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UPA to woo urban poor with job plan and housing

Ahead of the poll season, the Centre has gone into overdrive to woo India's urban poor.

Two schemes — one to impart job-oriented skills to help urban poor get gainful employment and another to provide housing to slum dwellers — are likely to be approved by the cabinet on Tuesday. Both schemes are piloted by the Union housing and urban poverty alleviation ministry.

In 2009, NREGA which targeted the rural poor was perceived by the Congress to be a major vote plank for the UPA. Ahead of the 2014 polls, along with the ambitious food security bill that the Parliament passed on Monday, the UPA hopes to encash on the NULM and RAY as well.

While the National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM) proposes to give skill development training to four million poor youth living in cities during the 12th plan period (2012-17), under the Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) the Centre plans to build about two million houses for the slum dwellers.

RAY is, however, not a new scheme. It was launched in 2011 on a pilot basis. “We are taking it to the cabinet to get it approved for its nationwide launch. An allocation of R35,000 crore has been made for it during the 12th plan,” said an official.

According to a ministry report, 93 million urban residents in India are estimated to be slumdwellers. Under the RAY, while the Centre will provide between 50% and 70% of the project cost of respective states to redevelop existing slums and create affordable housing, the remaining cost will be borne by states, municipalities and the beneficiaries.

On the other hand, for the NULM an allocation of over R7,000 crore has been made during the 12th plan. Unlike the wage-based National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGA), NULM would help develop the job skill of the poor youth.

NULM proposes to provide placement to those who have been provided skill training. Besides, those opting to start their own enterprise, the government would facilitate financial assistance.

The funding for NULM will be shared between the Centre and states in the ratio of 75: 25.

It will have four components — building community institutions like self-help groups and their federations, employment through skills training and placement, capacity building and training and self-employment programme.