



WEEKLY NEWS BULLETIN.

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Coalition Updates.

- The widows of the silicosis victims from mining affected regions of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh gathered on the occasion of International Widows Day in Jodhpur, Rajasthan. They announced the formation of the Silicosis Victims Widow Association, to strive for collective justice and support for the affected families. They demanded for fair pensions and alternative employment opportunities.

Silicosis victims' widows to set up body to push for demands

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JODHPUR: On International Widows Day, the widows of silicosis victims across Jodhpur have come together to confront the challenges they faced following the loss of their loved ones.

The sandstone quarry licences in the area have resulted in perilous working conditions, leading to a significant increase in deaths due to silicosis among mine workers. On Friday morning, these widows will announce the establishment of the Silicosis Victims Widow Association, aiming to address their urgent needs and demand fair pensions and alternative employment opportunities.

The Mine Labour Protection Campaign Trust (MLPC) will gather widows of silicosis victims in Jodhpur on Friday. Rana Sengupta, the managing trustee of MLPC, emphasised that the formation of the Silicosis Victims Widow Association is a crucial step towards highlighting the plight of these widows and advocating for their rights.

"Together, they will strive for a better future and work towards obtaining justice and support for all affected families," Sengupta said. The widows of silicosis victims face numerous challenges.



Dhalki Devi and Ugma Devi, widows of silicosis victims.

"They are responsible for caring for their children and earning a livelihood, but the government pension is insufficient. Many widows are forced to work in unsafe mines to survive."

According to the official portal of the Rajasthan government, the situation of silicosis victims in the Jodhpur district remains alarming. The government has provided compensation to the dependents of 1,482 mine workers who lost their lives due to silicosis, and an additional 6,117 new cases of silicosis have been certified. In the past, before the implementation of the Silicosis Policy-2019, the compensation amount provided to the dependents of a silicosis victim upon their death was three ₹3 lakh.

However, under the revised policy, the compensation amount has been increased to ₹5 lakh. Many widows have expressed that the compensation they received depleted quickly in repaying loans incurred for their husband's treatment and household expenses during his illness.

Dhalki Devi (60), one of the widows, shared her struggles and aspirations for change, stating: "After my husband's tragic demise due to silicosis, life became an uphill battle for me and my children. The compensation amount we received was quickly exhausted in repaying debts, leaving us in dire straits. We need a sustainable source of income and support to lead a dignified life."

Ugma Devi, another widow, emphasised the need for alternative employment opportunities, saying, "We don't want to continue in this cycle of danger and hardship. The government must step forward and provide us with viable alternative employment options. We deserve the chance to rebuild our lives and secure a brighter future for our children."

Anil Vyas, deputy director of the social justice and empowerment department, stated that starting from June 1, the widow pension amount has been increased to ₹1,000.



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