

25 years after Bhopal Gas Disaster



A selection of news
(Jan 2006 - Dec 2009)



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Executive Summary

On December 3, 1984, toxic poisonous methyl isocyanate gas leaked from Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL's) pesticide plant in Bhopal. The gas leak triggered a disaster that is now widely recognized as the world worst industrial catastrophe. Thousands of people were killed instantly and more than 25,000 people have died of gas-related illnesses, several thousands more maimed for life since.

Union Carbide negotiated a settlement with the Indian Government in 1989 for \$470 million - a total of only \$370 to \$533 per victim - a sum too small to pay for most medical bills.

In 1996, twelve years after the disaster, Union Carbide became part of the Dow Chemical Corporation, which flatly refused to assume any liabilities in India - or clean up the toxic poisons left behind saying that it was the responsibility of the Madhya Pradesh state government which had taken over the site.

Today twenty five years since that fateful night, lakhs of people still living in the vicinity of the factory are exposed to toxic chemicals that continue to leach from tonnes of waste lying within the UCIL premises causing groundwater and soil contamination. As a result a whole new generation continues to get sick, from cancer and birth defects to everyday impacts of aches and pains, rashes, fevers, eruptions of boils, headaches, nausea, lack of appetite, dizziness, and constant exhaustion.

During the last four years survivors' organizations have renewed their campaign to both get justice for the survivors as well as cleaning up of the hazardous waste.

This compilation of selected news stories covering the last four years is a small effort to highlight this campaign as reported by the mainstream media. For an in-depth understanding of the issues see www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/indepth/term/2542.

A comprehensive collection of these up-to-date news clippings, research papers, lab studies, reports, documents, opinions and court judgments etc have now been made available by the Centre for Science and Environment at www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/taxonomy/term/2544.

Links to selected CSE research papers and lab report.

http://www.downtoearth.org.in/webexclusives/factsheet_1.htm

<http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/node/292685>

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/default20091130.htm>

http://www.downtoearth.org.in/webexclusives/site_photos/Site_photos.htm

Gas victims' bodies celebrate judgement

Organisations of Gas victims had celebrated favourable decisions from the Judge John F Keenan of the District Court of New York for the first time in the history of the case regarding the Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal.

On January 10, Judge Keenan had issued a letter rogatory for obtaining the documents from Eveready Industries India Limited that could potentially establish the nexus between this Indian Company and Union Carbide, USA and DOW Chemical USA.

Sharma their Attorney General who had been fighting for the survivors in the US Courts since 1999 when the legal action was initiated.

In his decision Judge has agreed to seek judicial assistance from the Indian Government, to compel EIL to produce documents related to its corporate structure and affiliations and liabilities concerning environmental contamination caused by the Bhopal Factory.

The Judge has requested that plaintiff's attorney Sharma be notified regarding examination of documents before the appropriate courts in India.

Two appeals on this behalf of people affected by soil and ground water contamination from Bhopal, are currently pending before the Second circuit Court of Appeals, which was decided in favour of the Bhopal victims on two earlier occasions. If successfully the legal action in the US Federal Court will force Union Carbide to pay further compensation far greater than the settlement amount of 470 million dollars it paid in 1989.

Central Chronicle / Bhopal / 13/01/06

Girl born after gas tragedy gets Compensation twice

Staff Reporter / Bhopal

Compensation to gas victims was disbursed off to help them recover from the tragedy. However, few denizens had not only fraudulently got the names of their kin included in the compensation list, they also managed to obtain the compensation more than once for the same individual. Amazingly, the compensation was allegedly sanctioned by the same deputy commissioner twice without noticing the irregularity.

A woman Naznee Siddiqui allegedly got the name of her daughter Faiza Siddiqui included in the beneficiaries' list despite the girl being born three years after the gas tragedy. The alleged fraud did not end here, as the woman claimed the compensation twice in the name of her daughter.

Interestingly, the woman in an affidavit claimed that her daughter was present at the time of gas leakage but the mark sheet of the girl stated her date of birth as September 30, 1987.

Both the claims were sanctioned in 1999 by the same deputy commissioner, RK Bhawe, wherein the girl was made eligible for compensation of Rs 25,000 each. The claim numbers of the girl were 138071 and 139067. Apart from the girl, the mother and her son also obtained compensation of Rs 70,000 and Rs 25,000 in the year 1994 and 1999, respectively.

The claims clearly contained the name of the girl, her parents' name, residence and age. Despite this, they were sanctioned twice in four months. The girl was also directed to remain present in

the claims court on March 18 and July 19, 1999, to receive compensation as per the claimed letters. Bhartiya Jan Morcha district president Pradeep Khandelwal raised the issue and said that hundreds of such cases were approved by greasing the palms of employees posted in the office of Gas Welfare Commissioner.

Assistant Registrar of Gas Welfare DS Solanki told The Pioneer that the claim was accepted only after going through attached documents that include age proof. Speaking on the particular case, the assistant commissioner said the genuineness of the claim could be cross checked after verification of attached document. Mr Solanki assured that they would again go through the documents and take action against the guilty on discovering the fraud.

Pioneer / Delhi 23/01/06

Bhopal gas victims walk all the way to Delhi

As many as 39 survivors of the Bhopal gas leak tragedy today reached Delhi for a do-or-die battle after a 800-km trek from Bhopal that took them 33 days. Stressing that justice still eludes victims of the Union Carbide chemical leak tragedy, the 'padyatris', several of them above 60 years of age, say they will start a fast unto death here next month till their six-point charter of demands is met by the government.

The demands include setting up of a national commission on Bhopal to oversee medical and social rehabilitation of the victims for the next 30 years, supply of safe drinking water to communities currently drinking poisoned water, speedy prosecution of the accused,

including Union Carbide Corporation and its former chairman; environmental remediation, a ban on Dow Chemical and its subsidiary Union Carbide's business in India and memorialising the disaster story by including it in school and college curriculum. "It is sad that every government since the tragedy in 1984 has prioritised the interests of private companies instead of the people who have suffered. The killers are yet to be brought to justice," said Rashida Bi, who heads the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationary Karamchari Sangh. Rashida Bi has lost six members of her own family due to medical complications since that December night in 1984.

Toxic wastes are still polluting the water in the area threatening the lives of communities living there. The plant site was yet to be decontaminated.

Tribune/ New Delhi/ 26/03/06

Bhopal protesters detained in Delhi

Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI: Over 100 protesters, comprising mostly women, demanding the rehabilitation of survivors of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy were detained by the police for staging a dharna outside Shastri Bhavan here on Tuesday.

The protesters refused to leave without a positive response from the Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilizers, Ram Vilas Paswan. Around 4 p.m., the police detained them and took them to the Parliament Street police station.

They were kept there till late evening. "We are contemplating legal action against them as we want to discourage the practice of such big protests in the high-security zones," said a police officer.

Two of the protestors were injured when they were forcibly removed by the police. On

Monday, the protesters had organised a march from Nizamuddin Park to Jantar Mantar.

Threaten indefinite fast
They threatened to go on an indefinite fast if their demands were not met. Representatives from Delhi University and Jawaharlal Nehru University, activists of Narmada Bachao Andolan, trade union members and members of various non-Government organisations had also joined them. The protestors have been demanding setting up of a national commission on Bhopal to oversee medical and social rehabilitation.

As many as 39 survivors of the gas tragedy had reached the Capital on Saturday after a month-long, 800-km walk from Bhopal.

Hindu/ New Delhi/ 29/03/06

Cabinet nod on compensation to Bhopal victims

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the implementation of the 2004 Supreme Court order for disbursement of pro-rata additional compensation on one-on-one basis to victims of the Bhopal gas tragedy.

It also decided that the Government will take responsibility for meeting the shortfall of about Rs. 50 crore, as estimated by the Office of Welfare Commissioner.

The Cabinet also gave its nod for the proposal of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to open its South Asia Regional Office here to improve the efficacy of the Federation in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of its activities in the region.

The regional office would, among other things, coordinate and advise on development projects and programmes of the national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies of the

countries in the region, assist them in the event of a disaster and also provide training to their staff and volunteers.

The Cabinet also cleared a proposal to withdraw the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill to bring in a more comprehensive legislation.

The Bill was introduced in Parliament in 2003. Union Defence Minister and Cabinet spokesperson Pranab Mukherjee said the Bill was being withdrawn as a Parliament Standing Committee had recommended a long list of changes in it. The Government thought that instead of introducing the change in the Bill, it would be better to withdraw it and bring in a new legislation that incorporated the recommendations. The Cabinet also gave its nod for signing an agreement with Kuwait for avoidance of double taxation and prevention of fiscal evasion in respect of taxes on income and cleared a proposal for India to join the memorandum of understanding on the conservation and management of marine turtles and their habitats in the Indian Ocean and South East Asia.

Hindu / Delhi 06/04/06

Bhopal victims step up agitation

NEW DELHI: Over 400 survivors of the Bhopal gas disaster and their sympathisers who on Monday organised a huge "die in" here, covering themselves in white shrouds and lying on the road while symbolic figures of death danced through the "corpses". The gas victims and their sympathisers, who have been demonstrating here for the last fifteen days, announced that six persons (three survivors and three sympathisers) would go on an indefinite hunger strike from Tuesday.

Demonstrators said that though the Ministry of Chemicals had been

sympathetic to their demands, it was up to the Prime Minister to clear any decision related to the Bhopal victims. They said the Union Cabinet's approval for the implementation of the Supreme Court orders of 2004 for disbursement of pro-rata additional compensation on a one-to-one basis to the victims did not address their present demands. "This money was long due and a result of an agreement between the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Central Government that any shortfall in converting the money payable from dollars to rupees would be taken care by the Central Government. It has nothing to do with our present demands," said Nityanand Jayaram, environmental activist and writer. In a statement issued on Monday, four organisations, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmachari Sangh, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha, Bhopal Group for Information and Action, and Bhopal ki Awaaz cited a 2001 study published by the Madhya Pradesh government's Centre for Rehabilitation Studies that has attributed at least 350 deaths annually to gas-related ailments.

Hindu / Delhi 11/04/06

Gas victims allege bungling of funds

Pioneer News Service / New Delhi

The plea by Bhopal Gas tragedy victims alleging misappropriation of funds allotted to Bhopal Memorial Hospital Trust meant for their treatment, got a shot in the arm with the Supreme Court permitting 'Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila dyog Sangathan' to inspect the audited account from 1998 to 2004.

The issue came before the court after the Trust, represented through senior advocate RK Jain presented the audited accounts from the

year 1998-2004 and demanded that an amount of Rs 37.65 crore which was pending in the custody of a court in Bhopal be released to the trust.

This amount had been lying attached in the Magistrate court in Bhopal to secure the presence of Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) Chairman in a criminal case, who has since been declared an absconder.

The Hospital, which is meant to exclusively treat the Bhopal gas victims, has already received a sum of Rs 518 crore till date.

The sum of Rs 37.65 crore had been obtained after the sell-off of shares belonging to UCC.

The trust, presently headed by former Chief Justice of India Justice AM Ahmadi had claimed the immediate release of this amount in the wake of increased cost of maintenance of the hospital. However the petitioners alleged misappropriation of funds on massive scale. It further pointed out to court that the accounts for the period 1996-98 have not been kept.

The Bench of Justices BN Srikrishna and LS Pantia while posting the matter for May 2 observed, "in order to remove misgivings about the accounts, the advocate-on-record for the petitioner and a chartered accountant to be appointed by the petitioner shall be permitted to wrong is found in the Trust accounts, then an order for release of Rs 37.65 crore shall be passed on the next date of hearing. The court also decided to hear on May 2, an application filed by the petitioner seeking to set aside the compensation amount of US \$ 440 million arrived at between UCC and the Central Government on grounds that it was totally inadequate, keeping in view the loss of life and property.

The agreement was chalked out under the supervision of a Constitution Bench headed by then Chief Justice of India RS Pathak. The court will also decide on the question whether this application challenging the

compensation amount should be referred to the Constitution Bench.

It may be recalled that in December 1984, 2000 persons were killed and over 20,000 were injured when the poisonous gas MIC leaked from the UCC unit in Bhopal.

Pioneer / New Delhi 13/04/06

Parents of Bhopal victims protest in capital

Parents of children suffering from physical disability as a result of carbide contamination, after the Bhopal gas tragedy, came together in the capital on Saturday demanding immediate steps from the government to guarantee better health for Bhopal's children.

More than 70 children with birth deformities have been identified from among the communities who have been exposed to carbide poisoning in drinking water, revealed protesters who have entered the fifth day of hunger strike. Expressing disappointment over the meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh being called off on Friday,

Ms Champa Devi Shukla one the protesters on indefinite hungerstrike said, "We are extremely disappointed. Three gas victims are on the fifth day of the hungerstrike, and the Prime Minister has found no time to meet us, despite getting two months notice." All three sons of 50-year-old Shahida Bee are suffering from physical disorders.

My first son fell ill when he was eight years old. My second son was born dead and with a half-formed skull. All the kids in our family are physically retarded," said Shahida, a resident of Blue Moon colony in Bhopal.

Explaining that they are forced to use the contaminated tubewell water because of scarcity of water, the children in the area are developing skin diseases.

"After the accident I used to have fever. My babies inherited the same disease and they all died in their infancy," said 40-year-old Shanti Naidu, resident of Shankar Nagar in Bhopal. The fate of 60-year-old Tusi Bai is the same. While his son has been diagnosed with tuberculosis, all the women in the family are suffering from severe physical disorders. The contamination is having adverse effects on the health of the children, stressed protesters of the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal.

Families, who have been victims of the gas tragedy and carbide contamination come to Delhi to meet the Prime Minister and present the six-point demands.

Asian Age/ New Delhi
16/04/06

Govt agrees to major demands of Bhopal victims

Vibha Sharma

Stating to have registered a "major victory" after the "government conceded to four of their six long-standing demands", Bhopal gas tragedy survivors today called off their "international hunger strike" and the agitation that has been continuing at the protest venue near Jantar Mantar, here, for the past 20 days now.

The protestors, who met the Prime Minister for about 30 minutes this morning, later said,

"Dr Manmohan Singh assured a 10-member delegation, comprising Bhopal gas tragedy victims and supporters, that their demands related to clean water, clean-up of toxic wastes, setting up of a national commission for medical and economic rehabilitation will be met." Following this, the agitators, who had walked into the Capital on March 25 after an 800-km "padyatra" from Bhopal, ended their dharna

with a note of solidarity for the Narmada struggle.

Happy scenes could be witnessed at the protest venue with victims and supporters hugging and congratulating each other after this "major victory".

Activist Nityanand Jayaraman, however, expressed disappointment over the Prime Minister turning down their two demands. "Dr Manmohan Singh told the delegation that he was powerless to take any extra legal measures to hold the Union Carbide Corporation or its parent company Dow Chemical accountable in response to a demand by survivors that the UCC and Dow should be held liable for the continuing disaster in Bhopal." "The Prime Minister said we have to do business...we have to move ahead. India has to survive despite these tragedies. Please leave politics to politicians. He said the UCC was a foreign-based multinational and assured that he would explore whatever options existed within the law to hold the company accountable," Jayaraman added.

The activists expressed "shame and outraged at the Prime Minister of the world's largest democracy having openly admitted to his inability to pressurise an American multinational," and resolved to take direct and legal action against Dow and the UCC's businesses, nationally and internationally over the coming months. "We will hold dharnas in front of their offices everywhere in the world," well-known Bhopal activist Rashida Bi told The Tribune.

And in the words of activist Satinath Sarangi, "At a time when India is set to more than double its industrial capacity, the Prime Minister's reluctance to take extra legal measures to pressure multinational corporations is deplorable and should set the alarm bells ringing".

Sarangi added that, "It doesn't make any sense to direct our protests on the matter of corporate accountability towards a man who has expressed his powerlessness on this matter."

"The Dow should beware now because all our energies will be focused on putting the brakes on its business in India," Goldman award winner Champa Devi Shukla declared. There, however, has been no official word on the meeting. While the Madhya Pradesh Government recently announced the allotment of Rs 100 crore for the construction of a memorial in Bhopal, protestors have been told that the story of the Bhopal disaster would be included in educational curricula developed by the NCERT.

There also have been assurances regarding providing clean water to some colonies. Three activists will accompany high-level team led by the Secretary, Ministry of Chemicals, to finalise details regarding provision of safe water and the participation of survivors in the construction of a memorial in Bhopal.

Josh Imeson and Diane Wilson, both of who have been fasting in solidarity with the survivors, also called off their fast. Diane Wilson, a long-time Bhopal supporter, who is on the fourth day of her indefinite fast in the USA, was in the process of being informed about this "major victory", said Jayaraman.

The Bhopal campaign, which became somewhat overshadowed by the ongoing NBA struggle in the Capital, has been receiving good national and international support.

The PMO received nearly 3000 faxes and more than 350 persons have signed up to fast for a day or longer in solidarity with the Bhopal campaign. Film star Amir Khan also stopped by at the dharna site last week to express solidarity with protestors.

Twenty one years and many struggles later, 39 survivors of the worst industrial disaster of the world, the Bhopal gas leak tragedy walked into the Capital after a 800-km trek from Bhopal that took them 33 days for a do-or-die battle on March 25.

Tribune/ New Delhi/ 18/04/06

Dow shareholders want instant relief for Bhopal victims

Rahul Noronha | Bhopal

Resolution at Thursday's AGM to force issue ---- Survivors of the deadly 1984 gas disaster in Bhopal may have just found new allies, and that too in the most unlikely quarters, in their 21-year-long struggle for justice and adequate compensation. More than 15,000 people have died since the night of December 2-3, 1984, when tonnes of methyl isocyanate leaked from the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal. Many more and their offspring have been maimed for their lives.

Dow Chemical purchased Union Carbide in 2001 for 10.3 billion in stock and debt. Dow has publicly stated several times that the Union Carbide settlement payments have already fulfilled Dow's financial responsibility for the disaster. However, efforts by survivors to get Dow to clean the heavily contaminated site are on appeal in a US district court. Shareholders of Dow Chemical have now decided to challenge CEO Andrew Liveris and the company's top management at its annual meeting of stockholders on Thursday.

They want Dow to take new initiatives pertaining to the welfare of the survivors of the world's worst industrial disaster. Shareholders feel that more than 21 years after the disaster, the ongoing dispute threaten Dow's reputation and business in India. A shareholder resolution on the agenda for this year's annual meeting asserts that it would be

respectful of human rights and, more importantly, also a good business decision for Dow to undertake new initiatives to address the needs of survivors. The resolution requests the company to produce a document listing the new initiatives by the management pertaining to the environmental, health and social concerns of the survivors of the gas leak at the Union Carbide plant.

The shareholders who filed the resolution representing a total of 4.5 million shares (current value: \$186 million) include the New York City Fire Department (NYCFD) Pension Fund, New York State Common Retirement Fund (NYSCRF), Boston Common Asset Management, Amnesty International USA (AIUSA), Dominican Sisters: Grand Rapids, Sisters of Holy Cross and Sisters of Mercy Regional Community of Detroit Charitable Trust.

The move seems to have gone down well with those advocating the cause of gas survivors in Bhopal. Satinath Shadangi of the Bhopal Group for Information and Action, speaking to The Pioneer, termed the resolution "a significant move as far as shareholder activism is concerned."

He said "though shareholders of Dow have been supporting us for the last three years, the resolution to be moved on Thursday is bound to have a positive fallout."

Pioneer / Delhi 11/05/06

Gas hit welcome Centre's decision

Bhopal, May 13 Leaders of four organisations working with survivors of the Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal on Saturday hailed the formation of the co-ordination committee by the Government of India. However, they strongly condemned the composition of the committee that is dominated by government officials, that includes NP Mishra, a former

medical advisor to Union Carbide and that fails to include the majority of survivors' organisations in Bhopal.

These four organisations have written to the Prime Minister requesting his personal intervention to ensure a more balanced committee that includes their representatives.

The four organisations, who led the 800 kilometer long march to New Delhi in February this year had called specifically for the setting up of such a crucial committee as their first priority.

The Prime Minister conceded to the demand on April 17 after meeting with representatives of these organisations. In line with the demands of the four organisations, the coordination committee is expected to plan and implement schemes for medical, economic and social rehabilitation of the people poisoned by Union Carbide in Bhopal. It is a travesty, they stated on Saturday, that none of their representatives have yet been incorporated into the coordination committee.

The organisations have also taken strong exception to the inclusion of Dr NP Mishra, former medical advisor to Union Carbide in Bhopal in the committee.

According to them Dr Mishra is responsible for thousands of preventable deaths because of his opposition to the administration of sodium thiosulphate to the survivors in the aftermath of the disaster.

Many lives could have been saved, they asserted on Saturday, if gas affected people had received this injection in time. Administration of Sodium Thiosulphate helpful as it was in detoxifying the body, also demonstrated that contrary to Union Carbide's position that only lungs and eyes were damaged by the toxic gases the poisons had actually entered the blood stream and

caused damage to almost every organ in the body.

At least on of the nine members of the committee, Ms Madhumita Dutta from New Delhi has already tendered her resignation to protest against the imbalance of the committee, the inclusion of Dr Mishra and exclusion of the leaders of the four organisations. It was informed by Satinath Sarangi, Rachna Dhingra, Bhopal Group for Information and Action at a press conference here on Saturday. On the occasion large number of members of the four organizations were also present.

Central Chronicle / Bhopal
14/05/06

No security lapse in Carbide plant:

By Our Staff Reporter Bhopal,

A former senior official of the Union Carbide's pesticide plant today denied that lax security measures had resulted in 1984 Bhopal gas disaster, which claimed few thousand lives and affected several lakh people. Deposing before Chief Judicial Magistrate Ravindra Kumar in a criminal case related to the tragedy, the then Union Carbide India Limited production manager SP Choudhary, in his, written statement, said there was no laxity in security arrangement in the factory.

The CBI and other investigating agencies had, not succeeded in establishing a strong reason behind the tragedy. However, allegations were levelled, that the factory's design, was faulty. The pesticide plant was spread over an area of seven eight-acre land and functioned round the clock.

He said it was wrong to say that inadequate safety measures at the plant facing closure due to economic reasons led to the incident. In fact, a simple maintenance campaign was launched

between September and November 1984.

Choudhary rejected allegations levelled against him and pleaded the court to absolve him of the charges. Earlier, the then UCIL non-executive chairman Keshub Mahindra and the then UCIL vice-chairman Kishore Kamdar recorded their statements yesterday.

The statement of the then shift supervisor Shakeel Qureshi was being recorded today. Voluntary organisations Bhopal Gas Peedit Sangharsh Sahyog Samiti and Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sagathan, who are the intervenors appeared together in February.

They included Mahindra, Choudhary Qureshi, the then UCIL works manager J Mukund, the then UCIL production manager KV Shetty, managing director Vijay Gokhale, vice-president Kishore Kamdar and another accused A K Srivastava. After the lunch recess, the CJM fixed the next dates of hearing as July 11 and 12. After Choudhary, Qureshi's statement was recorded. Statements were recorded under section 313 of the CrPC. The state government was represented by CBI Counsel C Sahay and Advocate Ajay Gupta was the defence counsel.

Central Chronicle / Bhopal/
10/06/06

Court records statements of UCIL officials

The Bhopal Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) on Wednesday completed recording statements of all the main accused in connection with a criminal case related to the 1984 Union Carbide gas disaster.

CJM Ravindra Singh recorded the statement of AK Srivastava, a representative of the Union Carbide India Limited

(UCIL). The court had recorded the statements of former UCIL Bhopal plant production manager KV Shetty the other day. Recording of statements of former UCIL chairman Keshub Mahindra, former UCIL works manager J Mukund, former managing director Vijay Gokhale, former UCIL Vice president Kishore Kamdar former production manager SP Choudhary and former shift supervisor Shakil Ibrahim Qureshi had been completed earlier.

During the hearing, the prosecution agency, CBI, sought permission to ask more questions from the accused as investigation into the case was continuing.

Accepting the request, the court directed to make available the prescribed questionnaire to the accused. Meanwhile, Bhopal Gas Peedit Sangharsh Sahyog Samiti and Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan today submitted an application before the court saying the investigation in the case had not been completed and the chargesheet framed against the accused in 1987 needs to be argued.

Central Chronicle / Bhopal/
13/07/06

Declare entire Bhopal as gas-hit'

The Madhya Pradesh government today passed a non-official resolution urging the Centre to declare all 56 wards of this city as affected by the 1984 Gas Tragedy - the world's worst industrial disaster - and thereby eligible for compensation. Replying to a discussion on the resolution tabled by Umashankar Gupta (Bharatiya Janata Party), Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Minister Babulal Gaur said, all wards were affected by the tragedy on the intervening night of December 2-3, 1984.

"At that juncture, the Centre did not consult the state

government while reaching an understanding with Union Carbide. Therefore those in the remaining 20 wards are being denied compensation." Referring to the AR Antulay Committee's recommendations, Gaur said that the Committee also suggested review of the Centre's decision.

"At a Group of Ministers meeting in Delhi, the Centre later recommended inclusion of all the wards for compensation. However, compensation has been provided to all those who submitted medical certificates," he pointed out.

Madhya Pradesh has urged the Centre to arrange for an additional Rs 763 crore for the 20 wards so that a minimum of Rs 25,000 could be provided per person.

Raising a voice of protest, former Gas, Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation minister Arif Aqueel blamed the BJP for delay in declaring entire Bhopal as Gas Tragedy-affected as that party's government took no action on the matter while in power at the Centre.

Ram Lakhan Sharma (Communist Party of India Marxist) and IMP Verma (Bahujan Samaj Party) also took part in the discussion.

Central Chronicle/ Bhopal 04/11/06

Over 6,600 gas victims treated

Clinic has over 18,000 people registered

Clinic has completed 10 years of service
Stress for clinic in each of the affected communities

BHOPAL : More than 6,600 people affected by the Union Carbide plant gas leak in 1984 have been treated this year at the Sambhavna Trust Clinic here.

Addressing presspersons here on Wednesday, managing trustee Satinath Sarangi said the clinic had completed 10 years of service and had about

18,000 people registered with it for long-term treatment through Allopathic, Ayurveda and yoga systems.

This year, from January to November, 6,608 gas victims, including 4,524 females and 2,084 males, visited the clinic.

Mr. Sarangi said that facilities for eye-care, large-scale production of herbal medicines and microbiological tests had been added to the clinic.

Efforts had been taken to encourage affected communities to develop their own medicinal garden.

Mr. Sarangi stressed the need for a clinic in each of the affected communities.

He said employment, pension, safe drinking water, medical research, health surveillance, besides a clean-up of the soil, and groundwater contaminated by the toxic waste at the Carbide plant site were essential for the well-being of the population.

The clinic, which provides free care to gas victims, would hold a four-day exhibition at the Swaraj Bhavan here to mark the 22nd anniversary, photographs, documents and other material linked to the gas leak would be displayed.

Hindu/Delhi / 30/11/06

Bhopal gas victims getting sub-standard drugs: NGOs

"Criminal neglect of medical care by State Government"

BHOPAL: Four non-government organisations working here among the victims of the Union Carbide gas disaster of 1984 and ground water contamination have alleged after conducting raids on Wednesday on two medical stores of the Madhya Pradesh Gas Relief Department that a large number of expired and substandard drugs are being used for treatment of the gas victims.

Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, representatives of the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmachari Sangh, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha, Bhopal Group for Information and Action, and Bhopal ki Aawaaz condemned the State Government saying that it had shown "criminal neglect" towards medical care of the victims.

