calm, Sliver, Rabbit-Proof Fence, among many of his other works. It was an honour for the festival organizers to have Phillip Noyce come personally to receive the Lifetime Achievement award!

The International Cinema section was very, very vibrant, having 12 films that competed for the coveted 'Golden Peacock'.

The Golden Peacock for Best Film in the 55th IFFI went to Lithuanian film 'Toxic' by director and screenwriter SaulėBluivaitė. Romanian Director Bogdan Muresanu bagged the Best Director award for 'The New Year that Never Came'. Clément Faveau took home the Best Actor (Male) award for his nuanced and captivating portrayal in the French film 'Holy Cow'. This French film's director Louise Courvoisier also received the Special Jury Award for her debut film. The Best Actress award was jointly given to Vesta Matulytė and Ieva Rupeikaitė for their roles in 'Toxic'. American Director Sarah Friedland was awarded the Best Debut Feature Film award for her poignant narrative 'Familiar Touch'.

Australia was the focus country in the festival this year. Within the Australian bouquet, there were producer round-tables at the Film Bazaar, where the co-production treaty was discussed. Australia is the latest signatory of the co-production treaty which found fruition in 2023. The Australia team, with support from Screen Australia, was present in full strength and led by two amazing ladies - Screen Australia's Chief Operating Officer Grainne Brunson and CEO Deirdre Brennan. The Australian delegates participat-

ed in the festival with full enthusiasm, and many of their producers came to pitch their projects.

This year there were 15 International Premieres, the largest since the start of IFFI! Many domestic premieres also happened in the 55th IFFI, which included films of popular stars, like Manoj Bajpayee's 'Despatch', Boman Irani's 'Mehta Boys' and many others.

The International Jury headed by India's renowned film maker Ashutosh Gowariker had big globally well-known film personalities as jury members. The Oscar-winning film editor Jill Bilcock, who has edited Baz Luhrmann films like Strictly Ballroom (1992), Romeo + Juliet (1996), and Moulin Rouge! (2002), and also Shekhar Kapur's films, was a jury member. Then there was Anthony Chen, a winner at Cannes Film Festival. Fran Borga, one of the new voices of independent cinema globally from Spain, and UK's Film Producer Elizabeth Karlsen, who is the winner of many BAFTA awards, were also amongst International Jury members.

An important vertical of the film festival was the Masterclasses addressed by prominent names from cinema world like Phillip Noyce himself, Australian Academy award winning cinematographer John Seale - who was the DoP for 'Mad Max: Fury Road', 'The English Patient', and animation director Chris Kirshbaum, who is the creator of Avengers. The legendary AR Rahman addressed a master class and also delivered the Lata Mangeshkar Memorial Lecture this year. 'Headhunting to Beat boxing' - a musical documentary produced by Rahman also made its Asia Premiere in the film festival. Vidhu Vinod Chopra spoke on his film '12th Fail' which was screened with audio descriptions and sign language interpretation. Anupam Kher spoke on 'Power of Failure' in a Masterclass. Who better than him to speak on it, as he has decades of cinema and theatre experience behind him?

There were amazing panel discussion sessions. I moderated a session on 'Women's Safety and Cinema' where eminent panelists Intiaz Ali, Suhassini Rani Ratnam, Bhumi Pednekar and Khushboo Sundar, which explored the realms of safe spaces for women who work in films, objectification of women in

films which happens everywhere in the world, and also how empowered roles for women in cinema is a new normal today. In another interesting session moderated by Boddy Bedi, renowned writer Farrukh Dhondy, documentary film -maker Lucy Walker, Spanish producer Anna Saura, internationally recognized actor Tannistha Chatterjee and I had come together to talk about 'stories that travel', that is, cinema without borders.

In the knowledge series, the team from the state of Madhya Pradesh came in full strength, with teams of 'Stree 2' represented by actor Abhishek Banerjee and director Amar Kaushik and youngsters from the Oscar nominated film 'Lapataa Ladies'. They spoke about how film policies of the state are encouraging young film makers to shoot their films in MP.

