

News

Delhi HC Seeks Govt Response on Plea Challenging ILBS Policy Limiting Free Treatment for EWS



The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Delhi government and the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences (ILBS) to respond to a public interest litigation (PIL) challenging the hospital's policy of limiting free treatment for **economically weaker sections (EWS)**. The plea questions the decision to reserve only 10% of in-patient department (IPD) beds and 25% of out-patient department (OPD) cases for free treatment.

A bench comprising Chief Justice D.K. Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia issued notice to the Delhi government and ILBS while hearing the PIL filed by NGO Social Justice. The court has listed the matter for further hearing on April 22 and directed the respondents to file their replies.

Appearing for the petitioner, advocate Satyakam argued that ILBS, a government-funded institution known for treating serious liver diseases such as hepatitis, cirrhosis, and liver

cancer, cannot adopt a policy that effectively turns it into a predominantly paid medical facility. He contended that the decision is **arbitrary and violates Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution** by discriminating against economically weaker patients and denying them access to affordable and timely healthcare.

The petition, filed through advocates Ashok Agarwal and Kumar Utkarsh, highlights that even private hospitals allotted land at concessional rates are mandated to provide free treatment to EWS patients to the extent of 10% in IPD and 25% in OPD. It argues that a fully government-owned institution offering the same or lower level of free care is inconsistent with established norms.

The PIL further relies on Supreme Court principles requiring state-run hospitals to ensure equitable access to healthcare without commercial barriers. It claims that ILBS's current policy is exclusionary and revenue-driven, undermining the very purpose for which the institution was established.

Emphasising that access to healthcare for vulnerable sections is a core obligation of the state, the petition seeks directions to quash the ILBS policy and mandate free treatment for all patients. In the alternative, it urges the court to direct ILBS to increase the quota for free treatment to at least 50% of its services.