Upon raiding two medical stores of the Gas Relief Department, they found a large number of expired and substandard drugs, charged the activist leaders, accusing the State Government of deliberately causing harm to the victims of Union Carbide. Of 83 samples of medicines collected from the store, 30 were found to have crossed their expiry date.

Many of these expired medicines were antibiotics such as Norfloxacin, Ampicillin and Tetracyclin and steroids such as Prednisolone that could cause serious damage to people's health.

More than half of the samples collected were of medicines manufactured in Indore, the activists said.

According to them, three Indore firms that are among the largest suppliers of drugs to the Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Department have been found to be producing substandard drugs by the Drug Controller of Rajasthan this year.

In fact, two truckloads of medicines from two of these companies were being unloaded at the office of the Chief Medical Officer when the citizens' raid took place. The leaders said they had been campaigning against the poor quality of medicines at hospitals meant for gas victims for many years.

They alleged large-scale corruption and said the issue of poor quality of medicines had even been brought before the Supreme Court by the

Monitoring Committee in October 2005 when the Committee had recommended that random samples of medicines be taken and sent for testing at reputed labs.

According to the activist leaders, the State Government has not sent any medicine sample for quality testing so far. On October 5 this year the representatives of the four survivors' organisations had raised the issue of "poor quality medicines" at the meeting of the Coordination Committee on Bhopal (CCB) that has been set up on the directives of the Prime Minister.

At this meeting, attended by a Secretary to the State Government, the Director of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation and the Chief Medical Officer (Gas Relief), they had presented a list of 22 medicines from the medical store of Khan Shakir Ali Khan Hospital for investigation.

The activist leaders, Rashida Bi and Champa Devi Shukla of Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmachari Sangh, Shahid Noor of Bhopal ki Aawaaz, Rachna Dhingra and Satinath Sarangi of Bhopal Group for Information and Action told media persons that they would go on an indefinite fast to put pressure on the State Government on issues of medical care, employment, social rehabilitation and environmental remediation.

They said that the fast, to coincide with the New Year, would be for a new beginning in relief and rehabilitation of the victims of Union Carbide disaster.

Hindu / Delhi / 15/12/06

To get Dow to invest, Tata offers to lead initiative on Bhopal**SHISHIR GUPTA**

IN a first-of-its-kind corporate move, Tata group chairman Ratan Tata has volunteered his services to the UPA government for "remediation" of the Bhopal gas tragedy site to pave the way for Dow Chemicals, now the majority stakeholder of Union Carbide Ltd, to invest in India.

Tata's initiative comes after Dow Chemicals President and CEO Andrew N Liveris expressed his apprehension in making large-scale investments in India after the Department of Chemicals and Fertilizers filed an application in a PIL in a district court suggesting that the \$46-billion chemical giant should contribute Rs 100 crore (\$22 million) for remediation of the site.

At the India-US CEO forum meeting in New York last October, Liveris pointed out that the liability, if any, is of Union Carbide, which still exists as a separate company, and no liability rests with Dow as it was not in the picture when the disaster took place 22 years ago. Dow purchased Union Carbide Ltd in 1999.

While Dow has made it clear that it would be willing to contribute voluntarily to the remediation of the site as part of the Indian CEOs' corporate effort, it wants the government to clarify that it does not hold Dow legally responsible for the liabilities of Union Carbide.

Writing to the MEA on November 8, Liveris, who is a member of Indo-US CEO forum, said that it was not possible for Dow to invest in India unless the issue was cleared. The Dow CEO said that it wants to work with the local industry CEOs, Madhya Pradesh Government and New Delhi to expedite the remediation efforts.

However, the positive note is that Dow has been allowed collaboration with Reliance Industries Ltd by the Ministry of Industry after taking a green signal from the Law Ministry. The foreign collaboration approval was given to Dow in October, signalling that India has not blacklisted Dow as an investor.

Dow now has large-scale plans to invest in Madhya Pradesh and proposes to even employ relatives of the Bhopal gas tragedy survivors. West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee has also indicated to Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) representatives that he is looking towards Dow setting up a chemical industry in his state. So in a bid to break the deadlock, Tata wrote to Planning Commission Vice Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia on November 28 that he was willing "to lead and find funding for remediation of site above and below ground" in Bhopal.

It is understood that Tata wants to set up a corpus with the help of other Indian companies and Dow to clean up the Bhopal plant site. Given that the issue is complex and has implications for investors, the UPA government is toying with the idea of setting up of a Committee of Secretaries under Cabinet Secretary B K Chaturvedi to examine Tata's proposal and implementation of the site remediation plan. An alternative is an inter-ministerial meeting with Tata or his representatives.

Dow Chemicals purchased Union Carbide after all civil claims were settled as per the Supreme Court's decision. However, NGOs, in a PIL filed in the district court, have claimed that Dow must be held responsible for the remediation measures at the Bhopal site.

But Dow says that while it is comfortable with the case

against Union Carbide proceeding in the court, it finds the Department of Chemicals suggestion that Dow fork out Rs 100 crore as an interpretation that the government was holding Dow liable. In a letter to the Ministry of Industry on December 8, the Charge d' Affairs of the US Embassy in Delhi urged the government to withdraw the Rs 100-crore claim on Dow.

While the top leadership of the UPA government is in favour of burying the legacy, a senior Cabinet Minister told The Indian Express: "It is a sad history but should not bring about a stalemate. Dow has come to work in India, it is not shying and running away... if we do not help Dow settle this, then the company will move to Thailand or Vietnam."

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Indian Express/Delhi/01/01/07

Do and Dow

Proposal for voluntary corporate clean-up of Bhopal gas site merits serious consideration

Successive Indian governments have failed Bhopal's gas victims in a

variety of ways. From the first shoddy efforts following the terrible incident to non-disbursal of compensation years after the tragedy — it took a PIL and a resultant court ruling for the government to start moving on this front — official responses have made clear there were two villains in the Bhopal case: the callously negligent factory management and the consistently indifferent government. That is why official attempts to act virtuous over Bhopal-related matters are particularly hard to swallow. More so, when after decades, some sensible proposals are being heard.

As this newspaper reported on Monday, Ratan Tata has volunteered to take the lead in remediation — bureaucrats for a clean-up — of the Bhopal site and Dow Chemicals, which bought Union Carbide in 1999, has offered to be part of the process, including making substantial financial contributions. Since the department of chemicals is a plaintiff in an MP district court case where the demand is that Dow should pay Rs 100 crore for the clean-up, the question before the government is this: should it let the issue of Dow investing in India get horribly complicated by taking time and pushing files over the chemical company's legal liabilities, or should it sort out the issue quickly? The only victim in the case of a quick decision will be various departments' efforts to look good.

What needs to be remembered here is that the issue here is not of fixing criminal responsibility. Were that the case, no negotiations or offers would have mattered. The government wants Dow to pay, Dow is willing to pay, a respected Indian industrial house is willing to lead the process. So who gains if the department of chemicals insists that the court case must be the only way to sort out how much money Dow puts in? Arguments about corporate

malfeasance don't apply here. And when they did — the time when the tragedy happened — the government didn't seem to care. Bhopal's victims paid. They are still paying.

Indian Express/Delhi/02/01/07

1984 Bhopal survivors say Ratan Tata anti-national

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 3: Leaders of four organisations of survivors of the December 1984 Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal have condemned Tata Group Chairman Ratan Tata's offer to clear the path for Dow-Union Carbide's investments in India by leading an effort to pay for and clean up Union Carbide's toxic waste in Bhopal.

Displaying a poster of Ratan Tata with a garland of shoes around his neck they called him an anti-national element, who was causing damage to the people and environment by facilitating the expansion of US multinational Dow Chemical in this country. They appealed to Bhopal survivors to boycott Tata's salt as a mark of protest, and have launched a national boycott campaign.

The leaders emphasised that Dow Chemical took over the environmental liabilities of Bhopal when it became the 100% owner of Union Carbide in 2001. They said according to the "polluter pays principle", which is valid in the US and India, Dow/Union Carbide must pay for the clean up in Bhopal.

Indian Express/Delhi/04/01/2007

Bhopal Gas tragedy: SC asks MP govt to furnish response to panel's report

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24: The Supreme Court today asked the Madhya Pradesh Government to furnish its response to the monitoring

committee's report on whether medical facilities were inadequate for the victims of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy, as noted by the committee appointed to ensure timely and adequate medicare facilities to the victims.

The response will be filed within six weeks, said the Bench of Justices CK Thakker and Lokeshwar Singh Panta, who also directed the court-appointed advisory committee to file its report within six weeks.

The directions were issued on the PIL alleging gross neglect of the victims by the authorities in extending proper medicare and treatment facilities. PS Narasimha, counsel appearing for one of the NGOs complained that while the monitoring committee has been meeting regularly and performing its duties, the advisory committee constituted with eminent personalities has not been functional for the past two years.

In compliance with the SC's directions, the State Government on August 17, 2004 had constituted the two committees. According to the terms of references, while the monitoring committee was entrusted with the task of ensuring timely, efficient and effective medicare facilities to the victims, the advisory committee was to examine the treatment practices adopted by the Government and suggest proper measures to overcome the loopholes. It was directed to submit its report to the apex court after every six months. However, the counsel informed how the advisory committee had not been meeting for the past two years and was also not submitting its report to the apex court as directed.

After the tragedy in 1984, three of the NGOs fighting for the victims had in January 1998, filed a petition in the apex court alleging that on an average 10 to 15 people were dying every month in the state on account of the after effects

of the tragedy. It was pointed out that there was severe shortage of medicines and medical facilities, which was aggravating the problem. Besides, the fifth report of the monitoring committee which remarked about the "woeful" performance of the State Government in extending proper medicare to the victims, was also placed on record.

*Indian Express/Delhi/
25/01/07*

Rs 3 cr to be earmarked for gas-hit cancer patients

Bhopal, Feb 3: The fund amounting to Rs 70 lakh earmarked for the medical treatment of the cancer patients of Bhopal gas tragedy will be increased to more than four folds ie Rs three crore in the next financial year. Similarly, the hospitals of the gas relief department would keep on providing medical facilities on chargeable basis to the non gas affected patients on humanitarian ground.

The aforesaid information was given during the meeting of the departmental advisory committee of the gas relief department. The minister for gas tragedy relief and rehabilitation Babulal Gaur presided over the meeting. The members of the committee MLAs Bhaktapal Singh, Phoolsingh Mewada, Principal Secretary Gas Relief MM Upadhyaya, Director Gas Relief MK Varshney and several officers were present on the occasion.

Moreover, it has been decided in the meeting to pursue the case strongly with the union government regarding announcement of the remaining 20 wards of Bhopal as the gas affected and distribution of the relief amount. A demand of Rs 763 crore has been placed before the union government for these wards. Gaur informed that the high power committee constituted

for the gas affected has already consider the remaining 20 wards as the gas affected in principal. The union minister for human resources development Arjun Singh is the chairperson of the committee. It may be recalled that a proposal was passed by the state assembly and sent to the union government for its clearance.

The CMO of the gas relief department Dr DP Agrawal informed that an amount of Rs. six crore 15 lakh has been spent for the free medical treatment of the gas affected cancer patients so far. And a provision of Rs three crore is being made in the next financial year's budget. Further, a proposal of Rs two crore is being sent to the union government as per the recommendations made by the Indian council of medical research and renowned scientists of the country to set up 24 research projects regarding scientific study of disastrous effect of gas on the health of the people. Of these seven projects namely respiratory system, ophthalmology, mental diseases, epidemiological study, cyrogemetic, cancer and immunology have already been started.

Moreover, Rs 90 lakh have been spent on the study of chemical waste and its collection so far. Out of which Rs ten lakh each have been paid to the IICT, NEERI and NGRI apart from Rs 60 lakh to MP pollution control board.

*Central Chronicle/ Bhopal
04/02/07*

Toxic legacy

Ratan Tata's offer to help find funds to remove the toxic waste in UCC's Bhopal plant is inconsistent with the 'polluter pays' principle.

V.VENKATESAN

THE 'polluter pays' principle, which is a basic part of environmental law, requires

that polluters bear the remedial or clean-up costs of the damage they cause to the environment and the expenditure of compensating the victims of the pollution. In the case of the victims of the 1984 Bhopal gas disaster, the polluter, Union Carbide Corporation (UCC), may claim that it fulfilled the second part of this principle, that is, payment of compensation to the victims through the settlement with the Government of India, approved by the Supreme Court. But the question of fixing the liability for the remediation of the toxic waste left behind by its subsidiary Union Carbide India Ltd. (UCIL), which ran the abandoned pesticide plant in Bhopal, continues to be intractable.

Tata Group chairman Ratan Tata, according to a report carried in The Indian Express on January 1, has offered, in a letter to Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Msontek Singh Ahluwalia, to take the lead in finding the funds for remediation of the Bhopal site, above and below ground. Rata Tata has apparently made this offer to enable Dow Chemicals Co. - the company that inherited in 1999 UCC's assets and liabilities - to invest in India without getting bogged down in UCC's liabilities with regard to the clean-up. The Union Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers has urged the Madhya Pradesh High Court to direct Dow to deposit Rs.100 crores with the government for the remediation of the site. Dow is reluctant to invest in India or consider joint ventures with Indian companies until the government absolves the company of this liability. Survivors of the disaster, therefore, consider Ratan Tata's offer a mockery of the 'polluter pays' principle.

Earlier, in his letter to Finance Minister P. Chidambaram on July 10, 2006, Ratan Tata, according to a press release issued by the

Tata Group's spokesperson on January 17, made a similar suggestion. In the letter, Tata urged that remediation of the gas tragedy site be considered because of the likelihood of contamination of the soil and groundwater in the area, which would endanger the health and lives of the people of Bhopal. He suggested that one way forward might be to establish a fund for the remediation of the site. "Should the government and the courts endorse such a line of action, an effort could be made to bring [together] like-minded corporate houses to contribute to such a fund. These suggestions are totally independent of the issues being addressed in the courts," he noted in his letter. In June 2005, under orders from the Madhya Pradesh High Court in a petition filed under a public interest litigation (PIL), the Madhya Pradesh Pollution Control Board (MPPCB) initiated the process of removing the toxic waste from the plant site (Frontline, July 15, 2005). The effort was discontinued after the High Court constituted a task force to assess the magnitude of the problem. The task force set up a technical subcommittee (TSC) to suggest steps that could be taken to dispose of the waste that is lying above ground and that has been excavated from a number of sites within the UCIL factory grounds.

The TSC includes the Chairman of the MPPCB, P.D. Meena; Senior Scientist of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), D.D. Basu; Director Grade Scientist of the National Environment Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Tapan Chakrabarty; Deputy Director of the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology, A. Krishna Reddy; and Head of the Environment Management Division, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), K.P. Nyati. The TSC has two co-opted members, in compliance with the High Court. They are the

renowned scientists P.M. Bhargava of the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad, and J.P. Gupta, Director-General, Gujarat Energy Research and Management Institute. The mandate of the TSC is to give clear recommendations for the safe removal and disposal of the stored toxic waste.

The TSC has so far met twice. In its first meeting, held at the CPCB, Delhi, on July 10, 2006, Bhargava suggested that the first option should be to apply the 'polluter pays' principle, and hence Dow Chemicals Co. should undertake the disposal of the waste. Dow Chemicals Co., he said, must take responsibility for and bear the cost of its removal from UCIL, Bhopal, and its safe disposal in a suitable manner. He stated that the entire process and the treatments discussed by the TSC should be considered the second option. The TSC agreed to this suggestion and decided that it should be placed before the task force for consideration (according to the minutes of the TSC meeting accessed by Frontline).

In its second meeting, held on August 26, 2006, the TSC unanimously recommended that the government should ask Dow Chemicals Co. to take all the waste out of the country (in such a manner that no one is submitted to any health hazards and all legitimate environmental concerns are addressed) for disposal at their expense. This, the TSC felt, would be the only fair, ethical, proper, legal and desirable way of taking care of a problem, for the following reasons:

- * This step would be compatible with the universally accepted principle that in such cases the responsibility for waste disposal must lie with those who generate the waste.

- * When Dow acquired Union Carbide, it acquired all its assets and liabilities.

- * Precedence exists where India has exported hazardous

waste that could not be safely handled in the country. In March 2003, the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board ordered M/s Hindustan Lever Ltd. to export 286 tonnes of its mercury-contaminated waste to an overseas facility.

* Faced with a similar problem, that of obsolete pesticides, Africa called for and constituted a multi-stakeholder partnership called the Africa Stockpiles Programme (ASP) involving African countries, international donors, non-governmental organisations and pesticide manufacturers' associations. The programme envisages "repackaging and export to developed countries for final destruction" of stockpiled pesticides, and all activities will be carried out in line with the strictest health and environmental standards (www.africastockpiles.org).

* In 1995, the European Commission procured 230 tonnes of off-specification fungicide from Rwanda.

* Nearly 300 tonnes of obsolete pesticides were repackaged and exported to Britain from Yemen with the assistance of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the Netherlands and Germany.

If Dow does not agree to remove the waste and ship it overseas, the government should freeze the assets of Dow and all its subsidiaries and associated companies. In the event that Dow refuses to remove the waste, there may be no alternative but to go in for incineration. Incineration may then be carried out in such a way that the people concerned and civil society are satisfied and it is ensured, with total transparency and with participation of civil society, that all conceivable hazards to health have been adequately addressed.

Bhargava and Gupta will also need to access the data collected by NEERI (in the mid-1990s) with regard to the chemical waste in the factory site and give detailed

comments on this matter in order to determine the best way of disposing of the waste.

In the PIL before the High Court, the Central government sought the court's direction to make Dow Chemicals deposit Rs.100 crores for environmental remediation and restoration. The High Court postponed consideration of this plea as in its view the removal of the waste rather than the fixing of responsibility should get priority because unless removed immediately the waste could cause another disaster. It is unclear how the Central government quantified the amount to be advanced by the polluter, as activists allege it is an underestimation. Apparently, however, the Central government's plea before the High Court is a major hurdle to be crossed by Dow before it accepts invitations for investments and collaborations in India. Dow is also evading criminal liability for the disaster before the Bhopal District Court and has secured a stay from the High Court on the notice issued to it by the District Court.

In view of the TSC's recommendation, the High Court may well introspect whether it was prudent to postpone the determination of Dow Chemicals' liability as a polluter. The determination at the earliest of the polluter's liability can help avoid what the TSC has described as the hazards of incineration in unregulated situations, as is the case in India. India, according to the TSC, has no prior experience in trying to use any alternatives to incineration either. More importantly, the determination of Dow's liability for the clean-up is imperative to restrict consideration by the government of mindless offers from Dow's friends in India to remediate Bhopal's waste on its behalf.

It is useful to recall what the Supreme Court said in Indian Council for Enviro-Legal Action vs. Union of India (The Bichhri

Case, 1996): "The 'polluter pays' principle, as interpreted by this Court, means that the absolute liability for harm to the environment extends not only to compensate the victims of pollution but also the cost of restoring the environmental degradation. Remedying the damaged environment is part of the process of 'Sustainable Development' and as such the polluter is liable to pay the cost to the individual who suffers as well as the cost of reversing the damaged ecology." The Supreme Court's ruling in this case is binding on the Bhopal remediation case currently being heard by the Madhya Pradesh High Court.

Frontline 09/02/07

Bhopal gas survivors go on dharna again

NAMRATA BIJI AHUJA

New Delhi, Feb. 23: It has been one year since 55 survivors of the Bhopal gas tragedy embarked on an 800-km-long journey on foot from Bhopal to New Delhi to meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, demanding relief and rehabilitation for the survivors. However, even after a year, there has been no relief for the survivors, who have once again gone on an indefinite dharna, alleging "inaction" and complete apathy on part of the Madhya Pradesh government. More than 400 survivors of the Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal marched with burning torches to the chief minister's residence on Friday as part of the campaign "Jeene ka Haq (Right to Live)". The marchers condemned the chief minister's indifference towards the suffering of the people poisoned in the gas tragedy. Leaders of the Bhopal Gas Peedit Sangh alleged that the state government is blocking the implementation of the decisions of the Coordination Committee on Bhopal (CCB), which was set up to provide relief and rehabilitation for the victims.

"The CCB was set up after Dr Singh conceded to the demands of the Bhopal padayatri after they sat on a 14-day dharna followed by a seven-day hungerstrike in February-March 2006 in the capital," said Rashida Bi of the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karma chari Sangh. The CCB was set up with the participation of senior officials from the Central and state governments and representatives of survivors' organisations.

The survivors' organisations, including Bhopal ki Awaaz and Bhopal Group for Information and Action, said that they have made repeated attempts to meet the chief minister since June 2006. "All efforts have been futile and several petitions on behalf of people poisoned in the tragedy have gone unanswered," they alleged. "The current BJP government has surpassed all previous governments in terms of incompetence, corruption and apathy shown towards the plight of victims," said the survivors' organisations.

Reports of the Supreme Court committee for medical monitoring have -exposed the miserable state of healthcare of the survivors. The reports highlight the lack of standardised treatment protocol in hospitals meant for gas victims.

Asian Age/ New Delhi/ 24/02/07

Bhopal survivors demand pension, free treatment

Bhopal: : Claiming that chromosomal aberrations among people exposed to Union Carbide's toxic gases have caused birth defects among their children, survivors of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy on Sunday sought monthly pension and free treatment for them. Over 120 children of gas-affected parents, below the age of 12, were identified as born

with defects by the Chingari Trust, an organisation working for gas victims. Demanding monthly pension of Rs 1,000 and free medical care from the state government, they claimed the children suffered from defects like cerebral palsy, cleft lip, missing palate and the like. Indian Express/Delhi/ 26/ 02/ 07

Bhopal gas tragedy survivors threaten stir to press demands

They have been demanding clean drinking water, medicare

Madhya Pradesh "obstructing" rehabilitation of survivors

"Supreme Court orders ignored"

NEW DELHI: Representatives of the Bhopal gas tragedy survivors have threatened to go on an indefinite hunger strike in Bhopal from March 5 if their long-pending demands are not immediately met.

The demands include clean drinking water, adequate medical care and social rehabilitation.

Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, Union Carbide gas disaster survivor and winner of Goldman Environmental Prize, Rashida Bee, charged the Madhya Pradesh Government with obstructing medical care and rehabilitation of the survivors.

"We have been sitting on dharna for the past many days in the Capital, but we are yet to get any assurance from Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister about the welfare of those affected. The State Government is ignoring the Supreme Court orders regarding supply of safe water to the people living in the contaminated areas and has not implemented any of the recommendations of the Monitoring Committee set up by the Supreme Court for supervising the Government health care system. We are now forced to go on an

indefinite hunger strike," said Ms. Rashida Bee.

The victims are demanding proper health care, economic rehabilitation, social support, protection from Union Carbide's poisons and a responsive administration.

"We are demanding that the most basic means of survival be provided to those affected."

Apart from the multinational corporation Union Carbide and its new dispensation Dow Chemical, the Central and State Governments are responsible for the fallout of the disaster that struck 22 years ago, said Satinath Sarangi of the Bhopal Group for Information and Action.

The Madhya Pradesh Government had spent close to Rs. 500 crore in the name of relief and rehabilitation, but survivors still did not have proper medical care or adequate rehabilitation, he said.

Hindu/Delhi/02/03/07

Students oppose Tata's offer to clean Bhopal toxic waste

Students from Delhi have now joined the protest against Tata's offer to clean up the Union Carbide factory, the site of the tragic Bhopal gas disaster of 1984.

The students and youth held a demonstration and formed a human chain in front of an office of the Tata group in Connaught Place in the Capital to protest against its offer to clean the toxic wastes abandoned by the Union Carbide in Bhopal.

About 40 students from various colleges in Delhi under the banner of 'We for Bhopal and Tarunima', an organisation fighting against the Union Carbide, criticised Tata's offer to clear the wastes. They said it would clear Carbide's liabilities and enable it and its new owner Dow chemical to expand their businesses in India.

"It is the responsibility of the polluter to clean the wastes. The Tatas should first clear their wastes in different parts of the country," said Shalini Sharma, student coordinator of the Campaign for Justice in Bhopal.

According to Suroopa Mukherjee, advisor to students-led We for Bhopal group, a government-aided clean-up retains the possibility of recovering the money from the company depending on the outcome of the ongoing case in the Madhya Pradesh High Court. "But the Tata's offer of a charitable clean-up would make it impossible to pin liability and recover the cost from the company," she added.

Tribune/Delhi/04/ 03/ 07

Bhopal gas survivors protest, 9 held

Nine persons were arrested this afternoon after hundreds of women, led by various organisations supporting a four-point charter of demands by Bhopal Gas Tragedy victims, staged a demonstration in front of Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's residence.

The protesters, who reached the place in two vehicles, were adamant about meeting Chouhan, squatted on the road and shouted slogans.

"The arrests were executed as the women were in a prohibited area. Those apprehended included the Bhopal Group for Information and Action's Rachna Dhingra, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan's Rasheeda Bi, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmachari Sangh's Farida Bi and Shahzadi Bi. They were attempting to force their way in," said SP Anant Kumar Singh.

Meanwhile, Dhingra said the demonstrators draped shrouds around themselves after their demands were not met. "For a long time, the women were seeking a meeting with the chief minister as they wished to

discuss the problems of gas tragedy-affected areas". The charter of demands included making arrangements for the medical treatment of victims, providing jobs, ensuring rehabilitation, supplying pure water and disposing of chemical waste accumulated in the now-closed Union Carbide factory premises.

Tribune/ Delhi/ 04/ 03/ 07

Gas tragedy survivors go on fast

BHOPAL : Six persons representing the survivors of the Union Carbide gas disaster of 1984 began an indefinite fast here on Monday demanding "proper medical care, economic and social rehabilitation and protection from Union Carbide's poisons that continue to kill and maim people even after 22 years".

The fast is part of an ongoing "Jeene Kaa Haq" (Right to Live) campaign led by four organisations - Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmachari Sangh, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha, Bhopal Ki Aawaaz, and Bhopal Group for Information and Action -- working among the survivors of the disaster and those affected by ground water contamination caused due to the negligence of Union Carbide's current owner, Dow Chemical company.

The hunger strikers include the Goldman Environmental Prize winner Rashida Bee who lost of her six family members to cancer and herself suffers from chronic physical and mental problems ever since the disaster.

Others include Guddi Bee and Jabbar Khan who live next to the Union Carbide factory and are affected due to contaminated ground water.

The fourth member in the group, Shehazadi Bee, was exposed to Carbide's toxic gases in 1984 and then to contaminated water when she

moved in to a community close to the factory.

The other two hunger strikers are Rachna Dhingra and Satinath Sarangi who are not affected themselves but have been involved with relief, research and campaign efforts in support of the Bhopal survivors for years.

The organisations are demanding free medical care of the residents of communities near the Union Carbide factory with contaminated ground water, implementation of a drug policy to ensure evidence based treatment with quality medicines and greater emphasis on Yoga and herbal treatments in the health care of the people affected by toxic chemicals.

They are also calling upon the State Government to ensure adequacy of doctors and diagnostic equipment in the hospitals and clinics meant for treatment of the poisoned people.

Hindu/Delhi/06/03/07

Paswan's assurance to Bhopal gas survivors

The International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (ICJB) received some hope after union chemicals and fertilisers minister Ram Vilas Paswan assured its representatives in the Capital yesterday that he would take up issues of survivors of world's worst industrial disaster with the Prime Minister.

Six ICJB members, including four survivors of the Union Carbide disaster of 1984, have been on an indefinite fast in Bhopal, demanding medical care, economic and social rehabilitation and protection to the environment from toxic substances that continues to affect people of Bhopal even after 22 years. The hunger strikers include Goldman Environmental prize winner Rashida Bee, who lost six family members to cancer and

she herself suffers from chronic physical and mental problems ever since the disaster.

