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**Slum-free India in 5 yrs a reality?** NEW DELHI: Upgradation of 1,000 slums, construction of 10 lakh houses, a biometric survey of slums and "equitable city" campaign during the 11th five-year Plan period are the ambitious targets of UPA's new affordable housing scheme, Rajiv Gandhi Awas Yojana. Its aim is "to make a slum-free India in five years".

With the President setting the agenda in her joint address to Parliament, the government is finalising the broad contours of the scheme for urban poor across 74 cities having a population of five lakh and above.

In a move to tackle the massive housing shortage of 2.6 crore, the scheme aims to provide central assistance of Rs 1.5 lakh for each family living in slums. The Centre can also bear 25% of the cost in developing infrastructure like roads, sewage and other facilities for affordable housing projects.

In a multi-pronged strategy, the Centre is likely to extend financial support to states "that are willing to assign property rights" to people living in slums.

The scheme also aims to dovetail the schemes for affordable housing through public-private partnership and an interest-subsidy offer.

Under the affordable housing scheme with an initial [budget](#) of Rs 5,000 crore, the housing ministry has a target of constructing 10 lakh houses.

According to an official, the scheme envisages giving Rs 50,000 as grant and the balance Rs 1 lakh as a bank loan at 4% [interest rate](#) through an interest subsidy scheme.

In its first year, the Centre is likely to adopt a state-specific strategy by pushing them to go in for slum upgradation or slum rehabilitation projects involving private players to avail massive central [funding](#) .

"The ministry aims to upgrade around 1,000 slums during the 11th Plan," said an official, adding that many real estate players have shown interest in slum redevelopment, which is seen as an area offering significant business potential at a time when the sector is badly hit by the economic slowdown.

In view of the confusion over the slum population, the government plans to undertake a fresh biometric survey of slums across the country to come out with the exact number of people living in such areas.

The Rajiv Gandhi Awas Yojana is likely to be launch on August 20, the birth anniversary of the late Prime Minister.

As part of the scheme, the Centre is also likely to ask the states to attract private builders and developers by giving incentives like favourable land-use conversion and permitting extra FAR and coverage area.

The state housing boards are expected to be partners to the government and construct and develop projects with funding from institutional sources.

To minimize the cost of construction, the scheme suggests coming out with plan layouts which mixes EWS/LIG/MIG with HIG houses and commercial set-ups and cross-subsidy through premium earned through the sale of HIG houses and commercial space.

To avail central funds, a project should have houses ranging from 300 sq ft to 1,200 sq ft plinth area built at affordable rates on land provided by state governments. A minimum of 25% houses of 300 sq ft will be compulsory for economically weaker sections (EWS) in each project to be allotted by the government.