

## SC seeks plan to eradicate leprosy

The court said it would examine the action plan and pass judgment.

The Supreme Court on Thursday directed the Centre to file a comprehensive action plan to ensure eradication of leprosy, saying the 'curable' disease cannot be allowed to affect people.

A Bench comprising Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and D.Y. Chandrachud said it would examine the action plan and pass judgement on the issue. Additional Solicitor General Pinky Anand, appearing for the Centre, said the government was not taking an 'adversarial' stand on the PIL petition that had raised the important issue.

The Bench, while reserving its verdict, asked the parties to file written submissions by July 9 on a PIL plea filed by advocate Pankaj Sinha alleging that the government was not taking adequate steps to eradicate the disease.

The Bench was informed that Delhi, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh were leprosy-endemic States and efforts were needed to eradicate the disease from these States.

The court had earlier rapped the authorities for their "apathy" towards eradicating leprosy from the country, saying despite it being 'curable', the disease still remained a stigma.

Mr. Sinha, in his plea, has alleged that leprosy affects over 1.25 lakh people annually in the country. "Despite an effective cure, namely Multi-Drug Therapy, which has been available since 1981, that can completely cure 99% of leprosy bacteria, due to apathy of the Government of India and the State governments, people are still suffering from the said disease, which is treated as a social stigma," the petition said. It sought a direction to the governments that the drugs be made available at primary health centres.

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