

WHO praises Modi's initiative

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Calling it a "great commitment", the director general of the World Health Organization (WHO) has praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Ayushman Bharat initiative which aims to provide insurance cover of ₹5 lakh per annum to 50 crore people.

The ambitious health-care scheme, touted as the world's largest, aims to benefit more than 10 crore poor families in the country. "Very impressed with India's initiative on Ayushman Bharat or universal Health Coverage! Thank you Prime Minister @narendramodi. Great commitment! Thank you Minister of Health, @JPNadda, for meeting me today!" director general Tedros Ghebreyesus tweeted Thursday night.

Thanking the WHO DG, Union health minister J.P. Nadda said it was Mr Modi's vision to make healthcare "accessible and affordable" to all. In response, the minister tweeted: "Thank you for

Ayushman Bharat initiative aims to provide insurance cover of ₹5 lakh per annum to 50 crore people.

your kind words @DrTedros & a very fruitful meeting. Our PM envisions to make healthcare accessible and affordable for all. Under #PMJAY, an insurance cover of ₹5 lakh will be extended to 50 Cr people — equal the size of the population of America, Canada, Mexico".

It was during his Independence Day speech from the ramparts of the Red Fort this year, Mr Modi had said his government would launch the scheme on September 25, the birth anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay.

The scheme aims to target the poor, deprived rural families and it identified an occupational category of urban workers' families, 8.03 crore in rural and 2.33 crore in urban areas, as per the latest Socio Economic Caste Census data.