

Bihar to regulate street vending

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PATNA: Bihar could well become the first state in the country if Nitish government goes ahead with its promise to enact a legislation in the next financial year to provide registration, identity cards and health insurance to one million street vendors in the state.

Announcing this at a convention organized by National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI) at S K Memorial Hall here on Thursday to mark Vendors' Day, urban development minister Prem Kumar said that the proposed legislation would be based on National Policy for Urban Vendors, 2004, to protect vendors' rights from policemen, civic authorities and extortionists and giving them a chance to earn their livelihoods legally.

Admitting that vendors' problems were many and the government was alive to them, he stated, "Without a policy in place these problems cannot not be tackled effectively. We would provide licences to all street vendors". Kumar assured that while formulating the policy all issues pertaining to street vendors, such as harassment,



■ (Left from centre) Health minister Ashwini Kumar Chaubey, urban development minister Prem Kumar and others at the vendors' meet in Patna on Thursday.

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encroachment of parking space on roads and highhandedness of civic authorities and policemen would be taken into account.

Health minister Ashwini Kumar Chaubey, who is credited with stopping extortion of street vendors by contractors as urban development minister in NDA-I, promised that he would launch vendors' health insurance once vendors were armed with registration. "We would also provide free medicines to all street vendors", he said.

Arbind Singh, MD, Nidan,

an NGO, said that street vendors too should get the benefit of development and urged the state government to regularize street vendors and provide them entitlements to enable them to earn their livelihood in an honourable manner.

"Street vendors are basically self-employed people, being exploited endlessly in the absence of entitlements", said state INTUC president and NASVI vice president Chandra Prakash Singh.

He appealed to the state government not to treat street

vendors as encroachers. JD (U) Rajya Sabha member Ali Anwar regretted that street vendors were being evicted in the name of beautification and development.

NASVI Programme Manager Ranjit Abhigyan in a resolution demanded implementation of National Policy for Urban Vendors, 2004, enactment of law with provision for natural markets, earmarking 2.5 per cent of streets for vending, institutional arrangements of grievance redressal and formation of town vending committees.