



Saturday, May 26, 2012,
Chandigarh, India



MAIN NEWS

NEWS AND VIEWS

- [PUNJAB](#)
- [HARYANA](#)
- [JAMMU & KASHMIR](#)
- [HIMACHAL](#)
- [REGIONAL BRIEFS](#)
- [NATION](#)
- [OPINIONS](#)
- [LETTERS](#)
- [BUSINESS](#)
- [SPORTS](#)
- [WORLD](#)

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- [CHANDIGARH](#)
- [LUDHIANA](#)
- [DELHI](#)

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[50 YEARS OF
INDEPENDENCE](#)

[TERCENTENARY
CELEBRATIONS](#)

Repeal anti-conversion laws, Delhi told

Aditi Tandon
Tribune News Service

New Delhi, May 25

The Vatican City and Italy yesterday impressed upon India to repeal anti-conversion laws which are in force in some of its states and said such laws curbed religious freedom guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. The Netherlands sought greater religious freedom in India without mentioning any specifics.

Several UN member countries, however, sought to inquire from Attorney-General Ghoolam Vahanvati, country representative for India, at its ongoing second Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in Geneva, the status of the proposed law to prevent communal violence.

In response, Vahanvati defended India saying, "In India communal violence is an aberration, not a norm. The incidence of such violence has drastically reduced and the states have acted to curb it. India has a federal structure and all the states have to be taken on board to formulate the draft law".

India did not respond to the demands from The Vatican, capital of the Roman Catholic Church, and other western nations to repeal anti-conversion laws. These demands were rooted in the documentation (by the Working Group on Human Rights in India and the UN) on the existence of such legislative curbs in India.

"Since 1996, a number of laws pertaining to freedom of religion or belief have been amended in India and new ones adopted. A number of states have adopted specific laws to govern religious conversion and renunciation," states the WGHR Report submitted to the UN Human Rights Secretariat ahead of India's UPR which started in Geneva yesterday.

Five states have passed and implemented the Freedom of Religion Acts (Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh).

VAHANVATI DEFENDS JUDICIARY

Vahanvati on Thursday defended Indian judiciary against Italian representative's remarks it lacked transparency. "I object to this statement. Role of Indian judiciary is unparalleled and it's working on a war footing," he said, admitting to delay in justice. Fingers have been pointed at 31% posts of judges in HCs and SC being vacant.





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