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GOVT TO CONVERT 2K AGRI SOCIETIES INTO LOW-COST PHARMACIES

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NEW DELHI: The Centre has identified 2,000 primary agricultural credit societies (PACS) to serve as Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendras, which are low-cost pharmacies selling unbranded medicines, which officials said would bolster last-mile health care delivery.

“One thousand centres will start functioning by August and the next 1,000 by December this year,” an official said, declining to be named. The move follows a plan to diversify these farm-service points and an agreement overseen by home minister Amit Shah and health minister Mansukh Mandaviya. The cooperation ministry, also headed by Shah, is currently ramping up a drive to digitize PACS, which act as last-mile financial institutions for millions of farmers, which will enable them to diversify their business activities.

The Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana was launched by the chemicals and fertilizers ministry headed by Mandaviya in November 2008 to make quality generic medicines available at affordable prices. These dispensing facilities sell generic drugs that are 50-90% cheaper than branded drugs.

The Centre has rolled out changes to revamp the cooperative sector.
