

## PMJAY first step towards universal health coverage: WHO deputy DG

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LIVERPOOL, OCTOBER 10

DESCRIBING THE recently launched Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) as a "tremendous" first step towards universal health coverage, World Health Organisation's (WHO) deputy director general Dr Soumya Swaminathan said on Wednesday that it is exactly the kind of commitment WHO wants from countries. However, she emphasised that a good governance mechanism is essential to ensure a fair system free of frauds.

"The government of India needs to be congratulated to have thought about it... India has the Human Resources, the capacity and the wherewithal within the country to do this...there is no need for India to reinvent the wheel; it can learn from other countries and other countries can learn from India. A good governance mechanism is essential to ensure that the system is fair and does not encourage fraudulent practices," Dr Swaminathan said. She was speaking on the sidelines of the fifth Global Symposium on Health Systems Research.

Earlier, during her keynote address in a plenary session, Dr Swaminathan spoke about WHO's triple billion targets — one billion more people benefiting from universal health coverage, one billion more people better protected from health emergencies and one billion more people enjoying better health and well-being. PMJAY launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 23, covers 500 million people. Dr Swaminathan said the preventive arm of Ayushman Bharat — 1,53,000 health and wellness centres — is "equally, if not more important" in the context of Universal Health Coverage.

*(The writer is in Liverpool at HSR2018 as a media fellow as part of the inaugural HSG fellowship)*