Late last evening in Delhi, ICJB members Shalini Sharma, Suroopa Mukherjee and CPI National Secretary D. Raja shared the concerns of the survivors with Paswan and presented him a memorandum. "The minister was very supportive. He spoke on the phone with survivors' representative Satinath Sarangi, who is also fasting in Bhopal, and promised to take up the matter with the Prime Minister. He was concerned that while the Central Government provided the state government with Rs 14 crore for clean drinking water through Kolar pipeline, but no progress had been made in this regard," says Shalini.

Survivors say that despite the Prime Minister agreeing to demands of the 55 Bhopal survivors, who marched 800 km for 33 days on foot from Bhopal to Delhi last year, the state government continues to be indifferent.

"Our demands stem from the fact that the Madhya Pradesh government has not implemented any of the decisions reached at the two meetings of the Coordination Committee on Bhopal (CCB), presided over by the joint secretary, Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers," activist Satinath Sarangi.

As per the decisions of the CCB, the Madhya Pradesh government was to prepare an action plan for medical, economic, social and environmental rehabilitation by December 2006. "However, no action plan has yet been prepared nor has the state government formed sub-groups with participation of survivors' organisations to overlook different aspects of rehabilitation work. No representative of the state government has responded even after 15 days of the

dharna and third day into the fast," he says.

Besides this, the survivors are also protesting against Ratan Tata's offer to lead a charitable clean-up of the toxic wastes abandoned by Union Carbide in Bhopal. "Tata's offer is meant to clear Carbide's liabilities and enable it and its new owner Dow Chemical to expand their businesses in India," the survivors allege.

The Union Carbide had fled India after the 1984 Bhopal disaster, abandoning thousands of tonnes of toxic wastes. In 2001, Dow Chemical took over all of Carbide's assets. "But Dow failed to produce Union Carbide to face trial in India, and refused to take responsibility for cleaning up the toxic contamination. Because of these unresolved liabilities, Dow Chemical has put investment plans on hold. Tata's offer will allow Union Carbide to go scot-free, and even allow the company to resume business in India," the ICJB says.

Tribune/Delhi/ 09/ 03/ 07

Gas-hit demonstrate at CM house

Bhopal, Mar 14: Over 1000 survivors of the Union Carbide disaster, protesting against the indifferent attitude of the state government towards the suffering of the people, on Wednesday, demonstrated in front of the residence of the Chief Minister.

They bitterly criticised the Chief Minister for remaining apathetic towards the health condition of the six supporters who have been fasting for the last 9 days, demanding medical care, economic and social rehabilitation and protection from UC poisons.

The protestors said that while Union Carbide's poisons are still killing people, the survivors are also dying untimely deaths because of the state government's failure in

providing proper medical care and rehabilitation.

Goldman environmental prize winner Rasheeda Bi, Guddi Bi, Jabbar Khan, Shahjad Bi, Rachna Dhingra and Satinath Sarangi on indefinite fast for the last nine days. The health of all the six persons on fast are being monitored by doctors from the Gandhi Medical College and according to the latest reports the health of all the six is deteriorating.

It may be mentioned here that the chief minister, who had earlier promised to accept all 'logical and lawful' demands of the gas affected remains to respond to the specific demands of the protestors even after nine days of fast.

Central Chronicle/ Bhopal 15/03/07

Tragedy's children

Bhopal gas victims demand a proper rehabilitation package including research-based treatment

Sanjay Sharma / Bhopal

Even after 22 years, the world's worst industrial disaster in Bhopal remains a painful memory for the people of the city. The survivors are still struggling to overcome the trauma.

The victims are forced to live a life of destitution, as proper rehabilitation measures have not been taken after their exposure to the toxic gas. They are now facing another nightmare as the children born to them are facing physical and mental deformities.

The survivors of the Bhopal gas tragedy have launched a Jeene Ka Haq (Right to Live) campaign demanding free treatment of such children and a monthly pension of Rs 1,000 for them from the state government.

The tragedy occurred on the night of December 2/3, 1984, when over 40 tonnes of Methyl Iso-Cyanate (MIC) gas leaked out of Union Carbide's

pesticide plant killing more than 15,000 people.

The tanks full of toxic chemicals had been left there and washed away by the rainwater and percolated down poisoning the drinking water. According to former workers of Union Carbide, while the factory was in operation, massive amounts of chemicals including pesticides, solvents, catalysts and waste materials were being dumped in and around the factory. These included deadly substances such as aldicarb, carbaryl, mercury and several chlorinated chemicals and organic poisons.

Ironically, no scientist or organisation has come forward for research despite several request letters being sent to several institutes including the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR), said Satinath Sarangi, an activist fighting for the cause of the victims.

Medical aid to the victims cannot be effective without proper research because the etiology of the gas syndrome and second-generation damage has not been properly understood, said Sarangi.

The varied effects of the chemicals on the ground water and the level of contamination in and around the factory also needs research, he said, adding that high level of chemicals have been found in breast milk among women of the area. Some studies conducted by the Sambhavana Trust Clinic indicated that about half of the people living in the area were suffering from multiple diseases.

Vital areas of study like neurological problems, hormonal, mental (post traumatic stress disorder) and genetic damage in the second generation need to be properly researched for providing the right treatment. Congenital abnormalities in over 120 children have been attributed to the exposure of their parents to MIC gas.

Meanwhile the Chingari Trust, which was set up by Golden Peacock Award winners Rashida Bee and Champa Devi from the award money they got in 2004 for fighting the cause of the gas victims, is trying to help those affected.

Trust members have been sitting on dharna for the last 15 days alongwith with activists from other organizations like the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmachari Sangh (BGPMSKS), Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha (BGPMPM), Bhopal Group for Information and Action (BGIA) and Bhopal Ki Aawaaz (BKA) demanding medical care and economic and social rehabilitation of the victims.

Presenting 14 affected children, Rachna Dhingra of BGIA said, "These children suffer from defects like cerebral palsy, cleft lip, missing palate and disabilities related to vision, hearing and mental disorders and their number could increase if an in-depth survey is conducted."

"Last year the trust identified 100 children with different kinds of birth defects. Later specialists from New Delhi and Bhopal at a health camp found that a large number of children are suffering from cerebral palsy that causes total disability. The doctors also found children with cleft lip and missing palate and with disabilities related to vision, hearing impairment and mental functions," said Sarangi.

Several scientific studies by the government and non-government agencies have confirmed that several birth defects have been caused by chemicals and heavy metals in the ground water in and around the Union Carbide factory.

The four organizations who are determined to continue with the dharna till the state government concedes their demands of 'Right to Life' campaign are also demanding monthly pensions for the women who were widowed in

the disaster, persons who are unable to work, survivor families below the poverty line and those above 60 years of age with no one to depend on.

The campaign was launched to push forward the resolution of their long-pending demands, including healthcare, economic rehabilitation and social support for the survivors and their families, availability of safe drinking water and removal of hazardous waste from the Union Carbide Corporation's (UCC) abandoned plant.

The Central government had earlier approved a five-year action plan for the medical, social, economic and environmental rehabilitation of the Bhopal gas victims with a total outlay of Rs 163 crore which was subsequently increased to Rs 258 crore.

"This outlay was to be shared between the Centre and the state in a 75:25 ratio. The Centre has already released its share of Rs 1.93 billion and the state government has been informed that if further money was required by for the rehabilitation programmes started under the action plan, such funds should be provided as a part of the state plan in consultation with the Planning Commission", minister of state for chemicals and fertilizers and parliamentary affairs, B K Handique has informed the Lok Sabha last week.

Sahara Times/ Delhi 18/03/07

MP accepts demands of Bhopal victims

NEW DELHI, ARCH 19: Following enormous pressure, the Madhya Pradesh government has agreed to meet some of the demands related to water, medical care and rehabilitation of the people affected by the Bhopal gas tragedy.

The latest agreement comes after six of the "Right to Live" campaigners fasted for nearly a fortnight in Bhopal. Today, on behalf of the state

government, the collector handed over a written response to each of the demands raised by the four organisations involved.

Now, immediate steps will be taken to fill vacant posts in hospitals meant for gas-affected people. Doctors and specialists at the gas relief hospitals will henceforth be hired on five year contracts in place of two years. The government will also vacate 152 work sheds in the Special Industrial Area within three months to establish employment generating industries. Additionally, the state government will help survivors form Self Help Groups that will carry out production activities and survivors will be given priority while granting loans and subsidies through existing self employment schemes.

The state government also agreed to provide all information on soil and ground water contamination in and around the Union Carbide factory and to build a wall around its premises to protect children and cattle from hazardous materials. For provision of safe water in the vicinity of the abandoned factory, 50 additional tanks will be provided within a month's time.

The demands of the campaigners regarding setting up of an office of the Coordination Committee on Bhopal and formation of sub-groups on medical care, economic, social and environmental rehabilitation with participation of survivors' organisations was also accepted.

On behalf of the state government, the collector will organise a follow up meeting after a month to take stock of progress made with regard to different issues.

Meanwhile, the Bhopal organisations said public action had been planned in India and abroad for April and May in the event the State Government

failed to honour its commitments. Supporters from India, US and other countries sent more than 2,000 faxes to the Chief Minister and made more than 500 phone calls to senior bureaucrats and ministers in the Madhya Pradesh Government in this regard

**Indian Express/Delhi/
20/03/07**

Dow doesn't want to clean up Bhopal

New Delhi: Efforts to end the deadlock over compensation for Bhopal victims while absolving Dow Chemical Company has seen the firm lobby its case with Indian government, claiming that Indian officials had held a similar view.

A letter from Dow Chemical Company's chairman Andrew N Liveris to the Indian ambassador to the US, Ronen Sen, claims that Indian government representatives at the US-India CEO Forum in New York in 2006 made statements absolving Dow of responsibility for the Bhopal disaster. As a result, Liveris requests that the Union ministry of chemical and fertilisers withdraw its order asking Dow to pay Rs 100 crore for the cleanup of the disaster-hit area.

Interestingly, the letter has also been forwarded to deputy chairman of the Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia by none other than Ratan Tata with a suggestion that accepting Dow's position would help 'break the deadlock'.

Revealing the letters, secured via an RTI application, Rachna Dhingra of the Bhopal Group for Information and Action, said that the fact that Liveris writes that "resolution of the Bhopal legacy issue must be seen as a tangible, deliverable outcome for the CEO Forum" confirms suspicions that there is pressure on the Indian government to indemnify Dow

against liabilities arising out of Bhopal.

Ratan Tata had earlier put out a suggestion that government allow corporate India led by Tata to bear the cost of remediation. Ratan Tata is also the co-chair of the US-India CEO Forum, a body of Indian and US industrialists created to foster bilateral business relations.

Liveris's letter states that "given the statement made by the government representatives in front of all meeting attendees that Dow is not responsible for Bhopal and will not be pursued by the GOI, it will be important to follow through to ensure that concrete sustained actions are taken that are consistent with these statements." Liveris says in the letter to the ambassador: "I appreciate your continued support regarding these proposals, and would value an opportunity to discuss next steps with you."

Ratan Tata in his communication to Ahluwalia enclosed a copy of Liveris's letter and says: "It (withdrawal of fertiliser ministry's order to Dow to deposit money) is a key aspect and I wanted your assessment as to whether this is possible."

**Times of India/ Delhi/
10/04/07**

UC related fetuses find no takers

Adhir Kumar Saxena

Bhopal, Apr 9: Even after 23 years of the Union Carbide catastrophe, fetuses and other vital organs collected from the unfortunate victims remain at the Medico Legal Institute of Bhopal. The Medico Legal Institute has no idea what to do with about 25 fetuses it had preserved with an intention of offering them for some sort of research.

Despite several efforts of the institute director, no one has come forward to opt for research work on the world's worst industrial disaster. Apart from the fetuses, vital human

parts including liver, spleen and brain of foetuses also remain in the shelves waiting for either government institute or private one to take up some sort of research.

The foetuses belonged to pregnant women who died immediately after the gas leak on the night of December 3, 1984, or those who underwent abortions after the tragedy.

"I am not legally bound to preserve them but I took it as a social and moral responsibility," said Dr DK Satpathy, the institute's director. No one has shown interest, though I have repeatedly written to the state government and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

He said the institute's job was over with the post-mortem when it was established that the deaths were indeed caused by the leaked gas, Methyl Isocyanate. Once we established that the gas had crossed the placental blood barrier, we did not need the foetuses, he added.

Normally, they are disposed off once the criminal case is tried, he said.

According to him these control samples are still useful to compare the effect of the poisonous gas on lives exposed to it 23 years ago. Institute sources informed that apart from the human organs, the institute has also turned into a godown for human bones as many people do not claim bodies of their near and dear ones and at times, the bodies remain unidentified and they remain stored in the institute.

Central Chronicle / Bhopal
10/04/07

MP task force ignores advice on Bhopal gas leak waste

APURVA

VADODARA, MAY 2: The decision to dispose the 1984 Bhopal Gas Tragedy waste in Ankleshwar in Gujarat has been contentious from the start.

P M Bhargava, a member of the Technical Sub Committee (TSC) appointed by the Madhya Pradesh High Court to look into the disposal of the waste, had raised objections about disposing the waste anywhere in India.

In his report to the Madhya Pradesh Task Force, appointed to investigate the case, he had recommended that the waste be shipped back to Dow Chemical (formerly Union Carbide), who have won the disposal case. However, the Task Force chose to circumvent his recommendations.

Bhargava, also the vice chairman of National Knowledge Commission, member of the National Security Advisory board in his advisory capacity said, "I had recommended that the present owners — Dow Chemicals should dispose the waste not in India, but in the US," when his recommendations did not figure out in the final report.

While Ankleshwar is one of the largest chemical industry hubs in the country, activists point out that it has no great track record in chemical waste disposal. The proposal, therefore, has the locals opposing it.

Bhargava and J P Gupta were part of a two member technical committee appointed by the Madhya Pradesh High Court. Bhargava is founder chairman of Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, while Gupta is an academician at IIT, Kanpur.

Speaking to The Indian Express, Bhargava said that the minutes of the Task Force meeting did not contain all the suggestions of the TSC. "The Task Force had omitted parts of the TSC report that strongly suggested that the waste be shipped back to Dow Chemicals for disposal in US," said Bhargava from Hyderabad.

Documents in the possession of The Indian Express prove that the Task

Force in its ninth meeting held on October 16, 2006, had only retained the suggestion to ship the waste to the incinerator in Ankleshwar for disposal, which they recommended provisionally only under strict conditions.

Instead of the Indian government, which is footing the disposal bill, the committee had strongly held that Dow Chemicals should be responsible for disposing the waste. The TSC had stated that taking the waste out of the country was "the only fair, ethical, proper, legal and desirable way of taking care of the problem."

In a letter addressed to B K Singh, the member-secretary of the Madhya Pradesh Pollution Control Board and P D Meena, the chairman of the MPPCB, Bhargava had asked Singh why he had received only two pages of the minutes of the Task Force meeting, and had asked for the rest of the pages.

Indian Express/Delhi/
03/05/07

SC rejects sop to Bhopal Gas victims

New Delhi, May 4: The Supreme Court today dismissed an application seeking an announcement of compensation for the victims of the Bhopal Gas tragedy in December 1984, which claimed about 3,000 lives.

A Bench comprising Justices C K Thakker and H S Bedi dismissed the application filed by Bhopal Gas Pedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan (BGPMUS) holding that the 1989 settlement with the US-based Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) and the Central Government was arrived at with the intervention of a five-judge constitution Bench headed by then Chief Justice of India (CJI) R S Pathak and a two-judge Bench cannot reopen and review the judgement of a larger Bench.

Over 3,000 residents of Bhopal were killed due to the

leakage of poisonous gas from the UCC premises in December 1984, and thousand others were seriously affected and hundreds of the victims became disabled for life.

Central Chronicle/ Bhopal 05/05/07

Govt assures action against Dow Chemicals, if guilty

NEW DELHI, May 4: The government today assured that it would take action against Dow Chemicals, the multinational company which took over the controversial Union Carbide in 2001, if the company is found guilty with respect to reports that it bribed Indian officials to get its products registered.

Ms Brinda Karat of the Communist Party of India-Marxism alleged in the Rajya Sabha that these products are banned in the United States and other developed countries due to adverse effect on children, and demanded blacklisting of the company.

The issue was raised by BJP MP S S Ahluwalia who cited reports of United States Securities Exchange Commission (SEC) about confessions by Dow Chemicals regarding it having bribed Indian officials some years ago for securing approval of its products.

The MP also queried the minister, about the Multi-National Company allegedly pressuring the government to get rid of its financial liability for clean up of the Bhopal toxic waste. According to Amnesty International, more than 22,000 people have died and over 100,000 continue to suffer as a result of the 1984 disaster in which about 40 tons of deadly methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas was released from the Union Carbide plant on 3 December 1984.

"After investigations, action will be taken against the company," the agriculture

minister, Mr Sharad Pawar, said on demands to blacklist the company. He said he was aware of the reports. The incident reportedly took place between 1996 and 2001.

Preliminary inquiries revealed that a senior officer of the Central Insecticides Board (CIB) and some officers of the state government were involved, he said. "We have already ordered a CBI inquiry into this."

The case pertains to three molecular products developed by Dow Chemicals which the company allegedly approved by bribing some officials.

"We asked them (the company) about the truth. They told us we bribed one officer of Central Insecticides Board who retired in 2001 and some pesticides control, inspectors of the state, Mr. Pawar said and added that the government had also written to the certification committee to examine the quality of these chemicals. If these did not fit, the standards, the licenses would be cancelled, he said and added the report was expected it about two months. Amnesty has said that in a 8 November 2006 letter to the Indian ambassador to the United States, Ronen Sen, Dow emphasised its interest in eliminating the Bhopal impediment to investment in India.

The letter requested, that the government withdraw its application for a financial deposit against remediation costs (for Bhopal cleanup).

In a case in Madhya Pradesh High Court regarding cleanup of the toxic abandoned factory site, the Indian government has filed a brief asking for a \$22 million, deposit toward cleanup costs.

Amnesty also cited a second letter, dated 28 November 2006, from Indian industrialist Ratan Tata to the Planning Commission, supporting the request.

Statesman/Delhi/05/05/07

Plan to burn Carbide's waste opposed

Bhopal, May 6: Four organisations working among the survivors of the 1984 Union Carbide gas disaster have strongly objected the Madhya Pradesh Government's plan to dispose toxic waste of Union Carbide Factory in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.

The organisations demanded that the recommendations of a technical committee -- comprising government and non-government scientists -- formed by the Supreme Court in this regard be implemented. Bhopal Group For Information and Action spokesperson Satinath Sarangi told reporters here that the government had come out with a plan to dispose about 386 tonne toxic waste by burying it in Indore and burning it Gujarat's Ankleshwar.

He said the technical committee had clearly stated the DOW Chemicals should be pressurised to take the toxic waste to the US where it could be disposed safely. He pointed out that several organisations had made it clear in their survey that toxic waste from Union Carbide factory premises was causing various diseases. Sarangi said the government wanted to dispose the waste in an unscientific manner. The waste proposed to be disposed was less than one percent of the toxic substance. He the most important task before the government was to protect the toxic waste from rains before the start of monsoon season so that groundwater does not get polluted.

Sarangi alleged that the state government had no scheme to dispose of thousands of tonne of toxic waste and cleaning polluted land and water.

Citing a report by Dr Shults, advisor of a joint project between India and Germany, he said burning of toxic waste in Ankleshwar would release dioxygen and other chemicals

polluting the environment and badly affecting the health of about one lakh people.

He said the Gujarat Pollution Control Board had recently declared Ankleshwar as pollution-affected. He said the four organisations—Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmachari Sangh, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha, Bhopal Group for Information and Action and Bhopal Ki Awaz—had decided not allow the government dispose the toxic waster in Ankleshwar and Indore.

Central Chronicle/ Bhopal/ 07/05/07

A toxic burden

The Bhopal gas victims are against the shifting of toxic wastes to other states

Sanjay Sharma / Bhopal

THE Survivors of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy have declared that they would not allow any portion of Union Carbide's hazardous chemical waste, believed to be over 8,000 tonnes, to be taken out of the factory premises for incineration or as landfill as it would cause irreparable harm to the environment and the people. The waste is to be sent either to Ankleshwar in Gujarat for incineration or for land filling at Pithampur in the state.

"Our sufferings have made us resolve that we cannot let other people anywhere suffer like us. We will not allow Bhopal-like disasters in Ankleshwar and Pithampur and will fight every inch to ensure that the waste is not transported for unsafe disposal," Rashida Bee, president of the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmachari Sangh (BGPMSKS), told a press conference.

"Dow Chemical (which now owns Union Carbide) must carry this waste to the USA like Unilever carried the mercury waste from Kodaikanal in Tamil

Nadu to the USA in 2003," she said.

The other three organisations present were the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha (BGPMPMSM), Bhopal Ki Aawaaz (BKA) and the Bhopal Group for Information and Action (BGIA).

The Bhopal gas tragedy, the world's worst man-made industrial disaster that killed thousands instantaneously and maimed several thousands for life, occurred on Dec 2-3, 1984, when more than 40 tonnes of lethal Methyl Iso-Cyanate and other toxic gases spewed out of Union Carbide's pesticide plant. "The pesticide factory premises are still believed to be having over 8,000 tonnes of chemical waste that was recklessly dumped below and above the ground in and around the factory," alleged Satinath Sarangi of BGIA.

More than 10 studies by government and non-government scientific agencies have pointed out the presence of toxic chemicals in the ground water that could cause cancer and birth defects.

The Bhopal survivors' organisations hold the Dow Chemical Company, that took over Union Carbide in 2001, liable for the toxic legacy and are demanding money to clean up the place and compensation for injuries as per the "polluter pays" principle.

Condemning the Madhya Pradesh government's plans for disposal of 386 tonnes of Union Carbide's hazardous waste in Ankleshwar, Gujarat, and Pithampur near Indore, the leaders of the organisations demanded that the recommendation of the Technical Sub-Committee (of the Task Force) set up by the high court on this matter be implemented.

The Technical Sub-Committee comprising government and non-government scientists has recommended that the government must make Dow

Chemicals carry the hazardous waste from Bhopal to the USA or elsewhere with facilities for safe disposal.

The organizations have also accused the state government of having no scientific plans to deal with the thousands of tonnes of toxic waste and contaminated soil and ground water.

Citing the report of Dr Eckart Schultes, consultant in an Indo-German collaboration project, the organizations pointed out that the incineration of the hazardous waste in Ankleshwar would emit mercury and chemical pollutants including dioxin and toxic dust causing irreparable damage to the environment and to the health of over 100,000 people of Ankleshwar. They said that the Gujarat Pollution Control Board has just last year categorised Ankleshwar as an "environmental hotspot."

They also presented a critique of the Treatment Storage and Disposal Facility [TSDF] or Landfill, being built in Pithampur near Indore. The appraisal by Joseph Jackson a senior consultant with 6 years industry specific highly relevant experience of contaminated land consultation in Britain, points out that the landfill being built on top of a hill at Pithampur is a very unstable location and could well collapse.

The report, they said, also points out the absence of baseline information on ground water quality and the inadequate monitoring of the impact of the landfill on the local environment. The organizations pointed out that the Pithampur TSDF has been made by the same company Ramky that caused a toxic nightmare in June 2005 during the packaging of toxic waste in the Union Carbide factory.

Sahara Time/ Delhi/ 20/05/07

Firm to burn toxic waste from Bhopal gas tragedy

R.K. MISRA

Ahmedabad, May 29: An Indian firm plans to burn toxic waste from the Bhopal disaster, the world's worst industrial accident, despite environmentalists' objections.

The firm, Bharuch Environ Infrastructure Ltd., said burning the waste poses no threat. "We have the best waste disposal facility and it is child's play for us," Rajju Shroff, Beil's chairman, said on Tuesday. The 1984 leak of methyl isocyanate gas from a Bhopal pesticide plant run by a subsidiary of the US chemical company Union Carbide killed at least 10,000 people and affected about 550,000 others.

Survivors have since been fighting to get the site cleaned up, but say their efforts were slowed when union carbide was taken over by Michigan-based Dow Chemical Co. in 2001, seven years after Union Carbide sold its interest in the Bhopal plant. Dow has maintained that it is not responsible for cleaning up the site, and the plant is now under the control of India's Madhya Pradesh, which has agreed to pay Beil \$220,000 to dispose off the waste.

Punjwani said 350 tons of waste will be transported from Bhopal to Ankleshwar, an industrial area in the western state of Gujarat, by July. It will then be burned at high temperatures over the course of a week. Environmentalists objected to disposing of the waste in Ankleshwar, and said Beil was not up to the task. (AP)

Asian Age/ Delhi/ 30/05/07

Bhopal to ship Carbide waste to Bharuch

In order to solve the problem of disposing the waste generated

from the world's worst industrial disaster that occurred in Bhopal in 1984, the Madhya Pradesh Government has decided to shift the hazardous waste lying at the Union Carbide factory to Gujarat. A decision in this connection has been taken for incinerating the toxic waste at the Ankleshwar-based incinerator of Bharuch Environ Infrastructure Limited (BEIL).

The State Government in this regard has finalised that the toxic waste would be shifted to Ankleshwar but for the final dates or the complete schedule the Government is waiting for High Court directives.

The recent statement by BEIL that the company was ready to burn the toxic waste without any problem in July this year, has raised many eyebrows. Two days ago, BEIL chairman Ashok Punjwani told mediapersons in Ahmedabad, "Disposing the controversial Union Carbide waste is child's play for us. It will be burnt in incinerators for eight days at a very high temperature."

Besides, the Gujarat-based environmentalists the gas survivors from Bhopal have also asked the State Government not to shift the problem from one place to another.

Rachna Dhingra of Group for Information and Action while talking to The Pioneer alleged that in Bhopal, the toxic waste had affected all the ground water in the vicinity. Even the under ground water had been affected thereby causing several health hazards to the people, she added.

She further claimed that by shifting the toxic waste to Gujarat, the people living in the surroundings of the incinerator would be exposed to several health hazards. "We have also filed a petition in the Jabalpur High Court seeking intervention for not allowing the waste to be disposed in Gujarat, but that is yet to be heard," she added.

On the intervening night of December 2 and 3, 1984,

tonnes of toxic gas had leaked from the Union Carbide factory then owned by Union Carbide Limited. This fatal MIC gas had claimed over 3,800 people. Since then, thousands more have died from exposure-related sicknesses, while lakhs of survivors are still facing ill effects of the lethal gas. The gas victims had been demanding that the toxic wastes accumulated at the factory be cleaned up.

Rachna further said, "Our main contention is why a national company has been given contract for disposing of the toxic waste, while the Dow Chemical (earlier Union Carbide) was responsible for the gas tragedy. The Dow Chemical should be called for disposing of the hazardous waste." She claimed that the petition was scheduled to be heard in the High Court on May 25, but the Dow Chemical's advocate did not turn up.

The Pioneer/Delhi/ 01/ 06/ 07

Petition against dumping of Bhopal waste at Ankleshwar

VADODARA, JUNE 21: The Madhya Pradesh High Court today admitted an Ankleshwar-based activist's application which seeks to reverse the decision to dispose the chemical waste left over from the Bhopal Gas Tragedy at Ankleshwar in Bharuch District. The court also set August 8 as the date for the hearing when the activist can present his case.

The application cites excerpts from the Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB) report of June 2006, which maintains that Ankleshwar is a hotspot in terms of pollution. Activist Zia Pathan, who filed the intervention application at the Jabalpur court said, "We knew the decision would not be reversed immediately, but they have allowed me to present my case."

