

Lancet backs Modicare, takes potshot at Rahul

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mega health scheme—Ayushman Bharat—has got an endorsement from The Lancet, the world's most prestigious medical journal.

In an article accompanying five India-specific disease burden studies released on Wednesday, the journal's editor-in-chief Richard Horton has said Modi is the first PM to prioritise universal health coverage as part of his political reform.

Horton criticised Congress president Rahul Gandhi in the same article. "Rahul Gandhi, despite his promises to help lower castes, tribal communities, and the rural poor, has yet to match Modicare," he wrote.

Under Ayushman Bharat, the centre is running two flagship schemes: the creation of 1.5 lakh health

and wellness centres across the country to provide primary care facilities and the National Health Protection Mission (which has now been renamed Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna)—a system of health insurance that intends to cover 50 crore people. "Together, these two programmes should improve access to quality health services and reduce out-of-pocket health expenditures," Horton says.

Citing Rahul Gandhi's mention of a "full-blown crisis in India" during a visit to London School of Economics last month, Horton writes, "He was talking about a 'job crisis'. But there is also a health crisis, as five papers published across three Lancet specialty journals — Lancet Oncology, Global Health and Public Health — set out this week. Now is the right moment to be debating the future of health of the world's largest democracy."