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**Ten Leprosy Women leaders from six States to be felicitated by
Vice-President of India**

Mumbai, Monday: Ten leprosy women leaders from six states working in self-settled colonies of leprosy affected persons (LAPs) will be felicitated by Shri M. Hamid Ansari, Vice-President of India who will be the Chief Guest in a function organised by the International Leprosy Union-Health Alliance (ILU-HA) at Pune. While Shri K. Sankarnarayanan, Governor will be the Special Guest, Shri Rajendra Gavit, Minister of State for Tribal Development, Smt. Vaishali Bankar, Pune - Mayor and Justice (Retd) Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari, ILU-HA Patron will be the Guests of Honour. The function will be held on Wednesday, 10th April at 4.00 pm at YASHADA Hall in Raj Bhavan Complex, Pune. This information was given by Shri Ram Naik, President, ILU-HA & former Petroleum Minister in a press statement issued today in Mumbai.

While giving further details about the function, Shri Ram Naik said, "LAPs are below the last ladder of the society, i.e. people below the poverty line (BPL). They are not only ignored but are also outcast. Life of those staying in self-settled colonies of LAPs is miserable and women among them are the worst sufferers. In such circumstances, we would be felicitating 10 women leaders from 6 states who have worked for the empowerment of these LAPs while staying in such colonies. Their names are: (1)Smt. Maya Ranaware, Kolhapur (Maharashtra), (2)Smt. Vatsala Sangeet, Dapodi (Maharashtra), (3)Smt. Sita Devi, Patna (Bihar), (4)Smt. Bhimbai Marathe, Bijapur (Karnataka), (5)Smt. Basamma Devnoor, Gulbarga (Karnataka), (6)Smt. Nevis Marie, Madurai (Tamilnadu), (7)Smt. Sarita Martha, Cuttack (Odisha), (8)Smt. Hira Bhandari, Indore (Madhya Pradesh), (9)Smt. Parwatibai Preamsingh, Ratlam (Madhya Pradesh) and (10)Smt. Kamalabai Chandras, Alwasa (Madhya Pradesh)."

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"The various activities through which these women leaders empowered the LAPs include: organising self-help groups for getting employment, sheep and buffalo breeding, agriculture, providing grinding mills, preparation of masala, tailoring training and providing sewing machines, child education, providing medical aid, construction of houses through government schemes and providing civic amenities like water, drainage, pathways, electricity, ration cards, conducting campaigns against blind faith and violation of human rights, etc. This felicitation is to salute these women leaders for their active role in leprosy eradication and empowerment of LAPs", added Shri Ram Naik.

Giving details of the efforts made so far on the government front by ILU-HA and other N.G.O.s, Shri Ram Naik stated," We submitted a petition on behalf of all LAPs in the country to the Rajya Sabha on 5th December 2007. After visiting some self-settled colonies and discussions with various ministries of the Government of India and also the State Governments, the Committee on Petitions tabled their Report containing various recommendations on 24th October 2008 and subsequent Action Taken Report (ATR) on 22nd November 2010. We also discussed the issues for follow up action with the then President of India, Smt. Pratibha Patil twice on 14th September 2011 and 15th June 2012. On the Maharashtra State Government side, we have discussed these issues on several occasions with the Chief Minister and also the Deputy Chief Minister. Though more than five years have elapsed from the date of submission of the Petition, no positive decisions have been taken so far", ended Shri Naik his statement on a sad note.

(Office Secretary)