According to Pathan, the GPCB report clearly mentions Ankleshwar as a hotspot, particularly because of the presence of a large number of chemical industries. "Most of the people in Ankleshwar as well as the municipality are against this decision as it would only worsen the state of an already polluted town," said Pathan. He added that awareness among citizens there about the dangers was only increasing.

Vadodara-based environmental NGO Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti (PSS) is also working closely with Pathan. PSS front man Rohit Prajapati said that air samples that he had taken earlier suggested that the presence of cancerous chemicals were at levels higher than international standards. "We hope to get a favourable decision from the court, meanwhile, there might even be more demonstrations in Ankleshwar by the people," he said.

**Indian Express/Delhi/
22/06/07**

Travelling graveyard

People resist move to dispose of Bhopal gas tragedy's toxic wastes in Gujarat

Nandini Oza/ANKLESHWAR

A drive down National Highway 8 linking Vadodara and Mumbai exposes one to the gravity of pollution in and around Ankleshwar, one of the main chemical industrial estates in Gujarat. More than one lakh people live in Ankleshwar, Panoli and Jhagadia industrial estates, inhaling life-threatening gases.

Ismail Bhaiyat, 73, a resident of neighbouring Sanjali, struggles to breathe and the very mention of pollution makes him hysterical. His wife, too, is ailing and weak and their home is stacked with medical reports.

The Gujarat Ecology Commission, an autonomous

body of the Gujarat government, in a report five years ago, dubbed Ankleshwar a "toxic hotspot" as its air pollution "was not monitored regularly". Now the danger level is set to rise, fear environmentalists. The Madhya Pradesh government is taking 346 metric tonnes of toxic waste from the Bhopal gas tragedy-which killed over 3,800 people and affected over half a million on December 3, 1984-to be disposed of at Bharuch Enviro Infrastructure Limited (BEIL) in Ankleshwar.

One Alok Pratap Singh had filed a petition in the Madhya Pradesh High Court in 2004, demanding that the waste be disposed of. The High Court had set up a task force and recommended that the wastes be taken to BEIL. The wastes contain traces of semi-processed pesticides, naphthol, excavated wastes and reactor residues. The decision has sparked off environmental and health concerns.

Dr Ranjan Pasricha, a neuro-physician in Ankleshwar, said: "I have been seeing several cases of cerebral tuberculosis and these can be directly and indirectly linked to pollution. Pollution weakens lungs and other body parts." He is currently treating a 12-year-old girl.

Pollution has already killed natural water resources, leaving the farmers in trouble. "In the past, a monitoring committee of the Supreme Court had taken note of the pollution and said that the ineffective practices of entrepreneurs and laxity of authorities in implementing environmental regulations had exhausted the groundwater supplies," says Rohit Prajapati of Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti, a Vadodara-based group of environmentalists.

The Samiti has raised doubts about the incinerating capacity of BEIL, quoting a German technical cooperation study that highlighted several shortcomings in the BEIL

incinerator. However, the director of BEIL, Ashok Panjwani, rubbished all allegations and claimed that the plant had state-of-the-art technology created as per the guidelines of the Central Pollution Control Board. "Ours is the best place in the country to incinerate the waste," claimed Rajjubhai Patel, chairman of United Phosphorus Limited, a major equity stakeholder in BEIL.

Dr P.N. Parmeshwaran Moothathu, senior general manager (environment) of UPL, said there would not be any air pollution. Sanjiv Tyagi, member (secretary) of Gujarat Pollution Control Board-which has given a no objection certificate for one-time disposal of the toxic waste-did not rule out air pollution, but said it was within "permissible standards".

The Madhya Pradesh government will pay Rs 90 lakh to BEIL for the job. The company said the process would take only a few days and that the waste would be brought in a covered vehicle.

Environmentalists are not ready to buy these arguments. They are against the very move to dispose of the waste in India. Said Madhumita Dutta of International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal: "Survivors of the Bhopal tragedy want the waste to be sent to the US, and Dow Chemicals, which took over the Union Carbide Company, to pay for it" They have, in fact, sought an intervention in the ongoing case.

"Why should the people of Ankleshwar or any part of India suffer?" asked Ziya Pathan, a lawyer in Ankleshwar. The increasing pollution has already made youngsters and children prone to diseases like bronchitis. (None of the doctors say it on record.) Prajapati pointed out that the government had not carried out a comprehensive health check-up of residents. Gujarat Health Minister Ashok Bhatt disagreed, and claimed that the

workers were covered under Employees' State Insurance Scheme and health camps were conducted.

Hard to believe, considering the plight of the residents of the region. Mohammad Phaiyad, sarpanch of Kharod village near Ankleshwar, said, "People suffer from skin diseases and breathing problems. The eyes burn. The troubles increased in the last decade. How can we permit more wastes to be brought in?" People also suffer from scabies, a skin disease, said Dr Anwar Kanuga. "This is because of water pollution caused by the industrial wastes dumped into wells," he says.

Sixty-year-old Balu Sita Vasava's family of seven was orphaned when he succumbed to tuberculosis a fortnight ago. "He was a healthy man. But in the last six years, he had developed breathing problems," said Balu's widow, Chanchalben. One of his daughters is suffering from tuberculosis.

Tuberculosis, though, is not a direct consequence of pollution. It is common knowledge that any type of pollution affects the lungs and weakens the immune system, leaving the person susceptible to various diseases. Dr A.K. Patel, a surgeon in Ankleshwar, said smoking is another factor, but admitted that pollution had to be controlled to improve health and environmental conditions.

Although the 200-plus industries in the region are supposed to release their treated effluents into a 44-km pipeline project of Bharuch Eco-Aqua Infrastructure Limited, a sister concern of BEIL, for pumping them 9.4km into the sea, this does not happen.

With the hearing still on, it is uncertain when the Bhopal wastes would reach Ankleshwar. Said Panjwani; "It may take a week, or maybe even six months. The decision itself took 23 years."

The local people are hoping the day never comes at all.

The Week 17/06/07

Govt tries to cleanse Dow investment of Bhopal stain

Nitin Sethi | TNN

New Delhi: In a bid to clear Dow Chemicals, the American giant that took over Union Carbide in 2001, of civil liabilities in the Bhopal gas tragedy — said to be the worst industrial disaster in the world — the Centre is making a concerted effort for an out-of-court settlement with it.

The victims of the tragedy may find this hard to believe, but documents with TOI show that the PMO, backed by finance and industry ministers and the vice chairman of the Planning Commission are trying to find ways to clear Dow Chemicals of any legal liability, so that the company agrees to invest in India.

Key issues of the 1984 disaster remain unresolved. While direct victims of the poisonous gas leak have been compensated, toxic waste from the plant in a 7-hectare area is said to have contaminated Bhopal's ground water.

While the case is going on at the Jabalpur bench of the Madhya Pradesh HC, Union Carbide was bought over by Dow. With that, it would have taken over Carbide's civil liability. In the Jabalpur court case it is named as one of the respondents and the chemicals and fertiliser ministry has raised a demand of Rs 100 crore from Dow to clean up the contaminated factory site in Bhopal.

Faced with this, as well as the prospect of higher demands if the court holds it responsible for the ground water contamination, Dow first offered in 2005 to invest in a giant petrochemicals hub, covering 250 sq km, and then showed its reluctance to do so, citing the potential risk to its investment

should liability come on it from the Bhopal case.

This is where, it appears, government machinery got whirring to allay Dow's fears by seeking to reach an out-of-court settlement and thus pave the way for the investment in the petrochemicals hub. Documents acquired through an RTI application show a series of rapid-fire moves.

nitin.sethi@timesgroup.com
If settled out of court, Dow won't have any liability

New Delhi: Documents in TOI's possession show that an offer by Ratan Tata, who heads the Indo-US business council, to take up 'remediation' — in plain words, cleaning up — of the Union Carbide plant site has been picked up by the PMO and top ministries to find a way out for Dow.

The problem with this, say activists, is that once settled out of court, Dow will no longer be responsible for compensating for the water contamination. In other words, while the site might be cleaned up with the help of Tata and other industrialists, the indirect victims of Carbide's cavalier factory management might be left high and dry. What do the documents show? They consist of several notes generated by the PMO, finance and industry ministers, the Planning Commission and the Cabinet secretary.

Commerce and industry minister Kamal Nath wrote to the PMO in February 2007, "While I would not like to comment on whether Dow Chemicals has a legal responsibility or not, as it is a matter for courts to decide, with a view to sending an appropriate signal to Dow Chemicals, which is exploring investing substantially in India, I would urge that a group under the chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary be formed to look into the matter in a holistic manner." He added: "In a similar manner as was done with respect to the Enron

Corporation with respect to Dabhol Power Corporation.”

In the Dabhol case, an out-of-court settlement was reached with its now defunct promoter, Enron.

Deputy chairman of Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia wrote to the PM, finance minister P Chidambaram and Kamal Nath in December 2006: “Ministry of Industry has granted foreign collaboration approval for a technical collaboration between Dow and Reliance. This was greatly appreciated as a signal that Dow was not blacklisted.

“However, they have sought a statement from Gol in the court clarifying that Gol does not regard Dow as legally responsible for liabilities of Union Carbide. Similarly Shri Ratan Tata has written to the FM suggesting that we should launch an industry led initiative. Dow Chemicals indicated that they would be willing to contribute to such an effort voluntarily, but not under a cloud of legal liability.” Ahluwalia goes on to advise: “Cabinet secretary should be asked to try and resolve the issue in an inter-ministerial meeting including Ratan Tata or his representative.”

Earlier, Tata wrote to Ahluwalia in November 2006: “Dow has mentioned in their letter that it is critical for them to have the ministry of chemicals and fertilisers withdraw their application for a financial deposit by Dow against remediation costs, as that application implies that the Government of India views Dow as liable in the Bhopal Gas Disaster case. This is obviously a key aspect and I want your assessment as to whether it is possible.”

He also wrote to Chidambaram. The finance minister concurred with Tata while writing in December 2006 to PMO: “I think we should accept this offer and constitute a Site Remediation Trust under the chairmanship of Shri Ratan

Tata and including executives from the private sector.”

Dow, in the meanwhile, was in touch with top officials in PMO, in which they got the advice to consult top lawyer and Congress spokesman Abhishek Manu Singhvi. Documents show the legal advice given by Singhvi saying that Dow could not be held responsible for the disaster and also not be held liable for any alleged contamination and consequent cleaning up of the Bhopal site. This advice forms part of the PMO file.

When contacted on the advice given, Singhvi said, “I have been appearing as a senior counsel in this case for over 18 months. I was engaged by a leading solicitor firm. I am not in any manner engaged in any matter of the case except appearing at the Jabalpur High Court case and advising Dow on various legal aspects involved in those proceedings. I am not aware of anything else.”

Eventually, in April 2007, the cabinet secretary put up a note that says: “It stands to reason that instead of continuing to agitate these issues (Dow’s legal liability) in court for a protracted period, due consideration should be given to the prospect of settling these issues appropriately. An important aim is to remove uncertainties and pave the way for promoting investments in the sector.”

It adds that instead of leaving the matter to be settled by the court, the government should reconstitute the existing group of ministers (overseeing the work at Bhopal site) with an appropriate mandate.

Times of India/ Delhi/ 30/06/07

Dow seeks Bhopal solution

SONAL KELLOGG

Documents obtained from the Prime Minister’s Office by Bhopal gas tragedy survivors’ organisations reveal that the PMO, Planning Commission

and ministries of commerce and finance are all involved in plans that would allow the Dow Chemical Company to walk away with its liabilities in the case.

Even a top industrialist has been involved in discussions with the PMO, deputy chairman of the Planning Commission and other ministries to arrive at a settlement with Dow Chemical, which now owns Union Carbide Corporation.

Asian Age/ Delhi/ 01/07/07

UC water contamination area not identified

The Bhopal Gas Pedit Sangharsh Sehyog Samiti today opposed the Union Government’s decision for out of court settlement with USA based Dow Chemicals. Samiti coordinator Sadhna Karnik demanded that the Central Government should support the Samiti’s application in the Supreme Court for full compensation to the gas victims.

Staging protest before the Standing Committee of the Parliament, Karnik demanded that gas affected be extended BPIL card facilities, Union Carbide affected contaminated water area be identified and compensation be raised five times. She argued that the government had submitted before the court of law that 3 lakh people were affected, but the compensation has been distributed among 15 people. ICMR has not been able to ensure rehabilitation of the critically affected gas victims even after more than 20 years of the catastrophe. She informed that several committees have been formed since the UC accident but to no avail as they have visited Bhopal but have not done anything for victim welfare. The recommendations of the committee formed by the Chemical Fertilizer Ministry on recommendations of the Prime

Minister, are gathering dust in the Central and State Government offices.

She said that 16-17 Bastis have been selected on random basis that are considered infected by UC MIC contaminated water. These areas could not be identified till date and no scientific study or survey has been done. She demanded that the unjustified out of court agreement between the Government of India and Dow Chemicals should be stopped immediately and any decision initiated by Gol should be taken with UC victims welfare and their total rehabilitation in mind.

Centre Chronicle / Bhopal
07/07/07

Disposing of Carbide waste

The waste, says the report, will be manually emptied and re-packaged in plastic bags. This involves high health and safety risks - Nandita Chibber

The controversial move by the Madhya Pradesh government to incinerate some waste from the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal has met with stiff opposition. Civil society groups have strongly criticised the plan to take the waste to an incinerator in Gujarat. They say the incinerator at Ankleshwar is badly equipped and the move will merely shift the health hazards and in no way help dispose the toxic chemical waste.

Moreover, the move will rid Dow Chemicals-responsible for the waste's disposal-of the responsibility, say the groups. They moved the High Court of Madhya Pradesh against the plan, but the court declined to interfere into the matter.

The move comes under the directives of the high court. The court has ordered the state and the Centre to jointly bear the cost of Rs 2 crore for the disposal. Of the 5,000 tonnes waste stored at a warehouse in the factory, 345 metric tones will reach Ankleshwar-based

Bharuch Environ Infrastructure Limited (BEIL) in Gujarat for incineration. Another 40 tonnes will be disposed in a landfill in Pithampur in Indore. These are 6.9 and 0.8 per cent of the total waste.

The Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Department (BGTRRD) is awaiting clearance of the complete schedule of the disposal procedure from the high court. "In anticipation, all preparations to transport the toxic chemical waste have been started," says Ajit Kesri, BGTRD secretary.

The Madhya Pradesh Pollution Control Board (MPPCB), part of the task force set up by the high court in 2005 to give technical expertise for the clean-up, has said it will not monitor the disposal. The Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB) has backed it, maintaining that the site is fully equipped to handle the waste. "Having assessed the facilities of BEIL, we have approved their plan," says GPCB's regional officer at Bharuch. The chairman of MPPCB, SP Gautam, agrees: "The incinerator is of international standards and one of the best in the country regardless of what NGOs say." MPPCB, according to Gautam, will give its consent for transporting the toxic waste and also monitor the procedure once BGTRRD completes tenders for the transport vehicles.

In Ahmedabad, representatives of BEIL said the company runs a worldclass waste treatment plant, which has adequate facilities for transport, storage and disposal of any kind of hazardous solid waste. Former Narmada development minister Jaynarayan Vyas backs BEIL, saying the Bhopal toxic waste can safely be managed at Ankleshwar without any harm to the local environment. "What we are bringing is solid waste and not any liquid. The waste has been lying there for over two decades and must have

got diluted now. So it can be managed safely at Ankleshwar" he says.

Not everybody is buying this claim. Groups representing the survivors of the Bhopal tragedy and activists in Gujarat question the incinerator's ability to control pollution. They say incineration of the toxic waste will pollute the area the way Union Carbide did, triggering another tragedy. That a national company has undertaken the disposal goes against the 'polluter pays principle', they say.

Bhopal Group of Information and Action, an NGO, has filed a petition in the high court seeking a ban on the disposal. It has also submitted a report comparing the Treatment Storage Disposal Facility (TSDF) in BIEL and with the one in Biebesheim, Germany. The report was prepared by Eckart Schultes, hazardous waste management expert in Karnataka.

The report says the small facility at Ankleshwar can cause fluctuations in temperature, causing mercury emissions. Emissions of chemical pollutants and acidic gases at the facility are likely to be several times higher than what many internationally available incineration technologies generate; and land filling of dust and ashes from the incinerator without stabilisation can contaminate local environment with toxic heavy metals, salts and inorganic compounds. All these can cause long lasting health and environmental problems to 100,000 people in the area.

The waste, says the report, will be manually emptied and re-packaged in plastic bags. This involves high health and safety risks and the facility is inexperienced to handle this since it has been operational for only two years.

According to the report, the landfill at Pithampur is unsafely located on a hill and rainwater can get into it. It has inadequate monitoring of

leachates. According to Satinath Sarangi of Sambhavna Trust, an advocacy group, a small amount of toxic material disposed inefficiently can cause environmental problems at both the sites.

In Gujarat, residents have organised protest rallies under Ankleshwar Bachao Samiti. Zia Pathan, a resident, says: "We have warned the authorities. If the waste is brought here for disposal, we would launch an agitation," adding, "So far they have not said when they would bring the waste."

Environmentalist Rohit Prajapati says the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) in December 2006 asked G P C B to assess the facilities at the Ankleshwar plant, asking it to conduct an exhaustive study of the region's capacity for handling pollutants. "The Bharuch region of Gujarat has been under intense pressure due to the high air and water pollution potential on account of the large number of chemical industries....," CPCB said. However, GPCB secretary Sanjeev Tyagi says it needs time to carry out the directive since it has to arrange for the resources.

This flies in the face of the board's claim that Bharuch can handle the waste. NGOs say there are alternatives. They have come up with a plan of action to deal with the issue. Instead of taking toxic waste to Ankleshwar and Pithampur, the government should invest the fund to make provisions for stopping toxic wastes seeping into ground during monsoon, the activists say. They also demand Dow Chemicals take back the waste to the US, like Unilever did by shipping the toxic waste it made in Kodaikanal. The waste can be safely disposed in the US, which has advanced technology. The company has not yet dealt with the total waste at the factory and no proper assessment of it has been done by any agency, they say.

"Government organisations have caused delay and confusion. No attempt has been made to compare studies on other hazardous wastes with the Carbide factory waste," says Sarangi.

Down to Earth Feature
Centre Chronicle / Bhopal
11/07/07

Bhopal gas victims stage rally

Seeking compensation: Bhopal gas tragedy victims staging a protest on Wednesday.

BHOPAL: A large number of victims of the Bhopal gas tragedy, mainly local residents, staged a protest demonstration near the abandoned Union Carbide factory here on Wednesday.

They were demanding that the American multinational Dow Chemical that owns Union Carbide pay for the environmental and health damage caused due to reckless dumping of hazardous chemical wastes on the factory premises. The protesters opposed the Madhya Pradesh Government's plans to send a small part of the hazardous waste for incineration at Ankleshwar in Gujarat and to Pithampur near Indore for disposal in a landfill.

They demanded that the Centre make Dow Chemical shift the toxic waste from Bhopal to the U.S. for final disposal in the same manner as Unilever was made to shift mercury waste from its factory in Kodaikanal in 2003.

The residents said that owing to the current rain, contaminated water from the factory flowed into their localities and the State Government did nothing to stop it. They said the 386 tonnes of waste that the Government wished to dispose of through incineration was less than 5 per cent of the toxic waste that required safe disposal. The leaders of three organisations, Bhopal Gas

Peedit Mahila Stationary Karmachari Sangh, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangarsh Morcha and Bhopal Group for Information and Action, that led the agitation said they had documents from the Prime Minister's Office to show that the United Progressive Alliance Government was working on a secret deal with Dow Chemical on the matter of its liabilities in Bhopal.

The Hindu/Delhi/ 19/07/07

123 IMPACT CABINET ACTS

US seeks clarity on Dow Chem's Bhopal trouble

G Ganapathy Subramaniam & Gireesh Chandra Prasad

THE Cabinet is all set to take a final view on the legal liability of US giant Dow Chemicals in the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy, one of the worst industrial disasters in the world. The Trade and Economic Relations Committee (TERC) headed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has decided that the Cabinet should consider the contentious issue that's threatening to hamper economic ties with the US. The government is also trying to resolve a dispute between US company McDermott International and Kolkata-based Burn Standard ahead of concluding the 123 agreement with the US for nuclear co-operation.

While negotiating the nuclear pact, the US side emphasised that the uncertainty faced by Dow—which plans to invest \$1 billion in India—was a major irritant that needs to be tackled as a priority. With the ties with the US expected to hit a new high after the deal, New Delhi wants major disputes related to US corporations resolved without delay.

TERC has directed the Department of Chemicals & Petrochemicals to consult the law ministry and draft a note on the legal liability of Dow Chemicals so that the Cabinet could take a decision soon.

Chemicals ministry preparing note

CHEMICALS and fertilisers ministry officials said they are finalising their opinion by taking legal advice and keeping in mind the perception of NGOs and social organisations. The note will be ready soon, said an official.

In the case of a commercial dispute between Burn Standard Company and McDermott International, the ministry of heavy industries has been asked to expedite a decision. The ministry has already circulated a note for the consideration of CCEA to take a final call on the disputes associated with McDermott International.

The external affairs ministry highlighted the disputes related to Dow Chemicals and McDermott International during a presentation to the TERC earlier this month, highly-placed government sources said. The meeting was attended by finance minister P Chidambaram, commerce and industry minister Kamal Nath and Planning Commission deputy chairperson Montek Singh Ahluwalia. A number of senior bureaucrats were also present, the sources said.

Earlier, Tata Group chief Ratan Tata, in his capacity as Investment Commission chairman, has proposed cleaning up of the Bhopal Union Carbide site through a settlement plan. In view of the litigation over the issue, the government did not go ahead with the proposal.

Leak of poisonous gas from the Union Carbide factory in 1984 killed 4,000 people immediately and believed to have caused 20,000 deaths. A settlement over compensation was arrived at after a protracted legal battle. However, a dispute over clearing the site of toxicity persists. In 1994, Union Carbide sold its stake in its Indian company to Kolkata-based McLeod Russel. In 2001, Dow bought Union Carbide for

\$9.3 billion. The Bhopal unit of Union Carbide remains shut since the 1984 tragedy.

**Economic Times / Delhi/
27/ 07/ 07**

Bhopal survivors 'honour' Manmohan, Ambani

Vibha Sharma

It was an award ceremony with a difference. The "Dalal Foundation", formed just around 15 days ago by Bhopal survivors' organisations, yesterday presented "Mir Zafar awards for treachery" to top politicians and bureaucrats of the country in a dramatised version, peppered with satire.

The spoof awards were given to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, finance minister P. Chidambaram, vice-chairman planning commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia and industrialists Ratan Tata and Mukesh Ambani, who according to Bhopal survivors were being "felicitated for their efforts to bury Dow Chemical's liabilities in Bhopal tragedy cases and clear the way for Dow and Carbide to freely do business in India". Activists wearing respective masks received the awards.

Mir Zafar had betrayed his troops and cut a deal with the British East India Company. Today's event marked the 250 anniversary of the Battle of Plassey, where Mir Zafar betrayed his troops and his act could be likened to the present government's "kowtowing" to US corporations.

"The Indian government is indulging in activities that favour the elite and exacted a heavy toll on lives of common citizens," they said.

The list of award-winners included commerce minister Kamal Nath, industrialist Ashok Punjwani, Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi and senior bureaucrats like principal secretary T.K.A. Nair and former cabinet secretary B.K. Chaturvedi.

Madhya Pradesh gas relief minister Babu Lal Gaur came in for special mention for a "lifetime spent in betraying Bhopal victims". Besides, Indian Ambassador to US Ronen Sen was also presented a Mir Zafar Award.

The Mir Zafar "Best environmental talk the talk award" was given to Ashok Punjwani, director of Bharuch Enviro Infrastructure Limited, Gujarat.

The "Birds of a feather award 2007" went to Mukesh Ambani, "who recently announced plans to acquire Union Carbide technology for his new plastic factories in Gujarat." B. K. Chaturvedi won the Mir Zafar "Bureaucrat for Business Award 2007".

Ratan Tata, played by activist Satinath Sarangi, received the award from a Singur resident to highlight his offer to lead an effort to mop up Union Carbide's toxic wastes and facilitate Dow's investments in India.

Bhopal survivors said the ministry of chemicals filed an application seeking Rs 100 crore from Dow Chemical. However, files unearthed from the PMO using the RTI Act revealed that most of the "award-winners" were strongly pushing to exempt Dow.

Survivors added that a note by the cabinet secretary on April 6 said given the scope for future investments in the petrochemical sector, Dow's Bhopal liabilities should be resolved out of court.

The Mir Zafar Awards will be now be an annual affair. This year's ceremony was officiated by theatre personality Suhasini Mulay who spoke for the Dalal Foundation.

She said: "We at Dalal Foundation believe that freedom is okay as long as it is recognised and respected that the freedom to exploit natural and human resources for profit generation takes precedence over all other freedoms."

Tribune/ Delhi/ 13/ 08/ 07

Bhopal waste material to be sent to Ankleshwar

MUSLIM GHOGHAWALA **VAPI**

THE controversy over the left over waste material in the, Bhopal gas disaster is finally over as Jabalpur High Court has rejected the petition made by two persons from Gujarat over its removal. The waste material is now all set to be sent to Ankleshwar at Baruch Environment Infrastructure Ltd (BELL) for decimation.

According to information, two persons, Rohit Prajapati and Pathan, from Gujarat had filed a petition in the Jabalpur High Court, taking objection for sending Bhopal waste material to Gujarat saying it might hamper the environment here.. However, Chief justice C. J. Patnaik, after going through arguments from both side, said BELL was inspected by the Central Pollution Control Board, National Environment and Engineering Research Institute, Ministry of chemicals & fertilizers and Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat State Pollution Control Boards.

They were fully satisfied with the facilities at BEIL and also according to experts the left over material lying at the site has lost almost all its toxic properties, as no pesticides retains its efficiency or toxicity after two years.

Hence it is important to clean the site and the cleansed site can be used for good utilization for the people.

Free Press Journal 21/08/07

Ministries differ over Dow liability in Bhopal clean-up

Chemicals, Law Ministries At Loggerheads Over Advance Payment

Nitin Sethi & Akshaya Mukul | **TNN**

New Delhi: As government moves fast to help Dow Chemicals invest in India, a sharp difference of opinion has risen between the ministries of law and chemicals on whether the chemicals giant could be held legally liable for the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy clean-up.

The chemicals ministry had earlier indirectly held Dow responsible for the tragedy by demanding it to pay an advance for clean-up of the contaminated site while courts adjudicate on the matter. But the law ministry is of the opinion that it would depend upon the deal between Dow Chemicals and Union Carbide at the time the latter sold itself to Dow to decide whether Dow should hold legal liability for the Bhopal disaster.

The chemicals ministry, in tandem with the law ministry, was asked recently by the government to forward a fresh note on Dow's liability despite its earlier stand that the chemical giant shell out Rs 100 crore as advance for the liability of cleaning up while the Jabalpur Bench of the Madhya Pradesh High Court adjudicated on the matter.

Sources told TOI that the chemicals ministry had stuck to its guns and defended its position of demanding a pay up from Dow. However, the law ministry contends it would be crucial to figure out whether Union Carbide had passed on its liabilities to Dow when it was bought over in 2001 before implicating Dow Chemicals into the case. But not wanting to disturb the ongoing court case, the ministry believes the decision could finally lie with the judiciary.

