

Peacenic picks Indian doc as first prof for Harvard seat

SEEMA CHISHTI

NEW DELHI | MARCH 27

DR BERNARD Lown is no ordinary doctor. A legend, this inventor of the defibrillator won the Nobel peace prize in 1985, when the Cold War was at its peak, for an organisation he had co-founded with Soviet doctor Eugene Chazov: International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW).

A chance meeting in a lift at an international seminar with Chazov, who was the physician for high-ups at the Kremlin then, led to a life-long commitment to canvassing for a nuclear-free earth in both the US and the USSR, as well as around

the world.

Dr Lown, a committed peacenic and crusader, fighting against the “disease of militarism”, even met for USSR president Mikhail Gorbachev and finally recruited nearly 1,50,000 doctors to the cause, holding innumerable conferences and meeting world leaders.

Now 89, Dr Lown, a professor of Cardiology Emeritus at the Harvard School of Public Health, has set up a professorship at Harvard in cardiovascular health this year. And his choice for the first doctor for the chair is an Indian, Dr K Srinath Reddy, head of the Public Health Foundation of India.



Dr Reddy

Asked by *Newsline* on email about his choice for the first professorship, Dr Lown said, “Not only was Srinath Reddy my first choice, he was my only choice.”

Dr Reddy dons many hats — he was, till recently, the head of Cardiology at AIIMS. Having completed



Dr Lown

his MBBS from Osmania University, Hyderabad, he has won honours from the WHO for his work on tobacco control. A Padma Bhushan, he was also awarded the WHO Director General’s Award for Global Leadership in Tobacco Control in 2003. He has been on the medical team that takes care of the Prime Minister, but that is something you will not find in his CV.

About the Harvard stint, Dr Reddy said: “I will only be a visiting professor, as my several commitments in India make it difficult for me to do a long stint away from India.”

Dr Lown readily agreed to convert the prestigious professorship into a

visiting one. Reddy hopes that besides engaging with researchers and students through special lectures, he will also be able to work on global public health nutrition and global epidemiology.

Besides being engaged in the recent debate on healthcare in the US, Dr Lown has been interested in the state of medical care available in developing countries. “Two-thirds of cardiovascular fatalities in the world are from developing countries,” he said.

“India spends only 0.9 per cent of its GDP on the health sector, which is startlingly low even among developing countries, whose average expenditure is 2.2 per cent.”