

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE**

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 807
TO BE ANSWERED ON 26.07.2024**

“DISCRIMINATION OF LEPERS”

807: SHRI C M RAMESH:

Will the Minister of **HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE** be pleased to state :

- (a) whether there are reports of discrimination of persons with leprosy under the garb of certain discrimination provisions of the The Lepers Act of 1898 in States of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Kerala Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether the Law Commission in its 256th Report in 2015 recommended repeal of the Lepers Act and similar other laws and if so, the details thereof and the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard;
- (c) whether the Government has felt a need to amend The Lepers Act, 1890 to contain discrimination of Lepers in the Country;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) whether the Government considers discussing with States on this subject matter and take suitable measures in this regard and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
(SHRI PRATAPRAO JADHAV)**

(a) to (e) No discrimination of persons with leprosy under the garb of certain discrimination provisions of The Lepers Act of 1898 reported in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

The Law Commission of India in its 256th Report advised the repealing of The Lepers Act of 1898 and amending or repealing other discriminatory laws against individuals affected by leprosy. The details of recommendations of 256th Report of The Law Commission of India is available at <https://cdnbbsr.s3waas.gov.in/s3ca0daec69b5adc880fb464895726dbdf/uploads/2022/08/2022081662.pdf>.

The Indian government acknowledged the need to address the discriminatory nature of the Lepers Act of 1898 and as per recommendations of Law Commission's, The Lepers Act, 1898 was repealed in 2016. The Government of India has advised States to repeal all the State laws discriminating against the leprosy patients.

To educate people about leprosy, and its treatment, and to reduce social stigma, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, along with various State Health Departments and NGOs have been conducting various public awareness campaigns such as:-

- **Leprosy Case Detection Campaign (LCDC):** House-to-House surveys in villages and urban areas in identified high burden districts Focused Leprosy Campaign (FLC).
- Provision of leprosy services through community participation.
- **ASHA-based surveillance for leprosy suspects (ABSULS)** in districts not covered under LCDC to be integrated in the routine activities and continued. Epidemiological investigation of occurrence of G2D in patients detected with visible deformities investigation.
- **Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaign (SLAC):** Special Annual Mass Awareness campaigns named Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaigns (SLAC) were launched on 30th January, 2017 to reduce stigma and discrimination against persons suffering from leprosy.
- **Rehabilitation Programs:** Programs were introduced to support the social and economic rehabilitation of people affected by leprosy. This included vocational training, financial assistance, and efforts to ensure their inclusion in society. Leprosy patients are given dressing material, supportive medicines, and microcellular rubber (MCR) footwear to help avoid and manage impairment. The patients are also empowered with trainings in self-care procedure for preventing aggravating disability to the insensitive hands/feet's. The emphasis is also on the correction of permanent handicap by reconstructive surgery (RCS). To improve RCS services, the Government of India designated 112 institutions to conduct RCS based on State Government suggestions. 60 of these are government institutions, while 52 are non-governmental organisations. The patients concerned are provided RCS facility not only free of cost, but are also paid welfare allowances.
- **Healthcare Initiatives:** The National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP) continues to focus on early detection, prompt treatment, and rehabilitation of persons affected by leprosy. The program aims to provide free treatment and support services to all affected individuals.