Senior government officials told TOI that the law ministry's advice could be interpreted to mean that instead of demanding the advance, the government should look at the fine print of the deal between the two companies. In the case of the deal between the two not transferring any legal liabilities, the chemicals ministry may

have to withdraw the demand and therefore weaken the case against Dow in the courts as well.

The notes from the two ministries come against the backdrop of hectic lobbying by several UPA ministries as well as the the Planning Commission for clearing the way for Dow's investments in India. Dow has threatened that it would not be able to make any new investments in India as long as the legal liability existed in the form of a demand from the chemicals and fertilisers ministry.

Business leader Ratan Tata, head of the Indo-US Business Council, too had approached the government suggesting that the Indian industry led by him may be allowed to pay for the cleanup in order to take the legal liability off Dow.

Times of India/ Delhi/
06/09/07

Gujarat says no to Bhopal disaster waste

Rahul Mangaonkar | TNN

Ahmedabad: The fear of toxic waste from the infamous Bhopal gas disaster site reaching Gujarat may have just got over. The Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB) has now told the Centre that the "waste cannot be incinerated" in the state.

This comes two years after the GPCB had issued a 'no objection certificate' (NOC). The waste was supposed to be incinerated at a facility in south Gujarat.

Experts now question why such a permission was given in the first place. GPCB points out that it was done only after an order of the government of India, directing that the waste be incinerated in Gujarat.

However, letters sent by the government of India to the state chief secretary, copies of which were procured through RTI, show that it was just a "request" and not a direction.

In November last year, Union chemicals and fertilisers

secretary Satwant Reddy had written to then chief secretary Sudhir Mankad, seeking "permission" to transport and incinerate the toxic, hazardous waste in Ankleshwar.

GPCB first gave an NOC for 67 tonnes of tarry waste in 2005 and later changed it to 350 tons in December last year. "They have to take our permission to transport the waste, which we have denied now," said GPCB chairman CL Meena.

When told about the permission granted earlier, Meena retorted: "I am not aware of permissions given before my term."

There has been much consternation among senior officials in the Sachivalaya, who feel that they were kept in the dark. "The issue of getting Bhopal waste to Gujarat is a serious one. Other departments like health and GSDMA should have been consulted," said a bureaucrat.

Meena, however, told TOI that "other departments have no role to play." "A health audit needs to be conducted before such a decision is taken," said a health department official.

Statistics available with Bhopal Medical Appeal, an NGO, say:

- Around 5 lakh people exposed
- About 20,000 are believed to have died till date
- On an average, one person dies every day from the effects.
- Over 1.20 lakh continue to suffer breathing difficulties, cancer, serious birth-defects, blindness, gynaecological complications

**Times of India/Ahmedabad/
11/10/07**

Govt may clear Dow Chemicals path

Chetan Chauhan

THE CENTRE is all set to pave the way for Dow Chemicals to invest in India, by removing all "legal hurdles" related to the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy, one of the world's biggest industrial disasters that claimed

thousands of lives. The Department of Industries has moved a Cabinet note asking the government to absolve Dow Chemicals of all legal liabilities. The Chemicals and Fertilizers Ministry had earlier filed an affidavit in the Madhya Pradesh High Court seeking Rs 100 crore from the company as initial compensation. The note provides for withdrawal of the affidavit and out-of-court settlement. It is based on the Law Ministry's opinion that the government can opt to settle out of court with Dow Chemicals as the latter does not own the financial liabilities of Union Carbide, the main accused in the case.

The Chemicals Ministry has opposed this view. Dow Chemicals claims it is not liable to pay compensation because it did not inherit the liabilities of Union Carbide when it bought the company Magsaysay Award winner Sandeep Pandey, who is associated with the tragedy victims, described the move as cheating on the part of the government. "Allowing Dow Chemicals in India without paying the liabilities is a crime," he said.

The government had sought the Law Ministry's opinion after Dow Chemicals had expressed its wish to make huge investments in India, provided the legal hurdles were removed. In April, the then Cabinet Secretary B.K. Chaturvedi had favoured settling the issue with Dow Chemicals "appropriately". Even Ratan Tata had written to the Planning Commission and Finance Ministry earlier this year, recommending an out-of-court settlement. The Tata group had even proposed a remediation fund to clean up 8,000 tonnes of waste at the tragedy site. Last year, four US senators and Dow Chemicals chief executive officer Andrew N. Livers had written to the Prime Minister seeking his intervention to settle the issue. Within a year of these

suggestions, the government has acted and the Cabinet will soon examine the proposal, a senior government functionary said.

**Hindustan Times/Delhi/
22/10/07**

Alumni urge IITs to boycott Dow Chemicals

Dow Chemicals, the new owner of the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, is facing opposition from new quarters over issues related to the gas disaster of December 1984.

About 1,000 alumni of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) have sent a petition to the directors of the seven premier government-owned engineering institutes urging them to ban Dow Chemicals, which acquired the Union Carbide plant in 2001, from any partnership or role in the premier institutes of the country.

This comes soon after the company was forced to cancel pre-placement talks, due in the last week of October, in IIT Madras and Bombay following pressure from some of the students and faculty.

"A separate petition signed by 89 of the faculty and students within IIT Madras urged its director to bar Dow from recruiting students on campus. The company cancelled its pre-placement talks in IIT Madras and Bombay after students raised the issue about its entry into IIT," they said.

Releasing the petition here, Magsaysay award winner Arvind Kejriwal and activist Praful Bidwai, both IIT alumni, said the public outrage stemmed from Dow's continued evasion of legal responsibilities in Bhopal.

"Dow Chemicals not only acquired Union Carbide but also its liabilities as well. The company has to clean up the toxic waste in Bhopal, compensate the victims of

contamination and force its subsidiary to face criminal trial in the Bhopal court. Otherwise, Dow will be met with hostility wherever it goes in India," Bidwai said.

When contacted, Nandkumar Sanglekar, director (public affairs), said, "We are not aware of the developments. Dow India is searching for the best talent in the country to expand its operations and we would go to the IITs for recruitment."

"From last six months we have recruited more than 120 engineers and 100 researchers from some of the leading institutions in the country and so far our experience is encouraging," he said.

"Dow was supposed to come to IIT Madras for recruitment in last week of October. But after the protests from some students and faculty, they cancelled their preplacement talks.

They informed that they would send a representative in a few days to resolve the matter," Jayakumar, placement co-ordinator, IIT Madras told Business Standard.

Calling upon the students of IITs to bar Dow from entering their campuses, Bidwai and Kejriwal urged the IITs to set an example by developing screening criteria for corporations wishing to partner or recruit from IITs.

Business Standard/ Delhi
25/10/07

No repeat of Bhopal gas tragedy

A group of Bhopal tragedy survivors have urged the residents to prevent Dow-Carbide from setting up a research facility here, because the company was responsible for the horrendous Bhopal gas tragedy.

As part of their campaign in Tamil Nadu, the group plans to spread awareness in schools and organise a massive awareness rally at Nochikuppam on October 29.

Speaking to reporters here on Thursday, Rashida Bee, a 50-year-old survivor and winner of the Goldman prize for grassroots environmental activism, said, "We (survivors) fully object to the plans of the company Dow, owner of Union Carbide, which was responsible for the Bhopal gas leak disaster, to set up any facility on Indian soil. It is our duty to register our protest against the company." They have got an initial moral victory a few days ago, when the IIT Madras successfully thwarted the company from recruiting its students for the company's Research and Development Lab, to be set up at Guindy.

Giving a new dimension to the campaign, Sarita Malviya, a 14-year-old survivor of the disaster said, "This time onwards, we plan to take up the matter with children and students of schools and colleges, as they are capable of moving masses towards the goal." The delegation will engage in intensive campaigning among college youth and school children, and also travel to Cuddalore, Salem and Mettur to show solidarity with the communities affected with pollution there.

A group of Bhopal tragedy survivors have urged the residents to prevent Dow-Carbide from setting up a research facility here, because the company was responsible for the horrendous Bhopal gas tragedy. As part of their campaign in Tamil Nadu, the group plans to spread awareness in schools and organise a massive awareness rally at Nochikuppam on October 29. Speaking to reporters here on Thursday, Rashida Bee, a 50-year-old survivor and winner of the Goldman prize for grassroots environmental activism, said, "We (survivors) fully object to the plans of the company Dow, owner of Union Carbide, which was responsible for the Bhopal gas leak disaster, to set up any facility on Indian soil. It

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New Indian Express/Chennai/
26/10/07

Gas victims to file 1,00,000 petitions in SC

The survivors of the Bhopal gas tragedy will file 100,000 petitions in the Supreme Court demanding more compensation for deaths and injuries caused by the toxic gas leakage from Union Carbide on the night of December 2, 1984.

The petitions will be filed on November 10 to impress upon the Supreme Court to rethink its May 3, 2007 judgement that turned down the plea from the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan, an association of the victims, seeking five times more compensation.

A revision petition was filed in the apex court October 3 and the fresh petitions will be submitted in support of that. 'It will possibly be the first instance of its kind in the history of independent India,' association convenor Abdul Jabbar said of the move to file a large number of petitions.

The organisation had earlier

sought nearly five-fold increase in the Rs 470 crore compensation announced, but the court rejected the plea saying, 'if any of the victims was denied proper compensation, he or she can approach the Claims Tribunal for appropriate settlement of claims.'

The petitioners had claimed that the Rs 470 crore compensation was inadequate and several victims did not receive the amount till date.

**Free Press/ Indore/
02/ 11/ 07**

Officials confident of clearing Union Carbide premises

MP government authorities are now confident of disposing of the solid toxic wastes lying on the Union Carbide India Ltd premises.

They say non- government organisations are main hurdle than the gas victims in removing the toxic wastes.

The Madhya Pradesh Pollution Control Board and Bhopal Gas Relief and Rehabilitation Department do not see any possible threat to the environment while transporting or disposing of the toxic waste. "It has been lying there, unattended, in the open, for at least 19 years. How toxicity increases with the passage of time we don't know," said Krishna Kant Dubey, a senior official with the Bhopal Gas Relief and Rehabilitation Department.

The MP Pollution Control Board also does not see any potential hazard in handling the solid toxic wastes. "No one is interested in its disposal. If disposal takes place, there will be no issue. We have recommended the (solid waste) disposal to the task force. Now the state government has to execute the task. Half the solid waste will be land-filled and the rest will be incinerated by Bharuch Enviro Infrastructure

Ltd (BEIL) in Ankleshwar Gujrat."

Recently, MK Nagrik Parivahan & Udyog Sahakari Samiti, a company, has responded to a tender floated for the second time by the Bhopal Gas Relief and Rehabilitation Department for removing 46 tonnes of lime sludge.

The sludge is to be transported and land-filled in Pithampur (Dhar district) site developed by the Ramky Group.

NGOs have questioned the experience of the bidder. Government authorities say it will not be a simple exercise of transportation. "Whoever executes the task will have to abide by the norms of the Central Pollution Control Board. The land will be concreted and tagged while the rest of the toxic waste will be reduced to nothing at 1,400 degree temperature," said SP Gautam, chairman and head of the technical sub-committee that has recommended the terms and condition of the disposal. The Bhopal Gas Relief and Rehabilitation Department has also questioned the role of the Gujarat Pollution Control board on its refusal to accept the toxic waste.

"Why did they (Gujarat Pollution Control Board) accept the Jabalpur High Court's orders last month?

They should have refused before the court," said Dubey. However, some officials in the state government believe that the Gujarat government wants to avoid the matter since elections are nearing.

Replying to a question that if NGOs want Dow Chem to remove the waste and a claim for environment pollution, Dubey said,

"We work on the pollution pace principle. There was no Act on environment till 1989. How can you punish someone in retrospect?

Fortunately, the court has

discretionary powers in such cases otherwise we would be helpless."

Both the authorities are confident that the toxic waste removal process will be completed in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Jabalpur High Court, within two months with the NGO's cooperation.

**Business Standard/ Delhi/
09/ 11/ 07**

Gujarat against disposal of Bhopal waste at Ankleshwar

BHOPAL: The Gujarat government has refused to allow disposal of toxic waste from the abandoned Union Carbide plant at the incinerator facility in Ankleshwar, according to copies of letters from the Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB) and the State's Department of Forest and Environment.

This was highlighted at a press conference here on Sunday by representatives of four people's organisations working among the victims of the 1984 Union Carbide gas disaster. Mediapersons were jointly addressed by Satinath Sarangi and Rachna Dhingra of Bhopal Group for Information & Action, Syed M. Irfan of Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha and Rashida Bi of Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmachari Sangh.

Copies of the letters were circulated among journalists. These were obtained using the Right to Information Act. "Feigning ignorance"

Mr. Sarangi said the Madhya Pradesh government continued to feign ignorance in this regard and was trying to cover up its failure to find a facility within the country that would accept Bhopal's hazardous waste for disposal. The letters refer to "opposition from various NGOs and representatives of public" and

categorically state that the Madhya Pradesh government must carry out "disposal of the waste elsewhere."

Mr. Sarangi said that safe disposal of the toxic waste was not possible in India, and Gujarat's refusal to handle it proved this point.

The leaders heading the people's organisations reiterated their demand that the government should force Dow Chemical to clean up and ship the toxic waste to some facility in the United States just as the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board forced Unilever in 2003 to ship its mercury waste from its thermometer factory in Kodaikanal to the United States for treatment and disposal. The organisations also presented copies of correspondence between the Madhya Pradesh Pollution Control Board (MPPCB) and the Union Carbide to show that in 1991 the Board recommended export of toxic waste.

Drawing attention to the massive exposure of residents near the Union Carbide plant site to toxic dust during the packaging of the waste in June 2005, the activists expressed apprehension that the Bhopal residents and those on the route of the trucks carrying the waste would once again suffer health hazards.

Hindu/ Delhi/ 12/ 11/ 07

Gas-hit children

Children of Bhopal whose health has been impaired due to poisons from Union Carbide observed 'Children's Day' through a demonstration regarding social security pension for families with children with birth defects at the residence of the Principal Secretary, Department of Bhopal Gas Tragedy, M P Government.

The demonstration was led by Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationary Karmchari Sangh, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangarsh Morcha and

Bhopal Group for Information & Action that are active on issues of the 1984 gas disaster and toxic contamination in the vicinity of the abandoned factory.

Hundreds of children including those born to gas exposed parents with birth defects chanted slogans on the failure of the State Government in providing social security to the victims.

Ms Vinuta Lakhera, a gas victim from Kainchi Chhola and mother of 12 year old Jeet who had congenital heart disease (Ventricular Septal Defect with Fallot's Tetralogy) stated that she was denied financial assistance for Jeet's surgery despite appeals to Chief Minister Shivraj Singh.

Rashida Bee, of the Chingari Trust that paid over Rs. one lakh for Jeet's successful surgical treatment recently, said that there are close to two hundred children with congenital deformities who continue to be denied medical attention by the State Government.

Central Chronicle/ Bhopal/ 17/ 11/ 07

HC directs for removal of UC waste

A bench of Chief Justice Anang Kumar Patnaik and Justice Singh on Wednesday directed for resuming the process of removal of waste matter from the Union Carbide plant. Commenting on an affidavit of the Central government, the court said that the objections raised by the Gujarat government are not honest. Only after agreement by the Gujarat government, the court had given directives for removal of waste matter from the plant.

It may be noted that the petitioner Alok Pratap Singh had moved the public interest petition when the waste at the Union Carbide plant were not being re-moved.

During the hearing today,

senior Supreme Court advocate Vivek Tankha presented affidavit from the Centre's side that the Gujarat government was not prepared for destruction of the waste at Ankleshwar. Today an affidavit was also presented by the MP Govt saying earlier the Gujarat Govt had agreed for destruction of the UC waste at Ankleshwar. Also presented, along with the affidavit, was the written permission by Gujarat Pollution Control Board and estimate according to which the MP Govt was to provide its 70 lakh to the Gujarat Govt. From the petitioner's side, advocate Naman Nagrath objected to the waste disposal work being given on contract to a contractor for transporting fertilizer. Rather this work should be given to a party which has experience in handling dangerous materials, Naman contended.

The court then directed for continuing the process of removal of waste from Union Carbide plant.

Also, the contract work of transport of UC waste be cleared only after the orders of the court.

Central Chronicle/ Bhopal/ 22/ 11/ 07

Bhopal's ongoing tragedy

Sreelatha Menon

23 years on, the decision on who's going to clean it up is the subject of a court case. Survivors of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy, the country's worst industrial mishap when 40 tonnes of methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas leaked from Union Carbide's pesticide plant, continue to cope with serious health problems and contaminated water, but the government doesn't seem too concerned. It believes its responsibilities are over now that each of the 5.7 lakh victims has been given around Rs 40,000-45,000 in two tranches (the last in 2004, based on the interest that had accrued on the

undisbursed Union Carbide funds). There is another petition in court asking for a five-fold increase in the original \$470 million compensation that came in 1989, since it didn't change while the number of claimants rose four to five times the original estimate, but that's another story.

Indeed, while a recent survey of children below the age of 12 in the area around the erstwhile Union Carbide factory by the Chingari and Sambhavna Trust found that 112 had cerebral palsy, cuts in their lips and cheeks and some even a hole in the heart, the government has not come up with any ongoing free medical follow-up treatment plan to deal with the condition of the second and third generations of Bhopal survivors. In most other countries that have had similar accidents, tracking and treating the medical and psychological problems of the second and third generations of survivors is almost par for the course.

Indeed, the 396 metric tones of toxic waste inside the factory remain untouched to this day, and activists say an even larger amount is lying outside, slowly leaching down and contaminating the ground water — around 25,000 persons live in the vicinity of the factory. The government, both at the state and the Centre (both are respondents in the Madhya Pradesh high court, along with Union Carbide and its new owners, Dow Chemical), is sticking to its old stance that the polluter must pay. While the court has asked the Gujarat government to take the toxins to the Ankleshwar-based incinerator, the state is not too keen since it is not certain it will be able to deal with it. Many argue that this is the correct strategy as shipping the toxins to Gujarat could well lead to a mini-Bhopal there — the view is that Dow should take the toxins back to the US and destroy

them there using advanced technology.

State government officials also say, informally, that NGOs are exaggerating the exposure to contaminated water, and that the 25,000 persons living around the old Carbide factory are actually encroachers — and therefore, by implication, the government doesn't owe them anything.

Of course, the cynical attitude of the government is best seen from the fact that Dow Chemical' counsel on the case is Abhishek Singhvi who is also the official spokesperson of the Congress party. Singhvi, on his part, is of the view that his clients bear no responsibility as there were other companies between Dow and Union Carbide, and since the companies had not merged, there was no transfer of liabilities.

Lawyers such as Prashant Bhushan, however, say the argument is fallacious and, if the corporate veil is pierced, the argument will be seen to be hollow.

Activist Nityanand Jayaraman of the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal argues that the US law believes in 'successor liability' — so Dow is responsible for cleaning up the mess in the city. Dow's corporate relations official in India, Nandkumar Sanglekar, repeats the official company line that Dow has not inherited any liability, that the compensation and settlement had already been reached before Dow even entered the picture.

At another level, Ratan Tata who heads the Investment Commission has suggested that a way be found out without putting all the responsibility on Dow — the commerce ministry is also pushing the same line at the Group of Ministers which is looking into the matter. The argument given here is that while Bhopal happened 23 years ago, Dow's very large investment plans in India could get

compromised — if only someone could make Bhopal go away! A letter by Dow's Andrew Liveris to India's US envoy Ronen Sen in November last year was dug out by activists in Bhopal using the Right to Information law. The letter says representatives of the government had agreed at the US-India CEO Forum that Dow was not responsible and would not be pursued. Liveris, in his letter, urged Sen to take the matter forward and get local CEOs and others involved to tilt public opinion in Dow's favour. Liveris also asked Sen to look into getting the central government to withdraw its application in the Madhya Pradesh high court asking Dow to pay for the cleaning up.

For the survivors of the six lakh victims, and the 25,000 persons living in the immediate vicinity of the old Carbide plant, however, whether Dow pays for the cleaning up is perhaps of secondary importance. The case can go on, they argue, but surely the government can spend the few hundred crore required and buy the necessary technical expertise required to dispose off the toxic waste that is leaching into the ground water as well?

But, if successive governments, at both the Centre and in the state, have not even bothered to get ongoing free medical help for the survivors of the awful tragedy, perhaps that's asking for too much. As Rachna Dhingra of the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal says, "Whatever the government and Dow do in the court, the reality is that kids are born with deformities."

***Business Standard/ Delhi/
25/ 11/ 07***

Rs 70 cr monument for gas victims

A monument of interim national standard would be constructed at the Union Carbide factory premises in the state capital in

memory of victim of 1984 Bhopal Gas Tragedy, which claimed thousands of lives and maimed several lakhs of people. Official sources said the monument would be built over an area of 87 acre! at a cost of Rs 70 crore. The Housing and Environment department was preparing an outline in this regard. A provision of Rs 10 crore as first instalment towards the project has been made in the budget. Meanwhile, the government has approved an amount of Rs 2.80 crore for the municipal corporation for making drinking water available for people in ten gas-affected wards. Besides, a Rs 9.28 crore proposal for making permanent drinking water arrangements in 14 slums surrounding Union Carbide premises was sent to the Centre for approval but has not been sanctioned so far.

The government has provided Rs 3.60 crore from its limited resources to the municipal corporation for making clean drinking water available in these slums.

A scheme for rehabilitation of gas-affected by providing them training in 'Zari' art- and preparing artificial flowers and fruits has also been chalked out. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will take part in 'Sarva Dharma Sabha' at Central Library ground on December 3 at 1030 hours in Barkatullah Bhavan here and pay tributes to victims on the 23rd anniversary of the tragedy.

On the intervening night of December 2- 3, 1984, thousands died after inhaling methyl iso-cyanate while several lakh continue to suffer the deleterious effect of inhaling the deadly vapours.

**Central Chronicle/
Hyderabad/ 01/ 12/ 07**

Bhopal's deformed children

The govt itself estimated half a million people were exposed to the toxic Carbide gas leak of

1984, yet studies on genetic disorders of next generations have been desultory and insufficient

Sanjay Sharma

Twenty three years have passed since the world's worst man-made disaster occurred but the trauma still continues for those who survived that fateful night of December 2- 3, 1984 when more than 40 tonnes of Methyl Iso-Cyanate (MIC) spewed out of the now defunct Union Carbide's pesticide plant in Bhopal.

Having borne the brunt of neurological, hormonal and mental health problems - besides, of course, the economic miseries - the survivors are now faced with the problem of deformed children.

Children conceived and born after the disaster to affected parents were significantly different from children of the same age born to unexposed parents, says a recent study carried out by Sambhavna Trust which runs a clinic to treat the gas-affected people. "Such children were shorter, thinner, lighter and had smaller heads.

Also, children of exposed parents showed abnormal growth in their upper bodies - disproportionately smaller than their lower bodies," the study points out.

Medical research is thus desperately needed specially into the possible genetic and reproductive after-effects of the lethal gas leak that, 23 years ago, killed more than 3,000 people instantly and thousands subsequently years. But the genetic damage to the children -born to survivors - has been severely under-studied, allege rights activists, who say, "This has led to unsystematic treatment of gas victims already faced with neurological, hormonal and mental health problems".

Lack of research into the possible genetic and reproductive ramifications of

exposure to lethal gases and now to contaminated water has seriously marred efforts to check the effects of poisonous gases on the next generation of the affected.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) initiated 18 studies in the aftermath of the Bhopal disaster. However, despite findings of long-term damage, these studies were all prematurely ended within 10 years. That too at a time when the evidence of damage on the offspring of survivors was beginning to show.

The ICMR studies, though terminated prematurely, did show that children of exposed mothers had delayed physical and mental development and lower values for anthropometrical parameters such as height and mid-arm circumference.

"Most studies done by the ICMR were by the Sambhavna Trust Clinic indicated that about half of the people living in the contaminated area were suffering from multiple symptoms.

According to local groups monitoring the water quality, contamination from the factory has now spread to 16 wards and affects an estimated 16,000-20,000 people. The gas - hit kids, mainly those living in these 16

wards, this year held a demonstration to demand social security pension for the families with birth defects, as the nation celebrated Children's Day.

The demonstration was held under the aegis of Bhopal Group for Information and Action (BGIA), Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationary Karmchari Sangh and Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangarsh Morcha, the organisations that have been fighting for the victims of the Bhopal gas disaster.

"Children suffering congenital deformities continue to be denied medical attention. Only 14 children received official

assistance for heart surgery and 13 assistance in diagnosis for congenital brain anomalies between 1992 and 1997, under the programme SPARC (Special Assistance to At Risk Children) but it was suddenly withdrawn in 1997 citing financial constraints", bemoaned Rashida Bee of the Chingari Trust working for gas survivors.

"There are an unusually large number of children with cerebral palsy too in the communities affected by gas or contaminated groundwater," she alleged, lamenting that between 1984 and 2000, the government spent a paltry sum of Rs 3,761 per year per child orphaned by the disaster.

"In addition to children with birth defects, thousands of widows and destitute victims are being denied social support pension. In the last 23 years, the official administration of rehabilitation of victims of Union Carbide has been riddled with corruption, apathy and incompetence," said Rachna Dhingra of the BGIA. "The problem in the second generation due to gas exposure is one that will affect tens of thousands, and potentially many more in the future, and it needs to be addressed immediately. Yet the government has only very scanty information on this matter and no plans for the health or special assistance needed for them," said Champa Devi, another activist. She is the recipient of the American Public Health Association's Goldman Environmental Award for her work among gas victims. **Sahara Time/Delhi/ 12/ 12/ 07**

National Commission for Bhopal gas victims urged

With victims of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy still lacking adequate treatment and rehabilitation facilities, activists

working for their cause have sought setting up of a National Commission to cater to their medical needs for the next 30 years. 'They need specialized health care at least for the next 30 years. Setting up of a National Commission focussing on long-term rehabilitation of the survivors and their next generation is a must,' said Mohd Ali Qaiser, a physician at Sambhavana Trust Clinic who is treating the gas victims.

The Methyl Iso Cynate (MIC) that leaked from the Union Carbide factory on the intervening night of December 2-3, 1984, had affected those exposed to the gas and also their children, he said, quoting an internationally-published research by the clinic. Claiming to have evolved treatment protocols for gas victims integrating allopathy, ayurveda, panchakarma and yoga, the doctor said 'our results show that it is possible to provide safe inexpensive and effective health care through holistic approach.'

The National Commission should be formed through participation of government and non-government organizations, with a thirty-year action plan. It should ensure the line of treatment, availability of drugs, conduct medical research and become a forum for redressal of, complaints, he said. PTI **Free Press/Indore/ 03/ 12/ 07**

Dow shalt pay

V. VENKATESAN and VIDYA VENKAT

Civil society groups resist Dow Chemical's bid to evade liability for the Bhopal gas disaster as the government seeks to absolve it.

The Union Carbide factory in Bhopal, which the U.S.-based Dow Chemical Company has bought.

In June, activists working among the survivors of the 1984 Bhopal gas leak disaster

obtained certain documents from the Prime Minister's Office under the Right to Information Act. These documents suggest how keen the government is to relieve the Dow Chemical Company of any liability for the disaster and its toxic legacy.

Among the documents is an internal note submitted by Minister for Commerce and Industry Kamal Nath to the Prime Minister on February 7. This note deals with the issue of legal liability of the Dow Chemical Company of the United States, which purchased Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) and its Indian investments in 1999.

The Minister referred to the public interest litigation (PIL) going on in the Madhya Pradesh High Court about the 1984 disaster, in which the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers had moved the court in May 2005 to seek directions to Dow to deposit Rs.100 crore as remedial cost.

