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# Finance says no to Health request for \$10-million fund to meet G20 pledge

Promising 'unwavering support', India pledged seed fund for digital health

Written by [Harikishan Sharma](#) [Follow](#)

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While a Health Ministry spokesperson did not respond to queries on the issue, a source in the ministry, when asked about the status of the proposal, said that it is “under consideration at this point of time”. An email to the DEA did not elicit a response.

The Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH) was launched as a “key deliverable” of India’s G20 Presidency during the Health Ministers’ meeting in Gujarat on August 19 last year in the run-up to the September 9-10 summit in New Delhi. It became part of the New Delhi declaration and India promised to make a \$10-million contribution to it as a seed fund. The GIDH kicked off formally on February 20, 2024 with then Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya joining the virtual launch event. But India is yet to make its contribution of \$10 million.

**Reason:** the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) under the Ministry of Finance has not approved of the contribution which India had promised as part of its “unwavering support”.

The **GIDH is a World Health Organization (WHO)** -managed network of organisations, institutions and government technical agencies engaged in supporting national digital health transformation. In the Delhi Declaration, the G20 leaders welcomed the establishment of **the GIDH** “within a WHO-managed framework to build a comprehensive digital health ecosystem in compliance with respective data protection regulations”.

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It is learnt that the Health Ministry approached the DEA as early as December 16, 2022 — two weeks after India assumed the G-20 Presidency — for seeking the latter’s approval for contributing \$10 million to the GIDH. However, seven months later, on July 21, 2023, a DEA official wrote back to the Health Ministry: “The DEA does not support the proposal contributing USD 10 million to this initiative.”

While the DEA note did not specify any reason for not supporting the proposal, a source said that the DEA’s argument was that this funding should not create “committed liability”. Instead of India making financial contributions, it argued, it should look at other options like technical support to the GIDH. ✓

## EXPLAINED

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### What is GDIH

It’s a WHO-managed network of agencies and its objectives include: assess and prioritise needs for sustainable digital health transformation; match digital health resources and unfunded priorities.


It is learnt that the matter was subsequently even flagged by the Permanent Mission of India (PMI) to the UN. In November 2023, the PMI recommended to the government to make a contribution of a “substantial financial commitment” towards the establishment of the GIDH, sources said.

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In view of the fact that the entire Global South and the West, including African Union and the Latin American nations, look upon India as the “torchbearer” in digital health, the matter of contributing \$10 million to the GIDH was “reconsidered” in the Health Ministry with the approval of the Health Minister, said a source.



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The source highlighted that in contrast, Indonesia had contributed \$50 million as an initiator of the proposal to establish Presidency Prevention, Preparedness Response

(PPR) Financial Intermediary Fund (FIF) under its Presidency. The fund was launched and projected as an achievement under the Indonesian Presidency. India took over the G20 Presidency from Indonesia. Now, Brazil heads the G20 Presidency. Under Brazil's G20 Presidency, the GIDH is one of the health sector priorities, the sources said.

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