

Indian court: HP govt should regulate drug prices

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New Delhi: India's Himachal Pradesh High Court has asked the state government to establish a committee of experts in order to formulate uniform guidelines for regulating minimum retail prices of essential drugs. The court also asked the medicine retailers to display a comparative list of the medicines with prices for the benefit of the patients.

A division bench comprising Justice Deepak Gupta and Justice Sanjay Karol passed the order, stating that, "We direct the principal health secretary, health, government of Himachal Pradesh, to constitute a committee for this by January 31, 2013. We hope that such committee can give its recommendations by March 15, 2013."

The decision was made by the bench on a petition filed by Mr Amandeep Chauhan, a local citizen seeking to make essential drugs available to the patients at reasonable prices. A 13-member committee of experts including doctors of the Indira Gandhi Medical College and Hospital, Shimla, and the Rajendra Prasad Medical College, Tanda, Kangra district, was established for seeking guidance on availability and identification of cheap medicines, which could be sold at the retail shops including those run by Roji Kalyana Samitis.

The court also issued notices to the state government and Baddi-based pharma companies to file a reply stating what steps they were taking to ensure that drugs were available at the minimum costs.