

India had 56% of world's new leprosy infections in 2010

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India accounted for 56 percent of the world's new leprosy infections in 2010 despite declaring itself free of the nerve-destroying disease five years earlier, a report said Saturday.

Of the 228,474 new leprosy cases in the world in 2010, India accounted for 126,800, S.D. Gokhale, president of the International Leprosy Union (India), told the Press Trust of India news agency.

"If the union and state governments do not take serious note of this fact and initiate effective steps to eradicate leprosy, the problem will become more acute," Gokhale was quoted as saying.

Leprosy is a curable chronic infectious disease which mainly affects the skin, [peripheral nerves](#), [upper respiratory tract](#) and the eyes.

The bacteria that causes the disease multiply very slowly and the [incubation period](#) is about five years. Symptoms can take as long as 20 years to appear.

Gokhale, speaking following a three-day meeting of the International Leprosy Union in the western Indian city of Pune, said the leprosy infection figures had been confirmed by India's health ministry.

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