Kamal Nath suggested that in view of the likelihood of substantial investment from Dow in India, a group led by the Cabinet Secretary be formed to look into the matter holistically and the matter of legal responsibility of the company be left for the court to decide. He proposed that this group could consult all the stakeholders including industry, which, according to a letter from Ratan Tata, chairman of Tata Sons Limited, was willing to have an industry-led remediation arrangement (Frontline, February 9).

Kamal Nath's reference was to a letter Tata had written to Finance Minister P. Chidambaram regarding the creation of a Remediation Fund with contributions from the private sector. On Tata's proposal, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh wrote:

"This proposal requires serious consideration. Maybe a small group under Cabinet Secretary look into it involving among others Environment Ministry."

Both Chidambaram and the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, to whom Tata had written similar letters, concurred with the view that the pending case in the High Court need not deter the consideration of Tata's proposal.

The Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals, the administrative department concerned, however, opposed Tata's proposal. In its note on January 5, the department revealed that it had told a representative of Dow who visited the department that there appeared to be no valid ground for the Government of India to withdraw or modify its application dated May 10, 2005, filed in the Madhya Pradesh High Court (seeking Rs.100 crore as compensation from Dow) since the issue of deleting the name of Dow was sub judice.

The PIL petition was filed by Alok Pratap Singh in July 2004 seeking directions to the Central and State governments for the removal of the toxic wastes from the former Union Carbide India Ltd (UCIL) plant site at Bhopal and for remediation. Singh pleaded that the court hold Dow responsible for causing environmental pollution and pass suitable orders against the company to assume the yet-to-be discharged liabilities of UCC for the continuing and long-term impact of the disaster. He sought directions to Dow to provide for long-term medical care for the victims of the gas leak, for research and for monitoring the ill-effects of the pollution of land and water in and around the factory site at Bhopal. Dow, which was also made a respondent in the petition, requested the High Court to implead UCC (U.S.A) and Eveready Industries India Limited (EIL) as respondents and to delete its name from the array of parties on the grounds

that it had nothing to do with the matter.

The High Court permitted the inclusion of UCC and EIL but is yet to issue orders on whether to delete the name of Dow. The High Court has constituted a task force for removing and destroying the toxic wastes lying at the abandoned factory site. The rationale for the court's order was that the responsibility for clean-up should not overshadow the question of the clean-up itself. The court, therefore, did not give priority to determining Dow's liability and its responsibility for the clean-up.

Dow has consistently denied inheriting any liability for the Bhopal legacy from UCC. However, back in the U.S., it set aside \$2.2 billion to address future asbestos-related liabilities arising out of the Carbide acquisition.

Activists of the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal argue that if Dow can assume responsibility for asbestos-induced illnesses among victims in America, why then it should deny responsibility towards the victims of Bhopal and its continuing toxic legacy. A.M. FARUQUI Residents of neighbourhood communities demonstrating outside the abandoned factory on July 18 demanding that Dow Chemical pay for the damage the disaster caused to the environment and to public health.

The Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals explained its position on Tata's offer as follows:

"The matter is sub judice and the High Court of Madhya Pradesh is itself monitoring the entire process of environmental remediation.... Moreover, it may be mentioned that as per the provisions of Hazardous Wastes (Management and Handling) Rules, 1989, it is the polluter who is liable for meeting the cost of environmental remediation. It may be appropriate that such

an offer is submitted to the High Court of Madhya Pradesh by the individual/agency making the offer and seek directions thereon."

But the department's note of caution had no impact. A note prepared by Cabinet Secretary B.K. Chaturvedi on April 6 made clear what ought to be the government policy: "Given the scope for future investments in the sector, it stands to reason that instead of continuing to agitate these issues in court for a protracted period, due consideration be given to the prospect of settling these issues appropriately. An important aim is to remove uncertainties and pave the way for promoting investments in the sector."

The Cabinet Secretary referred in his note to Tata's letter stating that it was critical for Dow to have the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers withdraw its application in the Madhya Pradesh High Court for a financial deposit by Dow against the remediation cost, as that application would imply that the Government of India viewed Dow as "liable" in the Bhopal gas disaster case.

The Cabinet Secretary, therefore, suggested reconstitution of the existing Group of Ministers (GoM) dealing with matters relating to the Bhopal gas disaster with appropriate changes in its mandate to help Dow. The GoM is yet to be reconstituted as suggested by him.

Curiously, the Prime Minister's Office kept in its file a copy of the legal opinion tendered by Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Dow's counsel in the Madhya Pradesh High Court and also spokesperson for the Congress party. Singhvi suggested that Dow could not be held responsible and/or liable for the Bhopal gas tragedy and could not be held liable for the alleged contamination and/or consequent cleaning up of the Bhopal site.

While the government – with

the probable exception of the Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals – by and large appears to be inclined to let Dow evade liability for the Bhopal clean-up, civil society groups have successfully resisted Dow's efforts to woo public opinion.

The resistance has surprisingly come from groups of students, faculty members and alumni of the Indian Institutes of Technology (see box). This happened in the wake of Dow's recent attempts to forge links with the IITs for recruitment for its upcoming R&D centre in Maharashtra. Dow was expected to come for "pre- placement talks" in IIT Madras and IIT Bombay in October. But on October 10, a petition signed by 67 students and 22 faculty members of IIT Madras reached its Director, M.S. Ananth. It requested him to "remove Dow Chemicals from the list of companies invited for campus placements". Following this, Dow cancelled its talks scheduled on both these campuses.

On October 24, senior journalist Praful Bidwai and Ramon Magsaysay award winner Arvind Khejriwal, both IIT alumni, launched a "Blacklist Dow" campaign in New Delhi and released a petition signed by over 1,000 alumni and former faculty members of the IITs. They urged each of the seven IITs to bar Dow "from any partnership or role in the premier institute". During the release, Bidwai said, "The company has to clean up the toxic wastes in Bhopal, compensate the victims of contamination, and force its subsidiary to face criminal trial in the Bhopal court. Otherwise, it will be met with hostility wherever it goes in India."

As a fallout of this campaign, students in the Chemical Engineering Department of IIT Kharagpur have turned down sponsorship from Dow for their annual tech fest, Cheminsight, this year.

Last year, the company was a major sponsor for this event. Also, in Kharagpur, Dow has not been invited for campus placements. In IIT Kanpur, students have put up an online petition demanding that the institute refuse Dow sponsorship for the International and INNCOM-6 Conference, scheduled for December. The petition has received around 100 signatures from IIT Kanpur students. In their petition, the students have referred to the various controversies in which the company is embroiled. In August, officials of Dow Agro Sciences, an Indian subsidiary, were implicated by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for bribing Agricultural Ministry officials to expedite the registration of three pesticides between 1996 and 2001.

These pesticides included Dursban (chlorpyrifos), which had been taken off American markets after studies pointed to threats of toxic poisoning from it. Dow reportedly managed to make significant profits through the sales of these pesticides in India.

The petitioners have also raised the issue of Indian Oil Corporation cancelling a technology tie-up with Dow Global Technologies Inc., a subsidiary, in 2005 because the company had attempted to pass off a Union Carbide patented technology as its own. Said P.M. Bhargava, renowned scientist and chairperson of The Sambhavna Trust in Bhopal: "It is heartening to see a young generation of elite students take a moral stance for the cause of the underprivileged victims of Bhopal."

Frontline/ 07/ 12/ 07

Bhopal tragedy comes to haunt Dow R&D unit, villagers block road to site

Vinod Mathew & Nisha Nambiar

On January 16, they blocked the road leading to a 100-acre construction site- one that, if Dow Chemical has its way, will be their first R&D unit in India. The project was started in October.

The construction work at the Rs 400-crore 'Global Research Centre' came to a grinding halt as hundreds of residents of Shinde village, a quiet hamlet tucked away in the interiors of Khed taluka in

Pune district, woke up to an uncomfortable reality-that Dow Chemical now owns Union Carbide Corporation. The Corporation was the parent company of Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) when the Bhopal tragedy struck in 1984. For the villagers, however, it is of no consequence that UCIL was hived off by UCC in 1994 to McLeod Russel (India) Limited.

The negative light under which the 1,500- odd villagers have begun to look at Dow Chemical's centre has led to a decision that not a single truck, carrying building material or any worker to the construction site, will be allowed to pass through the village, the sole approach to the Dow Chemical unit. They know it could soon become a 'law -and- order' situation and they're bracing up to face such an eventuality, though as of now the protest is a peaceful one.

Sarpanch Gorakh Rambhau Temghire - who was called twice last week by the sub-divisional officer to be persuaded to withdraw the agitation - has told the villagers that the agitation will continue under the umbrella of Bhamchandragarh Bachao

Warkari Kisan Sangharsh Samiti, after Bhamchandragarh, a place of historical importance near their village.

The villagers are working in threehour shifts between 8 am and 7 pm, playing the role of sentry at this point and shouting slogans against the company. Interestingly, there has been no police action against them.

"Let them arrest us," shouts Shantaram Babu Temghire, former sarpanch of the village, reflecting the mood of the villagers.

The stand of villagers has perplexed N Y Sanglikar, Director, Public Affairs, Dow Chemical International Private Limited, as he believed the villagers were all for the 'big project' till a few weeks ago. "These are my people and I know them. They can be easily swayed. This week they may be opposing the project, but the next week they could be supporting it.

The company has decided to allow time to win back the confidence of the villagers. But there is no time frame," he says.

According to Justice BG Kolse Patil, retired judge of Bombay High Court, Justice P B Sawant, retired judge of Supreme Court and social activist Vilas Sonawane, the villagers were swayed by the arguments of the company once, but not anymore. "An RTI has been moved for information on Dow and we are ready to file a writ petition in the High Court for the same," says Patil.

Meanwhile, villagers have in their hand - what they hope can act as a legal spanner in the project work the 7/12 extract of the 100 acres where it's called a 'gairan' (grazing land for cattle), which is to be looked after by the village panchayat. "When it was given over by the Government to the company, we were not told about it. No

change of ownership has been made in the revenue documents. As on January 10, 2008, the owner of the land where the company is putting up its facility is not MIDC or Dow Chemical," says villager Genbhau Mengle.

According to Purshottam Jadhav, MIDC's regional officer at Pune, since it is a Government land, the onus is on the Government to change its ownership once the District Collector passes the order and it's not mandatory to ask the panchayat samiti's permission. "Of the 62.74 hectares, 10 hectares were given back to the village, 40 hectares were given for Dow Chemical and 12 hectares remained with the Government," he says. However, the same is yet to be reflected in the 7/12 extract.

"The 100-acre plot has been allocated to us by the Maharashtra Government on a long lease basis.

We have the appropriate documents and approvals in place needed to start and continue the construction of the research centre," points out Sanglikar.

Meanwhile, no efforts are being spared by the company to convince the villagers of their bonafide intent. On January 22, Dow Chemical got a letter of support from National Chemical Laboratory (NCL). On Thursday, NCL Deputy Director B D Kulkarni said he was requested by the company to give a covering letter and he did it immediately as NCL had worked on some research projects with Dow. When asked whether he had seen the project report, he said that they had assured him that it would be send to him later.

The coming days may see lot of developments as Dow Chemical is planning to woo back those villagers who were supportive of their centre mid-December when they got 'swayed by outsiders' - only two

months after Maharashtra Chief Minister Vilasrao signed on the dotted line to pave way for the facility.

The Indian Express/ Delhi/ 28/ 01/ 08

Gas-hit on foot march to Delhi

Beginning February 20, over a hundred citizens of Bhopal poisoned by Union Carbide's toxic chemicals will start their march on foot to New Delhi to re-mind the Prime Minister of the promises he did not keep. This information was given by the activists of Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmchari Sangh, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha and Bhopal Group for Information & Action at a press conference held here on Monday.

The people in the Padyatra will include survivors of the 1984 Union Carbide disaster and residents of communities in the vicinity of the abandoned Union Carbide factory where the soil and ground water has been contaminated for last 20 years.

The three survivors' and supporters' organizations: Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Kar-machari Sangh, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha and Bhopal Group for Information and Action, that are leading the Padyatra are demanding that the Prime Minister direct the setting up of an empowered commission on Bhopal for long term medical care and rehabilitation of the Bhopal victims and their children:

The organizations have suggested the names of Padmabhusan Dr PM Bhargava founder of the Centre or Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad, Dr Sneh Bhargav, former Director of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi and eight other scientists, social workers and former government officials as representatives of the

Bhopal survivors in the Commission on Bhopal.

In addition to the Empowered Commission on Bhopal, the Padyatris are demanding that the Prime Minister direct the ministries of External Affairs, Agriculture, Industries and Chemical & fertilizers to take legal action against Union Carbide and Dow Chemical.

Central Chronicle/ Bhopal/ 19/ 02/ 08

Bhopal gas tragedy victims walk to Parliament Street

Conclude 800 km march from Bhopal in support of their various demands

Marking two years since their last padayatra all the way on foot from Bhopal to Delhi, 50 people, including survivors of the 1984 gas tragedy, their children, people exposed to contaminated drinking water and their supporters concluded their second 800-km march over the weekend by walking from Nizamuddin Park in Bhopal to Parliament Street here in the Capital.

"We were forced to undertake this gruelling walk because the Prime Minister has failed to keep his word. This time, we are not going back until we get a public declaration from him that he will deliver on his promise," said Hazra Bi, a survivor and one of the padayatris.

According to the protesters, the Government's inaction on rehabilitation and environmental remediation has placed the people of Bhopal at the receiving end of two disasters -- the catastrophic 1984 gas leak and the ongoing water contamination -- both with pronounced deadly effects on children and future generations. "Despite a 1991 Supreme Court order directing the Government to extend insurance benefits to several

gas-affected children, not one child has been covered, leading to a spurt in destitution among families with sick children. In the contamination-affected communities, a congenital deformity among new borns is a rising trend. The future generations are in danger," said a statement issued by the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal.

Accusing the co-ordination committee set up by the Prime Minister to oversee implementation of rehabilitation schemes and environmental remediation of not delivering, it said: "Over the last two years, the co-ordination committee has had three meetings and accomplished nothing. More than 25,000 people continue to consume poison-tainted groundwater in the absence of reliable and good quality water supply. More than 5,000 tonnes of toxic wastes remains buried and spread around the factory site and no efforts have been taken to contain them or export them outside for final disposal."

The Hindu/ Delhi/ 30/ 03/ 08

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 2,500 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 visit 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.

Business Standard/ Delhi/ 04/ 04/ 08

Kids march for Bhopal gas victims

Over 100 school kids participated in a rally here

today in support of the Bhopal gas tragedy survivors who marched from Bhopal to Delhi, demanding rehabilitation and compensation for them and their children.

Echoing the marchers' demands for an empowered commission to provide medical, social, economic and environmental rehabilitation to those who have suffered since the 1984 tragedy, the children took the march from Jantar Mantar to Parliament Street.

"We had heard of the Bhopal gas tragedy. But after hearing the tales from the people themselves, especially from children, we feel strongly for their cause," said Raghav Sharma, a student of Shri Ram school.

The tragedy dates back to December 3, 1984, when a Union Carbide subsidiary pesticide plant in Bhopal released 40 tonne of methyl isocyanate gas, killing approximately 3,800 people.

The incident, known as one of the world's worst industrial disasters, left many suffering from chronic exposure. Contaminated groundwater around the plant area still continues to infect people with various diseases.

Of the 50 people who took the month-long Bhopal-Delhi march or padyatra of 800 km, five were children.

Rachna Dhingra of the Bhopal Group for Information and Action said that the kids who participated in the march were 11-year-olds.

"The marchers, including children, have just one demand — Prime Minister Manmohan Singh keeps his promises that he made to the people of Bhopal when they took a similar march two years ago," Dhingra told IANS.

Yasmin, one of the 11-year-old marchers, has written a letter to the Prime Minister in blood, urging him to keep his promises.

"Children of Bhopal are victims of two of the world's worst disasters. One was

caused by the Union Carbide's toxic gases and the other by the water that is still contaminated due to the tragedy," Yasmin said.

This letter, along with others echoing similar sentiments and written by school students of Delhi and Chennai, will be submitted to Manmohan Singh by a delegation of children.

The marchers submitted a letter earlier to the Prime Minister with 20 questions. These include queries like what measures have been taken to ensure medical care to victims of the tragedy and why the government has not taken any steps to prosecute Union Carbide?

Students of the Shri Ram School, Tagore International School and Blue Bells School were among those who participated in the rally. — IANS

The Tribune/ Delhi/ 17/ 04/ 08

GoM promises to consider Bhopal survivors' plea

Representatives of three organisations working with those affected by the gas leak from Union Carbide's plant in Bhopal have expressed satisfaction with the response of a Group of Ministers (GoM) after their meeting on Thursday.

The organisations had led a march of 50 Bhopal survivors and their supporters from Bhopal to Delhi and have been staging dharna at Jantar Mantar here for the past 20 days.

Rehabilitation

The GoM assured them that it would endorse and forward their demand for a special commission to address rehabilitation, and for legal action against Dow and Union Carbide, to the Prime Minister. While emphasising that it had never conceded the Madhya Pradesh government's request

for inclusion of 20 additional municipal wards in Bhopal as gas-affected, the GoM members clarified that it had requested the State government to submit data on gas-related deaths and injuries in the 20 wards. But no such data had been submitted till date.

No precedence

Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh, who heads the GoM, reportedly told the delegation that though there was no precedence but a special commission for Bhopal was justified as the disaster was unprecedented.

The GoM members are said to have expressed their support for the demand of the three organisations for legal action against the Dow and Carbide.

Paswan's promise

Chemical and Fertilizers Minister Ram Vilas Paswan assured the delegation that the government would continue its efforts to make the Dow Chemical pay Rs. 100 crore as advance for environmental remediation.

Mr. Paswan also admitted that after a recent fire incident at a toxic waste facility in Ankleshwar that was destined to receive Bhopal wastes, any attempts to send wastes anywhere else in the country would be met with opposition from local residents.

The Hindu/Delhi/ 19/ 04/ 08

Memo on Bhopal: lawyers, retired judges question 'immunity' to Dow

More than 200 retired judges and lawyers have signed a memorandum that says that the attempts made by the Government to grant "immunity" to Dow Chemical from its Bhopal liabilities are "unconstitutional and illegal". The memorandum alleges that

the Central Government is colluding with Dow Chemical to let it off its legal liability in an exchange for a promise to invest \$ 1 billion in India.

The group has managed to procure documents under the RTI Act that show that Congress spokesperson Abhishek Manu Singhvi, counsel for Dow Chemicals in the Madhya Pradesh High Court, and Ratan Tata, co-chairman of the US-India CEO Forum, believe that company has no legal liabilities. "Seen in the light of the case in Madhya Pradesh High Court, this collusion constitutes a Contempt of Court by the Government," states the memorandum.

In 2005, the Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals had asked the Madhya Pradesh HC to direct Dow Chemical to deposit Rs 100 crore as advance towards clean-up of contamination in Bhopal. A note prepared by former Cabinet Secretary B K Chaturvedi refers to letters from Ratan Tata and from Dow Chemical to the Indian Ambassador in USA, highlighting Dow's difficulty in investing in India unless the application filed by the Chemicals Department is withdrawn.

The Cabinet Secretary says, "Given the scope of future investments in the sector, it stands to reason that instead of continuing to agitate against these issues in court, due consideration be given to the prospect of settling them appropriately. An important aim is to remove uncertainties and pave the way for promoting investments in the sector."

Addressing a press conference on Monday, Supreme Court Advocate Prashant Bhushan and former Rajya Sabha MP and senior journalist Kuldip Nayyar said that the Governments of India and Madhya Pradesh and Dow Chemical are "joint tort feorsors" and are responsible for the condition of the Bhopal site and

its surroundings. Through this proposed settlement, the Government of India is contemplating letting Dow off the hook, even while failing to discharge its own statutory duties of protecting the environment and holding the polluters liable.

Dow has argued that its wholly-owned subsidiary Union Carbide is a separate legal entity that handles its own liabilities, and that the Government of India should pursue Union Carbide and not Dow. "Dow's argument is specious. Carbide has been an absconder since 1992. Dow knows very well that its subsidiary will not respond to summons from Indian courts," said Nayyar.

"As a 100 per cent owner of Union Carbide after the merger, Dow is saddled with successor liability. Its attempts to use the corporate veil, separating Dow and Union Carbide, to evade liability is fraudulent," added Bhushan.

Survivors of the 1984 Bhopal disaster, and victims of water contamination are currently camping in Jantar Mantar after an 800-km padyatra from Bhopal to Delhi. Besides their demand for an empowered commission to address rehabilitation issues, they also want the Government to pursue Union Carbide and Dow for their respective liabilities.

The Indian Express/ Delhi/ 22/ 04/ 08

Panel to decide Dow proposal fate as gas tragedy shadow still looms

Gireesh Chandra Prasad

US GIANT Dow Chemicals may have to wait for an independent commission's views before it could firm up plans for mega investments in India. The government is expected to appoint a high-powered committee to comprehensively look into

issues relating to the 1984 Bhopal gas disaster, including Dow's liability to clean up the site. The American chemical major, with the support of the US government and Indian industry, had been persuading New Delhi to take a view that it is not liable to clearing the site of the toxicity that persists there.

A group of ministers headed by Union human resources development minister Arjun Singh heard NGOs last Thursday, where the activists demanded an independent examination of all issues. The ministerial panel and the government of Madhya Pradesh are inclined to appoint a commission, sources told ET. The government would decide the structure of the commission in consultation with the law ministry, the sources said. The proposed commission would also look into issues of relief and rehabilitation, lack of co-ordination between various central and state agencies and the day-to-day difficulties of the affected people. It would also have powers to summon stakeholders and give directions. The commission's report would also be tabled in Parliament.

Letting an independent commission take a view on contentious issues would absolve the government of criticism for putting investments before human rights, especially when general elections and various state assembly polls are expected soon. It would also help the government to take a balanced view on other rehabilitation issues where different government agencies have narrow administrative interests.

Dow's efforts to be absolved of any legal liability for the slip of Union Carbide Corporation, which it acquired in 2001, has not met with much success as the chemicals and fertilizers ministry has not supported it. The ministry had also asked the company to pay Rs 100 crore as interim advance to

clean up the site, which the company has not paid.

The Economic Times/ Delhi/ 25/ 04/ 08

Bhopal victims present 'clinching' proof of apathy

Children of gas-hit parents continue to suffer from disorders

Parents of children from Bhopal with serious birth defects presented what they claimed to be evidence of the Government's criminal negligence towards the next generation of Union Carbide victims at a press conference here on Tuesday.

Present at the press conference were also parents who were exposed to methyl isocyanate and other toxic gases during the 1984 gas leak disaster and those who continue to be exposed to toxic chemicals and heavy metals like mercury in their drinking water from the community hand-pumps.

"The Central Government is fully aware that the children of gas-affected parents suffer from congenital physical and mental growth disorders. For its part, the State Government provided official assistance for heart surgery and congenital brain anomalies to merely 27 children under a programme called Special Assistance to At Risk Children. However, that was terminated in 1997 citing financial constraints," complained a parent.

The parents of children born with brain damage, mental retardation and cleft lip and palette said the Government continues to disregard a Supreme Court order of 1991 that directed medical insurance for at least one lakh children born to gas-exposed parents.

Among other things, the parents are demanding from the Government special medical assistance, community-based rehabilitation

centres and monetary help besides research and monitoring programmes aimed at assessing the magnitude of the problem and early detection of such defects.

The Hindu/ Delhi/ 30/ 04/ 08

Scrap Dow's pesticides, say Bhopal gas tragedy survivors

Thirty survivors of the Bhopal gas disaster staged a protest in front of the Agriculture Ministry on Friday, demanding cancellation of registration of three pesticides — Dursban, Nurelle and Pride — all produced by American multinational Dow Chemicals. The agitators enacted a mock death scene. They said one of the pesticides, Dursban, is banned in the US, as it is a neuro-toxin that can cause permanent damage to children's brain.

The Bhopal gas tragedy survivors claimed that the agriculture minister had failed to keep his promise of May 4, 2007, to the Parliament of taking action against the company after the CBI submitted its investigation report regarding bribes paid by Dow Chemicals. The survivors — who are on the 27th day of their dharna at the Jantar Mantar here after an 800-km-long padyatra from Bhopal — said that because of the minister's inaction, the three illegally registered pesticides continue to be produced and marketed in India.

Dow Chemical has admitted paying \$22,000 (Rs 88 lakh) as bribe to Agriculture Ministry officials to expedite registration of the three pesticides. The company had to pay a fine of \$ 325,000 (Rs 1.43 crore) to the Securities Exchange Commission for violating the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act last year.

The Times of India/ Delhi/ 26/ 04/ 08

Bhopal children knock at Manmohan's door

Police personnel preventing Bhopal gas victims from staging a surprise demonstration with their children outside the Prime Minister's residence in New Delhi on Monday.

More than 40 gas-affected children from Bhopal virtually knocked at the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's door at Race Course Road to draw his attention to their demands.

The children, along with their parents, made a sudden appearance near the Prime Minister's residence demanding livelihood and clean environment.

"We are of the same age as the Prime Minister's grandchildren. Would he let his grandchildren drink poisoned water or see them sitting on the streets for days," Yasim Khan, who walked from Bhopal to Delhi, said. On April 16, Yasim wrote a letter to Dr. Singh with blood drawn from the Bhopal gas victims, seeking constitution of an empowered commission to look into economic and medical rehabilitation, environmental clean-up and other issues related to the gas victims.

The Hindu/ Delhi/ 06/ 05/ 08

Dow not immune from any legal liability in Bhopal case: Centre

Twenty-four years after a gas leak from a Union Carbide Corp., or UCC, factory in Bhopal killed thousands of people, the Union law ministry has said that Dow Chemicals, which acquired UCC in 2001 and has big plans for India, will have to pay for the toxic waste clean-up in the affected area and offer compensation "if there is any legal liability".

The Madhya Pradesh high court is yet to give its verdict on a case on this.

The ministry has said that irrespective of the manner in which UCC has been merged or acquired by Dow Chemicals, if there is any legal liability, it would have to be borne by the company.

This information was obtained through a Right to Information application submitted by some Bhopal tragedy activists to the Prime Minister's Office.

The law ministry also said that in view of the ongoing court case, "it cannot be said that the investment proposed to be made by the Dow Chemicals will be immune from the orders of the court."

In 2005 the department of chemicals and petrochemicals filed an application, requesting Dow to deposit Rs100 crore with the court for site's clean-up. In effect, the law ministry has said that till the matter is cleared by the high court, Dow Chemicals cannot be absolved of UCC's liabilities.

Kailash Joshi, a Lok Sabha member of the Bharatiya Janata Party from Bhopal, said he was not aware of the law ministry's note on the issue. "How are we concerned who has sold the company and who has bought it?" asked Joshi. "All we are asking for is compensation for those affected by the tragedy. And we are agitating for inclusion of all 56 wards in the Bhopal Municipal Corporation, instead of just 36 wards at present (as the area affected by the 1984 gas tragedy). It is for the government to decide who should pay." Dow Chemicals claims that UCC is a separate legal entity and that it has not inherited UCC's liabilities. Activists, however, say that Dow should be made liable for the damages. "There is always the threat that legal and moral issues will be set aside for financial considerations such as investments," said Satinath Sarangi of the Bhopal Group for Information and Action.

Dow Chemicals plans to invest Rs300 crore to set up an

R&D facility in Pune. In April this year, it also announced an investment of Rs600 crore in a plant at Dahej in Gujarat, in alliance with Gujarat Alkalies and Chemicals Ltd.