Prasar Bharati launched its OTT platform 'WAVES' in the opening ceremony of IFFI, with a promise to bring diverse Indian content to a global audience. This year's VFX & Tech Pavilion, supported by FICCI, was another focal point of the event, attracting major international industry players. The pavilion was a testament to the role of technology in transforming filmmaking, offering a glimpse into the future of cinematic experiences through groundbreaking innovations. Market leaders like Netflix, Sony and others presented their offerings and products in the tech pavilion.

The festival had special features for people with special needs, like sign language interpreter at opening and closing ceremonies, press conferences and sessions. Mainstream Films like '12th Fail' were screened for people with visual and hearing impairments.

It's time to celebrate the new global narratives that the festival could create, with India being at the centre of attention, with a Grand Prix at Cannes by Payal Kapadia and many accolades which India received, including the Oscar, in the bygone year.

Hope the festival will be more vibrant and exuberant next year, for India's cinephiles and film makers all across the world.

Viva La Cinema!

(The writer is Actor, Producer, Steering Committee Member for 55th International Film Festival of India)

From Gridlock to Growth: Key Findings from Oxford's Said Business School case study on PRAGATI platform, India's Digital Governance

A new case study by Oxford's Said Business School being released at IIM Bangalore today reveals how India's PRAGATI platform is transforming the way large infrastructure and social development projects are implemented. The research, conducted with support from the Gates Foundation, documents how this digital governance innovation has helped accelerate 340 projects worth \$205 billion.

PRAGATI for Infrastructure

Since its launch in 2015, PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation) has helped accelerate 340 projects worth \$205 billion. The platform has supported unprecedented infrastructure development, including 50,000 kilometers of new National Highways and a doubling of airports. For every rupee spent on infrastructure, studies show a 2.5 to 3.5-rupee gain in GDP.

Leadership from the Top

At PRAGATI's core is Prime Minister Modi's direct involvement through video conference meetings, typically held once a month, with state chief secretaries and central ministry officials. This hands-on leadership, combined with digital monitoring tools, has created a new culture of accountability. The Prime Minister's active engagement in reviewing specific projects helps break bureaucratic deadlocks and accelerate implementation.

Problem Monitoring and Resolution

PRAGATI has emerged as India's primary problem-solver for infrastructure bottlenecks. The platform's mere existence catalyzes resolution - officials often solve problems before they reach the Prime Minister's review. For projects that do come up for review, PRAGATI's integrated approach helps break long-standing deadlocks in areas such as land acquisition and environmental clearances.

A Digital Governance Ecosystem

PRAGATI operates within a broader ecosystem including PM Gati Shakti for infrastructure planning and PARIVESH for environmental clearances. This integration has dramatically reduced approval timelines - environmental clearances that once took 600 days can now be obtained in 70-75 days. The ecosystem uses sophisticated tools including drone monitoring and GIS-based mapping.

PRAGATI for the Social Sector

The platform's impact extends beyond infrastructure to accelerating social development programs. Under PRAGATI's oversight, rural households with tap water connections increased from 17% to 79% in five years. The platform has also helped reduce government response time to citizen grievances from 32 to 20 days and supported initiatives like the Swachh Bharat Mission.

Collaboration Across States

PRAGATI has created a neutral forum where central and state governments work together effectively regardless of political affiliations. The platform embodies "Team India" - transcending traditional bureaucratic and political barriers to foster cooperation across India's federal structure. Several states have now created their own versions of PRAGATI.

Digital Governance Lessons for Global Leaders

The study offers key lessons for other emerging economies: the importance of high-level leadership in driving digital transformation, the value of regular review mechanisms, and the power of integrated platforms in accelerating development. The research suggests PRAGATI's approach could help other countries in the Global South overcome similar infrastructure and governance challenges.