

Produce leprosy drugs locally: PM Hasina to pharmaceutical companies

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Online Desk: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Sunday asked the local pharmaceutical companies to start manufacturing drugs for leprosy patients.

“I would like to request them (our pharmaceutical companies) to produce drugs for leprosy patients so that we can provide them medicines at low or free of cost,” she said.

The premier was addressing the inaugural ceremony of the 2nd National Leprosy Conference 2023 at Hotel InterContinental in the city.

She said the local pharmaceutical companies export drugs to the whole world. “We produce very high standard drugs,” she said.

The prime minister called upon all to stand by the leprosy patients, shunning the old misconception and superstition that they can't be touched.

“We'll have to shun the old beliefs and superstitions,” she added.

She said her government has built digital Bangladesh and now has taken steps to build a smart Bangladesh. “How will we be smart, cherishing such superstitions in the Smart Bangladesh?” she wondered.

She said leprosy patients used to be deprived and alienated from society and the family due to a British period law, the Lepers Act 1898, which her government has annulled.

The premier asked all to stand by the leprosy patients, boost their morale, show sympathy and ensure proper care of them.

Citing that Bangladesh achieved the WHO goal in leprosy elimination in 1998, she said the leprosy patients are availing free services and medicines from the upazila hospitals.

She said the government has taken steps to strengthen its leprosy programme so that the system for detection of new patients and leprosy preventive measures get expanded.

The prime minister put emphasis on prevention of leprosy. “The prevention we need most. We should give special attention to its causes and prevention,” she said.

She asked the experts to carry out medical research in a larger way in a bid to find out the causes and details about diseases particularly the climate-related diseases.

“We need much more research on medical science. If we do it, we'll get a good knowledge of our climate related diseases and will be able to take proper treatment measures and develop medicines in this regard,” she said.

In the function, the prime minister unveiled the National Strategic Guideline for Leprosy 2023-2030.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Zahid Maleque presided over the event, while WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination and Chairman of the Nippon Foundation in Japan Yohei Sasakawa spoke as the guest of honour.

Secretary of Health Services Division Md Jahangir Alam delivered the welcome speech.

The first version of the national leprosy conference was held in 2019.