Mint/ Delhi/ 13/ 05/ 08

Bhopal authorities seek Army, NIDM help for toxic clean-up

Shashikant Trivedi & Sreelatha Menon / Bhopal

The Bhopal Gas Relief and Rehabilitation Department is talking to the Indian Army and the Delhi-based National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) to help remove the toxic waste lying in the premises of the closed Union Carbide for the last 24 years.

Last month, the department requested the Indian Army to help dispose of the waste. This includes 376 tonnes of waste lying in sacks in the premises as well as 8,000 tonnes of waste buried underground, which continues to pollute groundwater in the area. Department officials told Business Standard that this was done following a court instruction.

The Indian Army, however, advised the department to rope in the NIDM to remove the waste.

"A team from NIDM will visit the site probably next week. NIDM will not remove the toxic waste but if roped in, it will support the transporter in handling the toxic waste," a senior official in the department said.

"We will have to submit updates on July 3 on the progress of removal of the toxic waste in the Madhya Pradesh High Court," the officials further said.

The NIDM, which comes under the home ministry, however, said it had not been approached yet.

Professor Santosh Kumar of NIDM said while no one had

written so far to the institute, it was willing to help.

Anil K Gupta, associate professor and programme director (industrial chemical and environmental risk management), NIDM, said clearing the toxic chemical waste would require a study of the condition of the chemicals lying there followed by remediation.

The state government had also written letters to eight hazardous waste transporters and had spelt out terms and conditions defined by central and state pollution control boards.

The department has not received any response from these firms.

The toxic waste of Union Carbide in Bhopal leaked from the factory on the intervening night of December 2 and 3, 1984, claiming thousands of lives.

Half of the solid waste (total of 376 tonnes) was to be land-filled and the rest was to be incinerated at Bharuch Enviro Infrastructure Ltd (BEIL) in Ankleshwar, Gujarat.

The Gujarat Pollution Control Board had recently refused to accept the toxic waste. A number of NGOs, which are fighting for the cause of gas victims, have demanded that Dow Chemicals (which has acquired Union Carbide) should remove the toxic waste. The law ministry has also taken the same position that Dow Chemicals is liable for removal of the waste left behind by Union Carbide.

Dow Chemicals spokesperson Scot Wheeler said the company's stand on legal liability for cleaning up the environmental mess remains the same as before.

"As Dow Chemicals never owned or operated the former Bhopal plant site, our position continues to be that this situation is not Dow's responsibility, accountability, or liability to bear. Contrary to claims made by some, Dow did not inherit Union Carbide's

liabilities and does not have responsibility for them."

"We do have sympathy for the plight of those who are victims of the tragedy and the fact that the site has not been cleaned up. The solution to this problem is in the hands of the Central and state governments as the site is under the control of the Madhya Pradesh government," Wheeler said.

Business Standard/ Delhi/ 15/ 05/ 08

Don't hold Bhopal hostage

THE Bhopal clean-up, for long an essay in travesty, has now become a saga of criminal callousness. The Union law ministry was probably right when it recently told the PMO that Dow Chemicals would normally have a legal liability to clean up the Union Carbide plant site — the source of the 1984 methyl isocyanate leak — on account of its acquisition of Union Carbide Corporation (UCC). But the 'unearthing' of such technical minutiae won't spell much relief for the victims. Disputes centred on the question of legal liability for the tragedy — which continues to unfold with toxins contaminating soil and water up to five kilometres from the plant site — have held up crucial remediation work. Such wrangling smacks of criminal cynicism. That is not to argue the government should refrain from figuring out on whom to pin the financial liability for contamination of Bhopal's ground water. That is, doubtless, the responsibility of the Indian state. But this is not a task in itself. It flows from the state's larger institutional role of being the guarantor of its citizens' life and liberty. Unfortunately, that has seemingly never been the concern of the Indian state. Or, why else would successive governments have made the remediation process contingent on conclusively settling the

liability issue, which by all accounts is extremely knotty?

There is no clarity on whether the Dow Chemicals-UCC deal had explicitly excluded liabilities arising out of the gas disaster. For, if that be so, Dow cannot be said to have inherited UCC's legal liabilities, which it 'normally' would have to bear. Besides, the suspect 1989 Supreme Court-endorsed \$470 million civil liabilities deal between the then government and UCC has further complicated the issue. It would, in such a scenario, be bad faith for the UPA government to continue to envisage remediation as being contingent on the definitive settling of the liability issue. It should expeditiously clean up the plant site, even as it seeks through political and/or judicial means to settle the liability issue. To not do that on the pretext that liability needs to be fixed first would perpetuate the tragedy and erode the shaky consensus for reform with which the UPA is so closely identified.

The Economic Times/ Delhi/ 16/ 05/ 08

Bhopal victims protest at PM's house

Forty Bhopal gas tragedy victims, including 15 children and 23 women, chained themselves to the fence around the Prime Minister's residence on Race Course Road demanding speedy resolution of their demands. They are demanding action against Union Carbide and Dow Chemicals and an empowered commission for the rehabilitation of Bhopal victims. Survivors of the 1984 Union Carbide disaster from Bhopal have been on protest in New Delhi for the last 55 days. Their first request for a meeting with the PM was sent in January.

Despite the long wait, they claimed that the PMO has refused to give any timeframe for resolution of the 23-year old legacy. "Twenty-three years is

too long. This is a matter of our lives and liberty and our children's health. We are not prepared to wait. We will do what it takes to ensure that the Prime Minister realizes that we, not American corporations, are his priority," said one of the victims.

The Bhopal gas victims charged the Prime Minister with being insensitive to the plight of the victims and their children. In April 2006, the Prime Minister had met a delegation of victims and promised to do all within his power to rehabilitate them and everything within the legal framework to hold the corporations to account. Two years hence, even their simplest demand -of clean water - remains unfulfilled, the victims alleged.

The Statesman/ Delhi/ 22/ 05/ 08

Commission to rehabilitate Bhopal gas victims to be set up

Aarti Dhar

Centre will take initiative soon to work out modalities. Committees on various rehabilitation aspects will be subsumed.

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

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 Centre 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.

The Hindu/ Delhi/ 30/ 05/ 08

Bhopal gas victims begin hunger strike

Nine activists, including survivors of the 1984 Bhopal gas disaster and victims of water contamination, began a hunger strike here on Tuesday. The activists said the statement by Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office Prithviraj Chavan on the setting up of an empowered commission for rehabilitation made no mention of its powers; nor did he specify any time frame for submission of its recommendations.

Also, the statement was silent on the issue of legal action against Union Carbide and Dow Chemicals.

Thousands of people died as methyl isocyanate gas leaked from the Union Carbide plant in the Madhya Pradesh capital in December 1984. Union Carbide and Dow Chemicals have since merged.

he activists are from the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmachari Sangh, the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha and

the Bhopal Group for Information and Action.

On Monday, the police arrested several activists who tried to hold a demonstration outside the Prime Minister's Office.

The Hindu/Delhi/ 11/ 06/ 08

25 years on, Govt wakes up to Bhopal waste but can't find any one to clean it up

Sonu Jain

386 tonnes were collected and stored in 2005 but no response to tenders; no estimate of total waste so far

Who will clean up the waste lying at the site of the Bhopal gas disaster? And when?

Months before the 25th anniversary of what is known as the world's worst industrial disaster, the clean-up at the 67-acre factory site has become a buck passed from one state to another, one agency to another. No one has even put an exact number to the amount of waste, its chemical composition and what effect it has had on the ground.

For years, the state government and the Centre had a fig leaf: the waste should lie untouched awaiting the long-drawn legal battle that's currently on to figure out whether it's Dow's liability. Dow Chemicals bought Union Carbide in 2001 and denies any legal liability in dealing with the waste.

But at a meeting of officials from Madhya Pradesh and the Centre on June 3, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh expressed concern over the waste and directed the state government to "expedite the process."

That's easier said than done.

- In 2004, the Madhya Pradesh High Court ordered the constitution of a task force under the chairmanship of Secretary, Department of Chemical and Petrochemicals, to monitor "overall

environmental remediation," which includes the clean-up.

- The next year, after reports that Sevin tar — the pesticide that Union Carbide manufactured — was leaking from one of the storage tanks, the Madhya Pradesh government collected 386 tonnes of waste in sacks and barrels which were then stored in a concrete godown in one corner of the factory site.

- Of this, 346 tonnes were proposed to be incinerated at a private firm, Bharuch Environ Infrastructure, in Ankleshwar, Gujarat. The remaining 40 tonnes were to be taken to a secure landfill at Pithampur in the state's Dhar district.

- But in April, the Gujarat government withdrew permission given to transport the waste to Ankleshwar after a fire at Bharuch Infrastructure's toxic waste treatment and storage facility.

- Meanwhile, for a year, no one responded to tenders for transporting the waste to Ankleshwar and Dhar. The MP government wrote letters to eight hazardous-waste transporters specifying terms defined by Central and state pollution control boards. Only last month, a firm responded but its application is still being processed.

- The task force has met 13 times and at its last meeting in May, the committee asked the government to finalise the clean-up of the 386 tonnes in a month's time. And urged the Madhya Pradesh government to get Gujarat to co-operate.

But the 386 tonnes is just scratching the surface. "This is a red herring. The real threat is the 10,000 tonnes of waste buried in and around the factory. No urgency has been shown in tackling these wastes for the last 25 years. For this, a comprehensive study of depth and spread of contaminants is the first step. Resolving liability issues and the remediation exercise can proceed simultaneously. The question of who should pay — the taxpayer

or the polluter— should not occupy the court's time for too long if it takes up the matter in right earnest," said Satinath Sarangi of the Sambhawna Trust who is now on a hunger strike in Delhi pressing for cleanup.

The storage tanks that once upon a time contained pesticide, gas chambers and pipes, lie rusting. Experts believe that most of the contaminants have leaked into the ground. No study has been done so far to gauge the level of contamination. The task force has now proposed that the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology and National Environment Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) give a proposal to the MP state government for providing consultancy in "detoxification, dismantling and decommissioning of the plant."

"There is a need to find out the impact of wind, rain and theft at the factory site before the environmental remediation plan is made. Once these studies are done, we will be able to demolish and treat the whole structure," said S P Gautam, chairman of the Madhya Pradesh Pollution Control Board and member of the task force.

There is a proposal by Ratan Tata for an industry-led effort of remediation of the site of Bhopal gas leak. The Department of Economic Affairs has given its view that the government should take up the offer. On the other hand, the Ministry of Chemicals has said that Dow should be made to pay Rs 100 crore for the clean-up. This issue is pending with a Group of Ministers led by Arjun Singh.

Meanwhile, the state government blames the Centre. "The Central government is solely responsible for the Bhopal gas victims after the Indian Disaster Act 1984. The state government has put forward a Rs 982-crore action plan which includes environmental remediation. The

Central government should provide the funds," said Babu Lal Gaur, Minister for Bhopal Gas relief department.

The Indian Express/ Delhi/ 15/ 06/ 08

Bhopal survivors say RTI applications stonewalled

Sonal Kellogg

Bhopal gas tragedy survivors on an indefinite fast accused the Prime Minister's Office of stonewalling the Right to Information requests filed by representatives of Bhopal victims for a malafide purpose on Tuesday.

At least three complaints are pending with the Central Information Commission against a range of violations by the public information officer of the Prime Minister's Office said Satinath Sarangi of the Bhopal group for Information and Action.

The complaints blame the highest executive office in the country of fraudulently removing important sections from files given for inspection, delaying the provision of requested photocopies and for disregarding the claim for information within two days under the Life and Liberty clause without providing any reasons for denial.

An RTI application filed invoking the Life and Liberty clause by Satinath Sarangi on June 13 — the 4th day of an indefinite hunger strike undertaken by nine Bhopal activists — has not elicited any response till date despite the strikers being on fast for 15 days. The application sought a time to inspect Bhopal-related files in the PMO, and has sought a copy of the register containing the identities of persons who met the Prime Minister since February 20, when 50 Bhopalis set off on their epic 800-km march to New Delhi.

Repeated requests since January 2008 by Bhopal

survivors and their representatives for an appointment with the PM have met with silence from the PMO. "Getting a list of people that the PM actually had the time to meet is critical to understanding where we stand in Dr Singh's scheme of things. But this list has been denied to us," said Mr Sarangi.

Having failed to hear from the PMO in the stipulated time, which is June 18, Mr Sarangi filed a complaint with the Central Information Commission on June 20 highlighting an earlier CIC decision that rules that hunger strikes, despite being a voluntary act, constitute a threat to life and liberty.

A urinalysis done on samples taken from the nine hunger strikers on 22 June revealed the presence of moderate to high levels of ketones in five samples. "The presence of ketones is worrisome as it is indicative of an advanced state of fasting and shows that the body is undergoing starvation," said Dr. Rakhal Gaitonde, a public health specialist with Bangalore-based Community Health Cell.

An earlier request filed on April 16, also for inspection invoking the life and liberty clause, got a response only on May 9.

The Asian Age/ Delhi/ 25/ 06/ 08

25 years later, toxic sludge torments Bhopal

Somini Sengupta

Hundreds of tons of waste still languish inside a tin-roofed warehouse in a corner of the old grounds of the Union Carbide pesticide factory here, nearly a quarter-century after a poison gas leak killed thousands and turned this ancient city into a notorious symbol of industrial disaster.

The toxic remains have yet to be carted away. No one has examined to what extent, over

more than two decades, they have seeped into the soil and water, except in desultory checks by a state environmental agency, which turned up pesticide residues in the neighborhood wells far exceeding permissible levels.

Nor has anyone bothered to address the concerns of those who have drunk that water and tended kitchen gardens on this soil and who now present ailments from cleft palates to mental retardation among their children as evidence of a second generation of Bhopal victims, though it is impossible to say with any certainty what is the source of the afflictions.

Why it has taken so long to deal with the disaster is an epic tale of the ineffectiveness and seeming apathy of India's bureaucracy and of the government's failure to make the factory owners do anything about the mess they left. But the question of who will pay for the cleanup of the 11-acre site has assumed new urgency in a country that today is increasingly keen to attract foreign investment.

It was here that on Dec. 3, 1984, a tank inside the factory released 40 tons of methyl isocyanate gas, killing those who inhaled it while they slept. At the time, it was called the world's worst industrial accident. At least 3,000 people were killed immediately. Thousands more may have died later from the aftereffects, though the exact death toll remains unclear.

More than 500,000 people were declared to be affected by the gas and awarded compensation, an average of \$550. Some victims say they have yet to receive any money. Efforts to extradite Warren

Anderson, the chief executive of Union Carbide at the time, from the United States continue, though apparently with little energy behind them. Advocates for those who live near the site continue to hound the company and their government. They chain

themselves to the prime minister's residence one day and dog shareholder meetings on another, refusing to let Bhopal become the tragedy that India forgot. They insist that Dow Chemical Company, which bought Union Carbide in 2001, also bought its liabilities and should pay for the cleanup. "Had the toxic waste been cleaned up, the contaminated groundwater would not have happened," says Mira Shiva, a doctor who heads the Voluntary Health Association, one of many groups pressing for Dow to take responsibility for the cleanup. "Dow was the first crime. The second crime was government negligence."

Dow, based in Michigan, says it bears no responsibility to clean up a mess it did not make. "As there was never any ownership, there is no responsibility and no liability — for the Bhopal tragedy or its aftermath," Scot Wheeler, a company spokesman, said in an e-mail message.

Wheeler pointed out that the former factory property, along with the waste it contained, had been turned over to the Madhya Pradesh State government in June 1998, and that "for whatever reason most of us do not know or fully understand, the site remains unremediated."

He went on to say that Dow could not finance remediation efforts, even if it wanted to, because it could potentially open up the company to potential further liabilities.

In a letter to the Indian ambassador to the United States in 2006, the Dow chairman, Andrew Liveris, sought assurance from the government that it would not be held liable for the mess on the old factory site, "in your efforts to ensure that we have the appropriate investment climate."

The claims have divided the government itself. It is now in the throes of a debate over who will pay — a debate that might have

taken place behind closed doors were it not for a series of public information requests by advocates for Bhopal residents that turned up revealing government correspondence.

It showed that one arm of the government, the Chemicals and Petrochemicals Ministry, entrusted with the cleanup of the site, has wanted Dow to put down a \$25 million deposit toward the cost of remediation, while other senior officials warned that forcing Dow's hand could endanger future investments in the country.

A senior government official, prohibited from speaking publicly on such a contentious issue, described the quandary. "Do you want \$1 billion in investment, or do you want this sticky situation to continue?" the official said, calling it a "stalemate."

The government is expected to make a final decision later this year.

Beyond who will pay for the cleanup here, the question is why 425 tons of hazardous waste — some local advocates allege there is a great deal more, buried in the factory grounds — remain here 24 years after the leak?

There are many answers. The company was allowed to dump the land on the government before it was cleaned up. Lawsuits by advocacy groups are still winding their way through the courts. And a network of often lethargic, seemingly apathetic government agencies do not always coordinate with one another.

The result is a wasteland in the city's heart. The old factory grounds, frozen in time, are an overgrown 11-acre forest of corroded tanks and pipes buzzing with cicadas, where cattle graze and women forage for twigs to cook their evening meal.

Since the disaster, ill-considered decisions on the part of local residents have only compounded the problems and heightened their health risks.

Just beyond the factory wall is a blue-black open pit. Once the repository of chemical sludge from the pesticide plant, it is now a pond where slum children and dogs dive on hot afternoons. Its banks are an open toilet. In the rainy season, it overflows through the slum's muddy alleys.

The slum rose up shortly after the gas leak. Poor people flocked here, seeking cheap land, and put up homes right up to the edge of the sludge pond. Once, the pond was sealed with concrete and plastic. But in the searing heat, the concrete cover eventually collapsed.

The first tests of groundwater began, inexplicably, 12 years after the gas leak. The state pollution control board turned up traces of pesticides, including endosulfan, lindane, trichlorobenzene and DDT. Soil sediments were not tested. The water was never compared with water in other city neighborhoods. The pollution board saw no cause for alarm. Nevertheless, in 2004, complaints from area residents led the Supreme Court to order the state to supply clean drinking water to the people living around the factory. By then, nearly 20 years had gone by.

"It is a scandal that the hazardous wastes left behind by Union Carbide unattended for 20 years have now migrated below ground and contaminated the groundwater below the factory and in its neighborhood," wrote Claude Alvares, a monitor for India's Supreme Court, who visited here in March 2005.

He tasted the water from an area well. "I had to spit out everything," he wrote in his report. The water "had an appalling chemical taste." Neighborhood women brought out their utensils to show how the water had corroded them. As his report went on to point out, the government was long ago made aware of the likelihood of contamination. A

government research center warned more than 10 years ago that, if left untreated, the toxic residue on the factory grounds would seep into the soil and water.

Around the same time, under public pressure, state authorities finally scooped up the toxic waste that had lain in clumps around the factory grounds, and stored it inside the tin-roofed warehouse. The warehouse was padlocked only about four years ago.

The waste was supposed to be taken to an incinerator in neighboring Gujarat, but the government has yet to find a contractor willing to pack it into small, transportable parcels. There have been delays in acquiring transport permits, too, with citizens groups raising new questions about the hazards of transporting the waste.

Ajay Vishoni, the state gas and health minister, said he was confident that none of the waste was hazardous anymore, nor had anyone proved to his satisfaction that it had ever caused the contamination of the groundwater. "There is hype," he said.

In 2005, a state-financed study called for long-term epidemiological studies to determine the impact of contaminated drinking water, concluding that while the levels of toxic contaminants were not very high, water and soil contamination had caused an increase in respiratory and gastrointestinal ailments.

In the Shiv Nagar slum about half a mile from the factory, there is a boy, Akash, who was born with an empty socket for a left eye. Now 6, he cannot see properly or speak. He is a cheerful child who plays in the lanes near his house.

His father, Shobha Ram, a maker of sweets who bought land here many years after the gas leak and built himself a two-room house, said the boy's afflictions were caused by the hand-pumped well from where his family drew water on the edge of the sludge pond for

years. He said it had not occurred to him that the water could be laced with pesticides.

"We knew the gas incident took place," he said. "We never thought the contaminated water would come all the way to our house."

The stories repeat themselves in the nearby slums. In Blue Moon, Muskan, a 2-year-old girl, cannot walk, speak or understand what is happening around her. Her father, Anwar, blames the water.

In Arif Nagar, Nawab and Hassan Mian, brothers who are 8 and 12, move through their house like newly hatched birds, barely able to stand. They have no control over their muscles. Their mother, Fareeda Bi, is unsure of exactly what caused their ailment, but she, too, blames the water.

"There are more children like this in the neighborhood," she said, "who cannot walk, who cannot see."

To compound the tragedy, there is no way to know to what extent the water is to blame. The government suspended long-term public health studies many years ago.

International Herald Tribune/
03/ 07/ 08

Bhopal Tragedy: Now, Gujarat refuses to dispose of chemical waste

Amrish Herdenia

Gujarat's turnaround at the 11th hour has once again dashed the hopes of Bhopal getting rid of the 390 metric tonnes of toxic chemical waste lying on the premises of the now defunct pesticide plant of the Union Carbide here for the past 24 years. In a letter to the Madhya Pradesh chief secretary, the Gujarat Pollution Control Board has made it clear that the "waste would not be allowed to cross the border of Gujarat".

The MP government has washed its hands off the entire issue saying that the MP High

Court was seized of the matter and that it had been informed of Gujarat's refusal via an affidavit submitted earlier this week.

Gujarat's has refused to dispose of the 350 tonnes of the waste by incineration at Ankleshwar in the state. The waste, lying on the plant premises since 1984, is a virtual store house of deadly chemicals. The detrimental effects of these chemicals on human body can cause cancer, damage liver, kidneys and lungs and many diseases.

In the intervening years, the waste has seeped into the earth contaminating ground water in an area of over 10 sq km. The area is heavily populated and does not have piped water supply. Though the government agencies have sealed a dozen-odd hand pumps after a report by "NEERI", Nagpur, saying that the water samples contained heavy metals and carcinogens, others continue to be used by the more than 25,000 people, who live in 14 colonies around the factory.

In May 2004, the Supreme Court passed an order saying that the settlements around the Union Carbide factory should start getting clean drinking water before the onset of monsoons. But till date, only 30 per cent of work on the project has been completed. Legally and morally, the Union Carbide and after its take-over by "Dow Chemicals"- the latter- is responsible for safe disposal of the waste. But beyond filing an application in the MP High Court asking the court to direct Dow Chemicals to pay Rs 100 crore as advance for the clean up, the government has done nothing to force the company to clean up the mess.

The high court, which has been hearing a PIL on the matter since 2004, has also explored various possibilities. Initially, it asked the state government to contact the "Nuclear, Chemical and

Biological warfare cell" in the Defence Ministry.

The Defence ministry refused to take up the job and suggested that the "National Institute of Disaster Management" would be a more appropriate agency.

Ultimately, after protracted arguments and after taking the consent of all concerned parties, the MP High Court in May this year, ordered that 40 MTs of the waste be transported to Pithampur in the Dhar district of MP to be consigned to landfills while the remaining 350 MTs be incinerated at Ankleshwar in Gujarat. The Gujarat government consented to the plan.

But the plan faced its first hurdle in April when the company that had been given the contract for transporting the waste to Pithampur and Ankleshwar, backed out at the last moment. And now has come Gujarat's refusal to play its role in the operation.

The Tribune/Delhi/ 02/ 08/ 08

Bhopal gas victims, govt call truce

The Centre today reached an agreement with those protesting for medical relief for the Bhopal gas tragedy victims and environmental recovery of the site of the Union Carbide plant from where the gas leak had occurred in 1984.

The organisations representing the victims today announced that they would call off their three-month-old agitation tomorrow. This was after the government agreed to form an autonomous commission to take care of medical, social and environmental grievances of the victims as well as the contamination of ground water by the toxic waste that has been dumped at the site.

Union Minister of Chemicals and Fertilisers Ram Vilas Paswan will tomorrow announce the government's willingness to continue to

demand the compensation amount from the company. Dow has been refusing to accept responsibility.

However, the end of the agitation, being carried out from New Delhi, will hardly be the end of troubles for Dow Chemicals as most agitating groups will now put their weight behind a Dow Quit India agitation, to be launched from Pune on August 9. Dow's R&D centre in a village in Chakan, Pune, was recently razed by Warkaris, the devotees of Sant Tukaram.

The sect, which has thousands of followers in Maharashtra, owned up to the offence and has vowed to oust Dow from Pune. The agitation, beginning in Pune, will have 100,000 Warkaris joining on the first day, says Sarangi. Dow Chemicals continues to maintain that it is being targeted for no reason.

"For 16 years, the National Chemical Laboratory has been functioning in Pune and that was what prompted Dow to set up its R&D centre in Pune. It is unfortunate that the villagers are being misled," said a spokesperson for the company.

Business Standard/ Delhi/ 08/ 08/ 08

Bhopal gas survivors end dharna

Bhopal gas leak survivors ended their four-month-long dharna here on Friday after the Centre formally announced the setting up of an Empowered Commission and promised legal action on the civil and criminal liabilities of Union Carbide and Dow Chemicals. Thousands of people died when a toxic gas leaked out of the Union Carbide plant in the Madhya Pradesh capital in December 1984. The company has since merged with Dow Chemicals.

The Hindu/ Delhi/ 09/ 08/ 08

BEIL equipped to dispose Bhopal waste: Rajju Shroff

"Environmentalists are ruining India's progress by creating a scare about the toxicity of the Bhopal gas tragedy waste. The Bharuch Enviro Infrastructure Ltd's (BEIL) waste disposal facility at Ankleshwar has the required capacity to safely dispose this waste, and we are ready to dispose it for free," says chairman BEIL, Rajju Shroff.

Shroff alleged that some NGOs are simply creating a scare and that the state government had revoked the permission given to dispose the waste at BEIL only on submissions made by them. He said he too has letters from various organizations stating that they have no problems if the waste is disposed at BEIL facility. "Many NGOs have written letters to the Gujarat government and to Central Pollution Control Board, stating that they are fully satisfied with the working of BEIL," Shroff said.

Speaking to TOI Shroff said, "Our Ankleshwar facility disposes about 60 tons of all types of hazardous waste daily. Some of it much more toxic and complicated than the waste lying in Bhopal. NEERI, IICT of Hyderabad and DRDO (Defense Research Organization) have tested the samples of the waste and the samples were found to be safe for disposal."

About the amount of waste stored at the facility, Shroff said, "If a member has more hazardous waste than permitted as per norms, Gujarat Pollution Control Board will issue closure notices. We therefore have to adjust and accept the additional waste. We do not want small units to close down or illegally dump the waste anywhere. According to the guidelines of CPCB any incinerator can store upto 2 years."

US court reinstates Bhopal gas case

Lalit K.Jha

The lawsuit was filed in 2004 by a group of people who live in the vicinity of the pesticide plant in Bhopal

A New York court has reinstated a case filed against Union Carbide by residents of Bhopal who claim to have suffered serious health problems due to a gas leak from the company's plant in 1984, rated the world's worst industrial disaster.

On the night of December 2-3, 1984, a Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal spewed tonnes of poisonous methyl isocyanate gas, killing some 3,000 people instantly and many more later.

The lawsuit was filed in 2004 by a group of people who live in the vicinity of the pesticide plant in Bhopal.

They claim they suffered serious health problems due to soil and water contamination in the area by the leakage of toxic gas from the plant run by Union Carbide.

