

For favour of publicity

13th December 2010

A Statement circulated by Shri Ram Naik, BJP Leader & former Petroleum Minister in a Press Conference held in Pune on 13th December 2010

Leprosy yet to be eradicated, formulate a national policy : Ram Naik

Pune, Monday : In spite of the Government claim that the country has achieved the goal of eradication level of leprosy, more than 1.34 lakh new cases have been detected during the last one and half years. Out of the total population of leprosy affected persons (LAPs) in the world, India has 54 percent LAPs. It is therefore necessary to complete the survey of LAPs by July 2011 and also to finalise a national policy for empowerment of LAPs, recommended Committee on Petitions of Rajya Sabha in their recent report submitted to the Rajya Sabha. Shri Ram Naik, BJP Leader & former Petroleum Minister who had filed the original petition demanded that the recommendations in the report must be implemented with priority. He was addressing media persons today in Pune as he had come here specially to address valedictory session of two days workshop of nine countries organised by the International Leprosy Union, Pune.

Inviting the attention of the Parliament towards the problems of the LAPs and to suggest their integration and empowerment Shri Ram Naik along with Dr. Sharad Gokhale of International Leprosy Union, Pune, Dr. Gopal, President, National Forum of LAPs, Chennai, Shri Uday Thakar, Treasurer, Kushth Rog Nivaran Samiti, Panvel, Shri Shantaram Bhoir, President Maharashtra Kushthpidit Sanghata and Shri Bhimrao Madhale had submitted the Petition to the Rajya Sabha on 5th December 2007 through late Shri Vedprakash Goyal, MP. After studying the problem and visiting several leprosy affected colonies Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, the then President of Committee on Petitions submitted their report to the Rajya Sabha on 24th October 2008. After receiving Action Taken Replies (ATR) and discussing the issues with several Ministries, the Committee on Petitions chaired by Shri Bhagat Singh Koshyari submitted their report to the Rajya Sabha recently on 22nd November. Shri Naik shared the details of the recommendations with the media persons.

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The Committee on Petitions in their original report had recommended that the Government should conduct the survey of LAPs and formulate a policy for integration and empowerment of LAPs. Though it has been claimed that the country has achieved the goal of eradication level of leprosy, the shocking revelation has come out that far from eradicating the leprosy, the number of new LAPs has reached the mind wobbling figure of 1,34,184 in the short period of one and half years from April 2008 to September 2009. The survey is yet to be completed. The Committee have therefore recommended that the survey be completed by July 2011 and a national policy for integration and empowerment of LAPs should be formulated.

Elaborating on the important recommendations in the Report, Shri Ram Naik said, "Under the Persons with Disabilities Act 1995, those having 40% disability get certain facilities. The Petitions Committee in their original report had recommended that taking into account the problems faced by LAPs due to stigma of leprosy, the condition of 40% disability may be removed and all LAPs should get the benefit of the Act. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment did not agree with the recommendations in their ATR. However the Committee felt that the fact remains that a person having deformities less than 40 % caused by leprosy is mistreated in society due to wrong notion of people about the disease. They have therefore reiterated their earlier recommendation with a view to ensure economic empowerment LAPs."

"The Committee has also recommended that LAPs should be given sustenance allowance of Rs. 2,000 per person per month so that they can lead a dignified life. The Centre and States should share the expenditure on humanitarian grounds. In respect of 612 self -settled LAP colonies, the Committee have recommended that all those staying in such secluded colonies be given public distribution items under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana at concessional rates. Moreover the Committee have also recommended that if

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a LAP is otherwise physically capable, he should not be deprived of a driving licence only because he is a LAP," added Shri Ram Naik.

Giving details of further recommendations in the Report, Shri Ram Naik said, "The Committee have recommended that the Primary Health Centers (PHL) should arrange free medicines to LAPs by visiting their self - settled colonies. They have also recommended that LAPs should be provided free houses under the Indira Aawas Yojana and free electricity under the Rajiv Kutir Jyoti Yojana. About education, the Committee have recommended that children of LAPs should have separate schools on the lines of residential schools for blind & children belonging to Schedule Tribes. They should be given free higher/vocational education so as to make them self-dependent".

"The Committee have also recommended amendments to various Acts which are discriminatory and out-dated. In particular, they had suggested amendments in Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act, 1939, Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872, Indian Divorce Act, 1869, and Hindu Adoption & Maintenance At, 1956. In spite of reminders, the ministry of Law & Justice did not respond to the suggestions of the Committee. They have therefore taken a serious view and recommended amendments to personal laws may be effected within six months so as to remove discriminatory provisions against LAPs. The Maharashtra State Government have been also requested to make suitable amendments in Mumbai Municipal Corporation Act, 1888 and Mumbai Prevention of Begging Act, 1959," added Shri Naik.

Shri Ram Naik has demanded early action on the recommendations of Report by the Government of India and the Maharashtra State Government, including formulation of a national policy for integration and empowerment of LAPs.

(Office Secretary)

N. B. For those who are interested in details, the Rajya Sabha Report is available on website : www.ramnaik.com in Press Release section.