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# No one to help destitute women

**TRAGIC** Elderly women run from pillar to post for a meagre pension of ₹275 while banks and BMC test their patience

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**BHOPAL:** Destitute, disabled, widows...beyond the age of 60 years — they perhaps form the most vulnerable section of society, deserving more attention from the government and social groups than anyone else. But the humiliation that they are subjected to while trying to withdraw the monthly destitute pension of ₹275 can put any one to shame. It's the municipal bodies of the respective places which are responsible for the disbursement of the destitute pension.

Beginning from ward office of Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) to its zonal office to its main office and then bank, these elderly, many of them disabled and most of them women, make rounds where they are insulted and ignored more than they are helped.

Bhopal, having experienced the brunt of worst industrial disaster, popularly known as Bhopal gas tragedy, unfortunately has a huge population of destitute numbering around 60,000. Hundreds of them can be found running from pillar to post for pension and not getting it. Still worse, these illiterate or semi-literate women don't know the exact reason why their pension is withheld.

Gappo Bee, Shaira Jahan,



■ The elderly and destitute pensioners, who bore the brunt of the deadly Bhopal gas tragedy, protest against the long delay in the release of their pensions, in Bhopal.

MUJEEB FARUQI/HT FILE

Kehar Bee and Halki Bai are some such women, who have been making round of banks for the past five months to get their pension, but till a few days ago when Hindustan Times talked to them, they were yet to receive the same.

"When I went to the bank, they told me that money was not been credited into the account and that I should go to my ward office of BMC. From there, I was sent to zonal office and then BM's office in Mata Mandir. Even after all this, there has

been no resolution to my problem till now. I don't know why my pension amount is not being credited into to bank," lamented Gappo Bee.

Halki Bai told HT how the bank staff once told them to sit outside in the blazing sun for a long time and was later told to go away saying there was no money in her bank account.

In fact, the problem is so grave that there is a group 'Bhopal Gas Peedit Nirashrit Pension Bhogi Morcha' which exclusively works to help them.

When asked about the magnitude of the problem morcha president Balkrishna Namdeo said, "There are thousands of people, who have not got pension since 2014. A lot of people used to get pension from post offices. In 2014, it was decided that pension would not be disbursed from post offices. If they were doing it, they should at least have got bank accounts opened for all the beneficiaries. But, nobody cares."

Abdul Jabbar, convener, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog



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GAPPO BEE, pensioner

» THE BANK ACCOUNT OF BENEFICIARIES IS BEING LINKED TO SAMAGRA ID FOR DIRECT BENEFIT TRANSFER. IT'S A NEW SYSTEM AND THEREFORE THERE WILL BE SOME PROBLEMS

TEJSWINI NAYAK, BMC commissioner



Sangthan (BGPMS), while showing bank passbooks of several women, said they had all come with complaint that they were not receiving pension and he wrote to the BMC commissioner and mayor Alok Sharma, but neither of them even cared to reply.

BMC Commissioner, Tejswini Nayak, when asked to comment said, "The bank account of beneficiaries is being linked to Samagra ID for direct benefit transfer. It's a new system and therefore there will be some

problems in the initial stage. Minister for social justice Gopal Bhargava, blamed staff manning the system for issue and said, "We pay money to districts in advance for destitute pension. Every district fund of ₹25 crore to ₹50 crore the purpose and if there is any delay, there is some serious wrong. I know you don't get money on time but not because of lack of fund or lack of will or corruption or part of persons and agencies trying out the job."

