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# Bhopal survivors demand Rs 2,500 crore rehabilitation commission

The survivors of the Bhopal industrial disaster seeking rehabilitation 24 years after the toxic gas leakage from the Union Carbide plant today met Congress General Secretary Rahul-Gandhi and sought his help to take their demands to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The main demand is setting up of a Commission on Bhopal with a corpus of Rs 1500 crore, with Rs 100 crore for every year that has passed since the tragedy.

The 60 survivors, led by activists from all over the country, have walked 850 km from Bhopal for a prolonged agitation in Delhi. Their mission is to get a hearing from the prime minister, whose office has so far turned down their petitions for a meeting.

Gandhi assured the group that he would help them get a hearing from the prime minister and also get a group of young parliamentarians to vis-

it Bhopal and look into their demands for rehabilitation.

Two years ago, the same group had trekked down from Bhopal seeking a meeting with the prime minister for a final settlement of the problems of the victims and survivors of the gas tragedy. This resulted in a formation of a committee to settle rehabilitation issues.

The survivors have come back only because the committee has achieved nothing in the three meetings it has held

so far. The survivors are still consuming the water contaminated by about 8,000 tonnes of toxic waste which lies buried at the site. The Rs 2,500 crore-commission would help in the social, economic and medical rehabilitation of the people hit by the gas tragedy and the ongoing contamination of ground water, says Rachna Dhingra Bhopal Group for Information and Action.

What we are asking for is a pittance. We asked for this two years ago but were given a

toothless committee, she adds.

The activists are bitter. Says Nityanand Jayaraman of International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal: "The government will eagerly set up an Investment Commission to facilitate investment by the likes of Dow Chemicals but when people in Bhopal want a rehabilitation commission, it is not interested. It gives a toothless body that can do nothing but see requests shuttled between state, Centre and the victims