



INTERNATIONAL LEPROSY UNION-HEALTH ALLIANCE

C/o. CASP BHAVAN : Survey No. 132/2, Plot No. 3, Pashan Baner Link Road,
Pune 411 021. INDIA Tel. : 32317932
E-mail : ilupune@gmail.com Website : www.ilu.org.in

Hon. Justice **Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari**, (Retd.)
Patron

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President

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Hon. President

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For Favour of Publicity

21st December, 2012

Law Secretary assures to revise Acts adversely affecting

Leprosy Affected Persons (LAPs)

Mumbai, Friday: Concrete measures will be taken to amend 16 Acts which are unjust, out-dated and create stigma to Leprosy Affected Persons (LAPs). The assurance was given by Shri P.K. Malhotra, Law Secretary of Government of India on Thursday to the delegation of International Leprosy Union (ILU). The delegation comprised of ILU's President and former Petroleum Minister Shri Ram Naik, Maharashtra Government's former Principal Secretary, Law & Judiciary Shri V.K. Deshpande, ILU's Vice-President and Maharashtra's former Directory General of Prisons Shri Ram Belavadi, Major Dr. Pradeep Gaikwad ILU's Ex and State's former Jt. Director of Health Services, Leprosy and TB and Shri Sanket Chiplunkar, Project Officer, ILU.

While elaborating the issue Shri Ram Naik said, " A national forum comprising ILU and other nationwide organizations dedicated to LAPs had submitted a petition on 4th December, 2007 to the Rajya Sabha for empowerment of LAPs. The Petitions Committee went around different states and presented their Report to the Rajya Sabha on 24th October, 2008. Thereafter various ministries submitted their reports and along with the recommendations, Action Taken Report (ATR) was also presented to the Rajya Sabha on 22nd November, 2010. The forum consistently followed up the matter for implementation of recommendations of the ATR. It wrote four letters to the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. We even sought intervention of the President of India and therefore met Smt. Pratibha Patil twice viz. on 14th September, 2011 and 15th June, 2012. In spite of the assurance given by Hon'ble President no action is so far initiated by the Government of India."

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Shri Naik further informed that 16 Acts need amendments as they are now unjust towards LAPs. In olden days leprosy was incurable and also considered contagious. Hence, these Acts still allow person to divorce spouse even on the suspected leprosy, prohibits LAPs to travel by railway and ST buses, breeches on their fundamental rights by detaining them indefinitely in beggars home, etc. However, now new scientific discoveries have proved that leprosy is curable, not hereditary and most importantly once the patient is brought under MDT, he no longer remains contagious. This changed scenario demands change in 16 various Acts. Therefore, ILU delegates called on Shri Ashwini Kumar, Law Minister at New Delhi on 10th December, 2012. Shri P.K. Malhotra, Law Secretary was also present at that time. Law Minister had assured to look into the matter. Accordingly, Shri Malhotra visited Mumbai and had detailed discussion with ILU delegates on Thursday. He assured to take immediate steps to amend these 16 Acts.

Shri Ram Naik expressed hope that time bound action plan will be implemented to give justice to lepers at the end.

(Office Secretary)