NEW DELHI: India could roll out cashless and portable Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in one district of each state during the first year of the 12th Plan as a pilot project before introducing it nationwide by 2020.

The steering committee has asked the Union health ministry to prepare and provide an Essential Health Package (EHP) covering out-patient and in-patient healthcare as an entitlement to every member of a family. The enrolment of beneficiary families should be done using a mix of existing databases like ration and voter ID card-holders.

“Core components of EHP would be finalized by the Centre so that the total expected cost is within Rs 3,000 per family per year, with two-thirds going to ambulatory care and remaining to in-patient care,” said the committee.

The panel has said the services for EHP would be made available through a panel of public and private providers at the choice of each family with provision for full access to essential, generic medicines through a network of Jan Aushadhi stores.

UHC is expected to be financed by states and the Centre on 85:15 sharing basis.

Central assistance would be made available to states through additional help along the lines of Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY). Around 20% of NRHM funds would be used towards UHC, the committee says.

The High Level Expert Group (HLEG) on UHC set up by the Planning Commission, headed by Dr K Srinath Reddy, says it envisages that overtime, every citizen would be issued an IT-enabled National Health Entitlement Card (NHEC), ensuring cashless transactions, allow mobility across the country and contain personal health information.

“Such a card will also help the state to track patterns of disease burdens across the country and plan better for public provision of healthcare,” it says.

HLEG has proposed that each and every citizen should be entitled to essential primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare services that will be guaranteed by the Central government.

The range of essential healthcare services offered as a National Health Package will cover all common conditions and high-impact healthcare interventions for reducing mortality and disability.