



# NHRC praises state for care of silicosis victims

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JAIPUR: The state came in for a lot of praise by the National Human Rights Commission ( NHRC) during a recent meeting of the commission with representatives from the state and those from Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi.

The state in fact was lauded for its efforts in taking care of silicosis victims and cited as a model state.

The meeting, held in [Delhi](#) on June 10, was a review on whether the states were implementing the recommendations of the commission on silicosis victims. Also, on the agenda were status report on the recommended survey for silicosis victims, payment of compensation to families of those who had died due to silicosis and finalising a rehabilitation programme for those suffering from silicosis.

The state was represented by principal secretary, department of mines, Govind Sharma and assistant labour commissioner Anjana Dixit. Also participating in the meeting were representatives of Mine Labour Protection Campaign (MLPC) who have been fighting for the cause of silicosis victims.

The state presented an update of an additional Rs 2 lakh given to the kin of silicosis victims as a fixed deposit. This was apart from Rs 1 lakh each that had already been given to them earlier. The state also presented provisions of Rs 83 crore that have been made in the budget for the healthcare of mine workers. A committee has been constituted under the chairmanship of additional chief secretary for overseeing the work.

"Also discussed were a sum of Rs 25.60 crore that has been sanctioned for upgrading medical services for mine workers in 19 districts where mining is extensively done. Talks were also held on the state inspecting several mines and notices being served to mine owners that were caught at fault," said an official present at the meeting.

The state also apprised the commission that 1,500 mine workers had been screened and that 54 workers were suspected to be suffering from silicosis.

However, the MLPC raised certain points that the relief paid to the next of kin of silicosis victims had omitted five victims from the list of 48 who were to be rehabilitated by the state as per the commission's recommendations. "But these workers had died awaiting rehabilitation and now they are eligible for compensation like the 21 other victims," said Rana Sengupta, managing trustee of MLPC.

"It has also been noticed that the government hospital has stopped diagnosing silicosis victims since August 2011.

The regular check-ups that were being done till then had come to an end but it should be revived," felt Sengupta.

He also raised the issue of maintaining transparency in use of the funds allotted for the healthcare of the workers and that identity cards to mine workers should be made mandatory so that they do not have to depend on relief from the state and can file cases of compensation under the Workmen's Compensation Act if they contract silicosis.



The commission, while appreciating the steps taken by the state, showed concern on the issue of hospitals hiding facts and ordered investigation.

The state was also asked to share the findings of the survey on mine workers on the government website.