

**Remove references to leprosy as disability from law books: SC**

The SC said leprosy is curable and patients should not be victims of social stigma.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Centre and all States to remove references to leprosy as a disability from statute books, saying leprosy is curable and patients should not be victims of social stigma.

Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra, heading a three-judge Bench, said references to leprosy as a disability in the written laws amounted to “statutory stigma.”

“Remove all the observations on leprosy from the laws, only then will there be parity,” the Chief Justice said.

Additional Solicitor General Pinky Anand, for the Centre, said the government was taking steps to delete the erring provisions from the enactments.

The court is hearing a PIL petition filed by Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy to repeal 119 Central and State laws in practice since the 1950s which discriminate against leprosy patients, stigmatise and isolate them despite the fact that modern medicine completely cures the disease.

Age-old beliefs about corrode minds and bring upon untold sufferings into the lives of leprosy patients, the Supreme Court observed.

The petition has urged the court to intervene and pave the way for recognising the fundamental right to equality, dignity and equal opportunity of persons affected by leprosy.

The court posted the case to July 5.

**END**

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