



## NHRC warns Modi govt of legal action

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New Delhi The NHRC today took strong exception to Gujarat government's reluctance in compensating the families of 238 tribals, who died due to silicosis while working in quartz crushing factories, and warned it would have to approach the Supreme Court if recommendations were not complied with.

Conveying its displeasure over non-compliance of its recommendations, the National Human Rights Commission asked the Narendra Modi-led government to pay Rs three lakh each as monetary relief to the next of kin of those who died due to silicosis without any further delay.

The Commission warned that it will have "no alternative but to approach the Supreme Court" which is seized of the matter if the government does not file a compliance report along with a proof of payment within six weeks.

The Commission noted that the Gujarat government has not taken appropriate measures as per its recommendations for providing monetary relief and other succor to the poor families of the 238 victims of incurable disease silicosis and address their cause.

The victims comprised of tribals from Alirajpur and Jhabua districts in Madhya Pradesh and contracted silicosis while working in quartz crushing factories of Kheda and Panchmahal in Gujarat.

It also asked the legal aid authorities of both Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, from where the tribals belong to, to adopt a "humane approach" to help settle the claims of silicosis victims at the earliest rather than "towing purely a litigational angle" to the issue.

The Commission also held the contention of the Gujarat government as "unjustifiable" that the families of such victims can be compensated under the provisions of ESI Act, 1948 and the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923.

The Commission said the benefits under the statues will be in addition to the compensation recommended by the Commission.

The NHRC has recommended that out of Rs 3 lakh, Rs one lakh has to be given immediately to the next of kin of the deceased and the remaining two lakh be kept in a fixed deposit in a bank and interest earned on the amount may be paid to the victims' families on a monthly basis.

An NHRC spokesperson said the Commission was expecting that Gujarat will take a cue from the governments of Rajasthan, Puducherry and Madhya Pradesh on dealing with the issues of relief, rehabilitation and health of silicosis patients and its victims with a more humane approach.



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However, in the wake of some allegations that contrary to the claims of Madhya Pradesh Government the relief package is not reaching to the 304 patients of silicosis, the NHRC has asked the Chief Secretary of the state to send complete details of award of package.