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# Commission to rehabilitate Bhopal gas victims to be set up

## Centre will take initiative soon to work out modalities

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*(Handwritten: 15/5/08, E40a)*

**NEW DELHI:** The Centre has agreed "in principle" to set up an empowered commission to rehabilitate the survivors and victims of the Bhopal gas leak that happened 23 years ago.

It is in "in principle agreement with the demand for a specially empowered commission to carry out medical, economic, social and environmental rehabilitation of the victims and would soon take the initiative to work out the modalities," Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office Prithviraj Chavan said in a statement here on Thursday.

He read it out, on behalf of the Prime Minister, when he met the survivors and victims at Jantar Mantar, where they have been on a dharna for the past two months.

The Centre would set up the commission, subsuming the committees on various rehabilitation aspects constituted by the Supreme Court, the Centre, the Madhya Pradesh government and the Madhya Pradesh High Court and other courts.

"Also, the Madhya Pradesh government is being asked to prepare a detailed plan of action for schemes for rehabilitation of the victims with estimates of the funds required. The Centre will examine this speedily and sympathetically once it is received," Mr. Chavan assured

*(Handwritten: 30/5/08)*

- Committees on various rehabilitation aspects will be subsumed

- Drinking water from Kolar reservoir for localities around Carbide plant by year-end

the protesters.

### Upgrading coordination panel

The Centre also decided to upgrade the Coordination Committee, set up in the Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals and it would now be chaired by the Secretary.

On the demand for provision of clean drinking water from unpolluted sources in 14 localities around the Union Carbide plant, which was the source of the gas leak, Mr. Chavan said the government had already sanctioned a project, under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission at an estimated cost of Rs. 14.18 crore, to the Bhopal Municipal Corporation. This was to provide safe drinking water through pipelines from the Kolar Reservoir to localities around the Union Carbide plant. "The work is likely to be completed by the year-end and the Cen-

tre will also monitor the progress."

The Health Ministry would be asked to continue research, through the Indian Council of Medical Research, on the adverse effects of the gas leak on the health of the surviving victims and their descendants.

Mr. Chavan said the protesters' demand for taking legal action against Dow Chemicals — this company and Union Carbide have since merged — for environmental and health damage and soil and water contamination was pending before the Madhya Pradesh High Court. The Department of Chemical and Petrochemicals had filed an application requesting the court to direct Dow Chemicals and associated companies to deposit Rs. 100 crore as advance for environmental remediation. Further action would be taken according to the court decision.

### Protest will continue

Welcoming the announcements, the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmachari Sangh, the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha and the Bhopal Group for Information and Action, however, said they would continue with their protest as their demand for legal action against Union Carbide and Dow Chemicals had not been addressed.