

Experts urge more funds to tackle tuberculosis crisis

Only 63% of the patients infected with TB are currently under treatment.

Stating that tuberculosis (TB) has become a national crisis in India, the Health Ministry assured the TB community that eliminating the disease by 2025 had the 'highest level of commitment from the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's office.'

Senior Health Ministry official Sunil Khaparde, who heads the TB programme voiced the assurance at the opening day of the 5th Global Forum on TB Vaccines in New Delhi.

Nearly 4.2 lakh Indians die of TB every year. Out of the 10 million cases globally, India shoulders the maximum burden with 2.8 million cases. According to Health Ministry data, only 63% of the patients infected with the airborne disease are currently under treatment. Further, 1,47,000 patients are resistant to first and second line TB medicines. At the current rate of progress, global targets to eliminate TB by 2030 will be missed by a 150 years.

Against this backdrop, Dr Soumya Swaminathan, deputy director general of the World Health Organisation (WHO) said that globally, governments need to invest more in TB research and development to meet the global targets.

WHO representative to India Hendrick Bekedam added that TB vaccine was a global public health good, which meant governments need to invest if they want to own it later.

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