The case was previously dismissed by a trial court in 2006 and 2007. Reinstating the case, the US second-circuit court of appeals (Manhattan) on Monday said the lower courts did not give the plaintiff enough notice to respond to Union Carbide's bid to dismiss the case.

"We view this as a close case," US circuit judge Robert D. Sack said. "But we think there is a reasonable likelihood that, in light of the peculiarly difficult procedural history of this and related litigation, the plaintiffs were not aware that they were in danger of an adverse grant of summary judgment based on the submissions prior to the district court's order converting the motion and then deciding it." Welcoming the court's decision, H. Rajan Sharma, the attorney

representing the Bhopal gas victims, said the judgment would enable them to conduct a detailed study on the role of the Union Carbide in the contamination of groundwater in Bhopal.

Mr Sharma said the lawsuit is seeking cleanup, monitoring, and damages for personal injury caused to about 20,000 individuals along with property damages. The company, now owned by Dow Chemicals, had paid a compensation of \$470 million in 1989.

In a statement, Union Carbide claimed Monday's judgment should not be interpreted as a ruling on the merits of the case and said the claims would be ultimately dismissed.

"The second circuit did not discuss the merits of the case or the merits of the trial judge's ruling of dismissal and its decision should not be interpreted as a ruling on the merits," the statement said.

***The Asian Age/ Delhi/
05/ 11/ 08***

Bhopal disaster -an eye opener to units

The 1984 gas leak in Bhopal, was a terrible tragedy that understandably continues to evoke strong emotions even 24 years later.

On 3rd December 1984, poison gas leaked from a Union Carbide factory, killing thousands.

On the fateful night the Union Carbide India plant in Bhopal began leaking 27 tons of the deadly methyl isocyanate gas. None of the six safety systems designed to contain such a leak were operational, allowing the gas to spread throughout the city of Bhopal. Half a million people were exposed to the gas and many have died to date as a result of their exposure. A large number of people continue to suffer from ailments caused by the accident and the subsequent pollution at the plant site. These ailments include

blindness, extreme difficulty in breathing, and gynecological disorders. The site has never been properly cleaned up and it continues to poison the residents of Bhopal. In 1999, local groundwater and well water testing near the site of the accident revealed mercury at higher levels. Cancer and brain-damage- and birth-defect-causing chemicals were found in the water; trichloroethylene, a chemical that has been shown to impair fetal development, was found at levels 50 times higher than EPA safety limits

his disaster is termed as one of the biggest calamities which resulted in many casualties.

This industrial disaster could have been prevented by providing proper and adequate provision of periodic revision of the system checking. The unfortunate part in our system is that there are no proper measures made available for checking of the system with defined periodicity. All mechanical, electrical and electronic systems devices can misbehave at the point of time until unless which is periodically checked and monitored.

No doubt the Government has introduced the disaster management bill 2005 on 8th May 2005. Also the Government has decided to enact a law on disaster management for requisite institutional mechanism. This disaster management will also provide for setting up of national disaster management authority under the chairmanship of Prime Minister and the State disaster management authorities under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister. He will also provide for concerned Minister or the department to draw up department wise plan in accordance with the national disaster management plan. These are definitely one of the best management system and enforcing law, but with all these

we still face many issues on disaster management which remain unresolved. We find a better solution to make this system more effective is the localized management with authorities and responsibilities. The solution to this is that the Government can also recognize professional institutions and NGOs to co-ordinate for an effective implementation of the system. The Institute of Industrial Management which is one of the professional establishments has decided to formalize a Responsible Emergency System Care Unit. This is the first institute in the country recognized by IGNOU for developing qualified safety officers for industries. The degree PGDM (ISHE) is awarded by IGNOU. Responsible Emergency System Care Management Unit will be one of the voluntary organizations with the support of industries and institutions in Bhopal to create a platform of technical experts to advise and develop disaster management plan.

A number of important measures will be taken up by this professional body which will add value to the institution and industries. The RESCU established by IIMSHE will make a District level survey at the first instant and may lead to other districts of MP later. The members are industries and institutions established in Bhopal with the support of Government Officials. We are sure that this new venture of establishing RESCU will definitely prove to be a breakthrough in the country of professional support to Government system.

Remembers Aziza Sultan, a survivor: "At about 12.30 am I woke to the sound of my baby coughing badly. In the half light I saw that the room was filled with a white cloud. I heard a lot of people shouting. They were shouting 'run, run'. Then I started coughing with each breath seeming as if I was

breathing in fire. My eyes were burning.

Another survivor, Champa Devi Shukla, remembers that "It felt like somebody had filled our bodies up with red chillies, our eyes tears coming out, noses were watering, we had froth in our mouths. The coughing was so bad that people were writhing in pain. Somebody was running this way and somebody was running that way, some people were just running in their underclothes. People were only concerned as to how they would save their lives so they just ran.

"The poison cloud was so dense and searing that people were reduced to near blindness. As they gasped for breath its effects grew ever more suffocating. The gases burned the tissues of their eyes and lungs and attacked their nervous system. People lost control of their bodies. Urine and feces ran down their legs. Women lost their unborn children as they ran, their wombs spontaneously opening in bloody abortion." According to Rashida Bi, a survivor who lost five gas-exposed family members to cancer, those who escaped with their lives" are the unlucky ones; the lucky ones are those who died on that night."

Since the disaster, survivors have been plagued with an epidemic of cancer, menstrual disorders and what one doctor described as "monstrous births."

**Central Chronicle/ Bhopal/
04/ 12/ 08**

Dump Dow, Bhopal kids tell NGO

Zubeda Hamid

We appeal to you not associate with a company that has still not provided justice to the thousands affected in Bhopal. A group of children from Bhopal, suffering from disabilities caused gas leak from Union Carbide in 1984, have appealed to a private trust here to disassociate itself from

Dow Chemicals, which now owns the firm.

Adinath Jain Trust is holding a five-day camp to distribute Jaipur foats, prosthetic limbs, crutches and walkers free of cost to disabled people across the State.

The camp is sponsored by Dow, as part of its corporate social responsibility initiative, on behalf of Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti, a Jaipur-based NGO.

On Tuesday, the Bhopal children, accompanied by local kids, met Mohan Jain, honorary secretary of the trust, at the camp.

A scene ensued when Jain insisted on deletion of pictures taken by the photographer of this newspaper of the Bhopal children meeting him. (He perhaps did not notice a volunteer who was with the children and shot photographs - which we carry here on the sly). Jain also said he did not want any mention of the incident in the newspaper.

The children, alternately arguing and appealing, submitted a letter and showed Jain a scrapbook of photographs of survivors who 24 years after the tragedy were still suffering from the aftermath of the disaster.

"We appeal to you not associate with a company that has still not provided justice to the thousands affected in Bhopal," said Meera Morey, a 28-year-old whose father died after battling years of illness following the gas leak.

Jain asked for government reports and medical studies supporting their claim. Shwetha Narayan of International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal promised to provide him with both.

Eight-year-old Suraj is less than three feet tall. He cannot walk or eat on his own and is mentally challenged as well. His mother has brought him here to consult Vidya Sagar, an NGO that works with physically challenged children.

Meera's seven siblings suffer from debilitating lung disease and other illnesses. Her father was working as a road worker in front of the company when the gas leak occurred.

Jain said that if the reports were convincing, he would stop his association with Dow Chemicals. "This is the first time we have collaborated with them," he said.

***The New Indian Express/
Chennai/ 17/ 12/ 08***

SC asks Centre, States to help dispose Union Carbide waste

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Centre and Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat Governments to resolve the issue relating to disposal of around 350 metric tonnes of hazardous toxic waste from the now-defunct Union Carbide India Ltd's plant in Bhopal.

The uncertainty over the fate of the toxic waste has been prevailing for more than two decades. The waste is allegedly causing air, soil and water pollution as it is lying at the plant of the Union Carbide India Ltd (now Dow Chemicals) for the last 24 years.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice KG Balakrishnan asked the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers to decide the issue with the other two States and inform the court about the final decision on February 20, the next date of hearing.

The Union Carbide plant at Bhopal is the site of one of the largest industrial disasters (Bhopal gas tragedy) in the world. More than 17,000 people had died due to release of 42 tonnes of toxic methyl isocyanate on December 3, 1984.

The issue has reached the apex court in an appeal filed by the Gujarat Government challenging the Madhya Pradesh High Court's order that cleared the transportation of several tonnes of toxic waste from Bhopal plant to Ankleshwar in Gujarat by the end of January 2009.

The High Court while setting aside objections raised by the Gujarat Government and the Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB) had directed the authorities to carry the toxic waste to Ankleshwar for disposal in the incinerator of Bharuch Eviro Infrastructure Ltd.

The order of the High Court, which had also threatened to initiate contempt proceedings against those who objected to disposal of the toxic waste at Ankleshwar, had come on a petition by a social activist seeking direction for safe disposal of the waste. The Gujarat Government had objected to the disposal of the waste at Ankleshwar citing opposition from local social activists.

Gujarat counsel Ashok Desai argued that the transportation of such a huge quantity of toxic waste and its disposal in the incinerator might expose the people to hazardous toxic gases.

Instead of transporting the waste over a long distance up to Ankleshwar in south Gujarat, the toxic waste could be disposed at a newly-developed site in MP itself, he said, adding the incinerator set up near Indore in MP would be operational in February 2009.

Drawing attention to the massive exposure of residents near the Union Carbide plant to toxic dust during the packaging of the waste in June 2005, the activists had expressed apprehension that the Bhopal residents and those on the route of the trucks carrying the waste would once again suffer health hazards.

However, the Central Government informed the apex court bench that there was no objection from the Government or the Central Pollution Control Board for disposing of the toxic waste in Ankaleshwar.

The Pioneer/ Delhi/ 20/ 01/ 09

Gaur urges Centre to sanction funds for gas victims

Madhya Pradesh Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Minister Babulal Gaur today urged the Centre to sanction the proposed Rs 985.75 crore

for social, economical and medical rehabilitation for Bhopal gas tragedy victims.

Gaur, who met the Union Human Resources Development Minister and the Chairman of Group of Ministers (GoM) for gas tragedy rehabilitation Arjun Singh in New Delhi today, said the state government had not received any rehab package for Bhopal gas victims since July, 1999 and the state government was trying to provide aid to the victims with its limited resources.

Gaur, a former Madhya Pradesh chief minister, said the GoM prepared an action plan of Rs 985.75 during a meeting on June 11, 2008 and decided to send the proposal to Planning Commission for approval. He urged Singh to take initiative to get sanctioned the proposed funds after its approval from the Planning Commission at the earliest.

Central Chronicle/ Bhopal/ 22/ 01/ 09

Bhopal gas tragedy: survivors seek heritage status for site**Raghvendra Rao**

Twenty-four years after the leakage of methyl isocyanate gas from the Union Carbide factory killed over 10,000 people, UNESCO is all set to forward to the Government of India a representation from the survivors of the tragedy who have sought its intervention to protect, decontaminate, repair, and restore the plant structure at the factory site as an industrial World Heritage on the lines the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and the Auswitz and Buchenwald concentration camps, in order to preserve the site as a physical reminder of the tragedy.

In a petition submitted to the UNESCO's Representative to India, Minja Yang, members of

five organisations, comprising survivors of the tragedy, have underlined the criticality of preserving the “memory of the Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal for realising the possibility of a world free of disasters” and have sought inclusion in the list of World Heritage monuments in the Additional Cultural category as a Modern Industrial Heritage site.

“The plant structures are the physical heart of this movement to preserve the memory and lessons of the tragedy for future generations. We believe that the structures of the Methyl Isocyanate (MIC) and Sevin plants and few remaining structures are, in the likeness of the remains of the concentration camps at Auswitz and Buchenwald, of tremendous educative value for future generations across the world and therefore, must be preserved,” the petition states.

The Indian Express/ Delhi/ 28/ 02/ 09

Three killed in a steel plant in Orissa

At least three people were killed after inhaling poisonous carbon monoxide gas in a sponge iron factory in Orissa's Jharsuguda district, police said Friday.

The deaths occurred at the Singhal Enterprises Private Ltd. factory at Hirma, some 400 km from here, at around 8 p.m. Thursday.

Inspector in charge of the local police station P.K. Rout told IANS on phone that the three men aged between 22 to 25 years had gone to wash a chamber used to cool hot sponge iron and got trapped inside. They died of suffocation after inhaling carbon monoxide.

The New Indian Express/ Bhubaneswar/ 06/ 02/ 09

25 yrs later, study on Bhopal fallout

ICMR To Look Into Effects After 25,000 Fall Prey To Gas Leak-Related Ailments

Kounteya Sinha

Indian scientists are all set to take a relook at one of the country's worst industrial disasters — the Bhopal gas tragedy of 1984.

Twenty-five years after the Union Carbide plant spewed 42 tonnes of toxic methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas into the air, exposing more than 500,000 people, India's premier medical research body — Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) — has decided to investigate the long-term health effects of the disaster.

According to some estimates, 25,000 people have died of gas-related diseases. Several thousands were maimed for life.

Calling it “an unfinished story that requires an urgent relook”, secretary of the newly formed Department of Health Research (DHR) and director general of ICMR Dr V M Katoch told TOI that proposals had been invited from the country's scientific fraternity to restudy what is considered one of the world's worst industrial disasters. Dr Katoch told TOI, “Scientists, NGOs and the community at large felt that the aftermath of the Bhopal gas tragedy needed to be studied in detail. They asked us to see whether the toxic waste posed a threat to people even now and whether people were still suffering from its effects.”

He added, “Since ICMR does not have the manpower to revisit the horror single handedly, we decided to invite proposals from scientists across the country who were willing to conduct detailed research to see whether the gas leak had long-term health effects on people. ICMR will fund the proposals which are finally selected.”

According to ICMR's call for research proposals on the “long-term effect(s) of MIC gas, if any, on the Bhopal population either exposed or affected in December 1984”, separate studies will be conducted to see whether the toxic gases caused genetic disorders, low birth weight, growth and development disorders, congenital malformation and biological markers of MIC/toxic gas exposure. According to ICMR, the project will have to be based on clinical and epidemiological findings in the aftermath of the Bhopal gas disaster. Every investigation will have to include information about affected and unaffected exposees. Other issues like retardation of genitalia and reproductive functions will also be assessed.

“In the aftermath of the disaster, some felt it could cause chromosomal abnormalities. This has to be substantiated by a trans-generational chromosomal study among exposees and unaffected population of Bhopal,” an ICMR official said. According to scientists, there has been no official study of the long-term effects of the gas leak.

The Times of India/ Delhi/ 06/ 03/ 09

Stalemate over Bhopal waste disposal

Tannu Sharma

Centre wants it to be incinerated at Ankleshwar, Gujarat says already a huge backlog

A case between the Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh governments pending before the Supreme Court over disposal of nearly 350 metric tonnes of toxic waste lying at the now defunct Union Carbide India Ltd (UCIL) — now Dow Chemicals — plant in Bhopal for over 24 years seems far from being settled.

Last week, the Centre submitted before an apex court bench headed by Chief Justice

K G Balakrishnan that the waste must be incinerated at Ankleshwar in Gujarat where it would barely take a week's time. Opposing the submission, the Modi Government claimed that it had a backlog of around 15,000 metric tonnes of waste, making it impossible to dispose of the Bhopal waste within the state. It said the waste should be disposed of in MP at its upcoming incinerator facility at Pithampur.

The issue reached the apex court after Gujarat challenged an order of the MP High Court clearing the transportation of the toxic waste from Bhopal to Ankleshwar by the end of January 2009. Gujarat submitted before the Supreme Court: "There is an increasing problem of rise in toxic waste in the state and there is a total backlog of about 15,000 metric tonnes. If there is a facility in MP that is capable of storing and incinerating the hazardous waste, it will be more practical and safe if the same is directed to be incinerated in MP instead of in the petitioner state (Gujarat)."

**The Indian Express/ Delhi/
11/ 03/ 09**

Bhopal Gas Tragedy and the Survivor Tour

A four-member delegation including two members of the survivors' family of the worst industrial gas tragedy in Bhopal conducted a successful campaign of United States to exert pressure over Dow Chemicals Company that refused to obey Indian courts and Indian government.

"We had a successful meeting with the US State and Justice Department officials, who took keen interest on the issue of extradition of Warren Anderson, former chairman of Union Carbide and Dow Chemical's liability for clean up in Bhopal where toxins still linger 25 years later, creating unsafe, chemical-laced drinking water that people within poor communities have no choice

but to drink," said Satinath Sarangi, who led the delegation, at a press conference here today.

Mr Sarangi and another delegate Rachna Dhingra, members for Bhopal Group for Information and Action (BGIA), said two teen-aged girls -- Sarita and Safreen -- belonging to the toxic gas and contaminated ground water exposed family and students of ninth and tenth standards respectively, were the main spokespersons of the tour.

"We were overjoyed to see so much support for the people of Bhopal so far away. But at the same time we are shocked to see Bhopal like situations in institutes in several places in that country where it is mostly the poor and black people, who are the victims," said Sarita and Safreen, who belong to the organisation 'Children against Dow-Carbide' and coped well with the language, food and hectic pace of the tour.

The 42-day campaign tour that began at Princeton University on April 21, went through several cities including New York, Washington D.C. and ended in San Francisco. They visited 23 universities including Havard University. The delegation also met with 17 senators, congressman and their aides including Jim McDermott, Chairman of India Caucus and Henry Waxman, Chairman of Energy and Commerce Committee.

Mr Sarangi said the response of the senators was positive after Barak Obama became the US President and Mr Waxman, in particular, was very cooperative and assured to provide all sorts of help.

He said 15 congressman had already signed on to the letter, initiated by Congressman Frank Pallone, addressed to the board of directors of Dow Chemical Company which asked to accept liabilities of Bhopal. Mr Waxman, who in 1984 chaired the congressional sub-committee on Bhopal Gas Disaster, had expressed

support for a fresh congressional hearing, which could summon Dow Chemical's representatives, Mr Sarangi said.

The tour was organised by International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (ICJB) with support of over one hundred U.S-based organisations including AID, Amnesty International and others. Funds for the tour was raised by local donations, mainly by AID.

**Central Chronicle/ Bhopal/
11/06/09**

US lawmakers want Dow to clean up Bhopal gas leak site

Washington/New Delhi, 18 JUNE: US lawmakers have asked Dow Chemical to clean up the soil and underground water contaminated by the deadly gas leak at Union Carbide plant at Bhopal but the US firm disowned the liabilities saying that it never owned or operated the disgraced plant site.

As many as 27 lawmakers have requested Dow Chemical Company to meet the demands of the survivors of Bhopal tragedy for medical and economic rehabilitation.

"Dow acquired shares of Union Carbide in 2001, seven years after UCIL became Eveready Industries India Ltd.

"Union Carbide had no assets in India at the time of the transaction with Dow. Dow never owned or operated the UCIL plant site," a spokesperson for Dow said in a statement.

Union Carbide paid US\$ 470 million in damages for the deadly gas leak from the plant on 3 December, 1984, which left several hundred dead and thousands medically ill.

In a letter to the Dow Chairman and CEO Andrew Liveris, the

American lawmakers said: "We request that Dow ensures that a representative appear in the ongoing legal cases in India

regarding Bhopal, that Dow meets the demands of the survivors for medical and economic rehabilitation, and cleans up the soil and groundwater contamination in and around the factory site". The US lawmakers' letter has endorsed the survivors' demands for remediation, as put forth by the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (ICJB), mainly that Dow provide medical and economic rehabilitation and clean up the factory and groundwater contamination.

US Congressman Mr Frank Pallone led the effort to support the ICJB demands. "The polluter pays" principle in the domestic laws of both India and America state that the polluter, rather than the public agencies or taxpayers, should be held responsible for its environmental pollution in its entirety, the letter said.

However, the Dow statement noted that "polluter pays" law is misinterpreted in the letter.

"The law applies to those who owned and operated plant sites. The Bhopal site was owned and operated by UCIL, a separate, publicly traded Indian company.

"With the Supreme Court, Union Carbide sold its interest in UCIL in 1994 and UCIL was renamed Eveready Industries India Ltd -- a company that continues to operate in India today and is the company that was involved in the tragedy," the statement pointed out.

Statesman/ Kolkata/ 19/06/09

Warrant against Carbide ex-chief

NBW Issued Against Warren Anderson 25 Years After Bhopal Gas Tragedy

Suchandana Gupta

Twenty-five years after the world's worst industrial disaster hit Madhya Pradesh's capital killing more than 15,000 people, a local court has issued a fresh arrest warrant against

former Union Carbide Corporation chairman Warren Anderson — the main accused in the gas tragedy case.

Chief judicial magistrate Prakash Mohan Tiwari issued the warrant on July 22 directing CBI to arrest and produce Anderson so that he could face the trial. The warrant was issued after two NGOs, Bhopal Gas Peedith Mahila Udhog Sangathan (BGP MUS) and Bhopal Gas Peedith Sangharsh Sahayog Samiti, approached the CJM's court.

In their application, the NGOs appealed to the court "to frustrate the concerted attempt of the Union of India and all concerned public servants in office at relevant periods, who have made a complete mockery of the judicial process and the criminal justice system in the country."

The tragedy occurred on the intervening midnight of December 2-3, 1984. Four days later, Anderson came to Bhopal to review the situation. He was arrested but released almost immediately after which he left India, never to come back. CBI has been claiming before different courts that Anderson is absconding. But local NGOs claim Anderson, who was living in Florida, later shifted to Long Island, New York, where he was tracked down by Green Peace activists five years ago.

Earlier, a non-bailable arrest warrant was issued against Anderson by the CJM's court on March 27, 1992, recalled BGP MUS convener Abdul Jabbar. "In 1994, the Union government constituted a special committee to execute the extradition of Anderson. But nothing happened," he claimed. After consulting legal experts, then (2002) attorney general Soli Sorabjee argued that Anderson was more than 80-year-old and recommended that "the demand for his extradition be dropped." Under pressure from the gas victims, the Union government sent a letter asking for Anderson's

extradition. The US government refused to send him.

"If we have been continuously demanding Abu Salem and Dawood Ibrahim to be brought to India, why not Anderson?" asked Jabbar. "All those who commit heinous crimes against India should be brought and tried in our courts. The Bhopal gas tragedy officially killed 15,274 people and left 5.74 lakh affected. Why should this man get away just because he is an American citizen and approaching 90. He is still wanted in the Bhopal law courts. It's a judicial process. We don't want to shoot him or hang him," Jabbar added.

GOVERNMENT SLOTH

1994 | Union govt forms panel to execute Anderson's extradition

2003 | India asks US to extradite him

2004 | US rejects request

COMPENSATION

Union govt claims \$350 bn from UCC

In an '89 settlement, UCC agrees to pay \$470m in damages, 15% of the original \$3 bn claimed in lawsuit

Families of 3000 dead get Rs 2 lakh each and 1.20 lakh gas victims Rs 50,000 (twice) in 1992 and 2004. The govt sells UCC property in India. Rs 3,000cr collected given as compensation

WHO'S WARREN ANDERSON?

Anderson (88) was CEO, Union Carbide, during Bhopal gas leak in 1984, when

15,274 killed

CHARGES

Main accused. Arrested and released in Bhopal on Dec 7; fled to US in a private jet Feb 1, 1992 | Declared fugitive by India March 27 | NBW issued. Court tells Centre to press for extradition Booked for culpable homicide. Maximum penalty | 10 years in jail WHERE'S ANDERSON?

The Times of India/ Delhi/ 01/ 08/ 09

Bhopal gas victims continue to suffer

Mahim Pratap Singh

As the 25th anniversary of the world's biggest industrial disaster draws closer, victims of the Bhopal gas tragedy continue to face the abject indifference of the Union and State governments.

Recently, the Union Carbide Corporation denied it was the management's fault and instead blamed the workers.

"There is enough evidence to prove that the management was responsible for the cost-saving steps that led to the safety lapse that caused the leak," says T.R. Chauhan, a control-room operator at the plant during the tragedy and the author of 'Bhopal: The Inside Story'.

Situation today

At last count made in 2004 during settlement of compensation claims, there were 5,74,000 people seriously injured. They and the families of the 15,274 dead, received monetary compensation. Today, over 3,00,000 victims still make frequent rounds of city hospitals. Over a 1,00,000 are permanently affected.

To Carbide, the tragedy cost a mere \$470 million in compensation, as agreed upon in a 1989 Supreme Court-brokered settlement based on 1,20,000 injured and another 3000 dead, without any consultation with the victims.

"We are preparing a detailed report of the tragedy, to be made public two days after the 25th anniversary of the tragedy," says Babulal Gaur, Minister for Gas Relief in Madhya Pradesh.

"The disaster didn't just end in 1984," says Abdul Jabbar, an activist working for the victims since the tragedy. "For those permanently affected and living around the Carbide factory and the pond where all its effluents were dumped, and which still

have hazardous chemicals, the disaster continues," he adds.

Reports compiled by Greenpeace, Citizen's Environmental Laboratory (Boston) and the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute, reveal that the Carbide factory, stockpile, disposal sites, waste dump and the soil around it, contain over 15,000 metric tones of at least 18 toxicants.

Exposure to carcinogens such as polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) and hexachlorobenzene (HCB), and substances like chlorinated naphthalene, hexachlorobutadine, lead and mercury can cause excessive damage to the brain, nervous system, liver, kidneys, and lungs, and result in skin lesions and fragile skin. It can also lead to stunted growth and damage fetus.

The pond, according to Carbide, had a plastic coating underneath to stop seepage. However, the black soil of the region develops cracks and seepage occurs easily, polluting the ground water. Residents of slums and colonies around the site are forced to drink contaminated water.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) conducted 24 studies in Bhopal since the disaster. The consolidated report of the studies are yet to be made public.

The Hindu/ Delhi/ 07/ 08/ 09

Truth about Bhopal gas leak tragedy uncomfortable, says Jairam

Milind Ghatwai

Union Environment and Forests Minister Jairam Ramesh on Saturday said "the truth (about the Bhopal gas tragedy) is uncomfortable". The Minister said this after visiting the site of the disaster whose unofficial toll he put at 25,000. Though he did not clarify whether he

was referring to the gas leak or its aftermath, he said it was time to look ahead after learning lessons from the tragedy.

In less than three months it will be 25 years of the world's worst industrial disaster. "I have held that waste in my hand, I am still alive," the minister said while referring to the 350 tonne toxic waste lying on the campus of the now abandoned plant.

The minister chose not to say it in too many words but targeted the NGOs by observing that the greenery around the abandoned premises was better than most other places, and asked "Would it have been (so) with all the toxicity around?"

According to the Union minister, compensation has been paid to every eligible claimant. Ramesh said 40 tonnes of lime sludge had already been disposed of and the government hoped to dispose of the remaining waste within the next six months. Gujarat has already refused permission to incinerate the waste at Ankleshwar. The minister said the facility in Pithampur in Madhya Pradesh was the first choice while a committee was also looking for alternate sites.

Meanwhile, the state government has proposed to the Centre to share the Rs 110-crore memorial proposed for the gas victims. "I am sure the Centre will support the initiative," Ramesh said after Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan discussed the matter with him.

The Centre has also proposed to upgrade the Disaster Management Institute set up after the gas tragedy to the level of a National Institute of Industrial Safety.

The Indian Express/ Delhi/ 13/ 09/ 09

Gas tragedy: NGOs warn of direct action

Three organisations working for welfare of those affected by the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy victims warned the Madhya Pradesh government today to fulfil its promise of providing clean water to the victims before the tragedy's 25th anniversary failing which they will be compelled to take "direct action." Leaders of the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmchari Sangh, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha and Bhopal Group for Information and Action (BGIA) asserted that the regime would be responsible for the consequences.

"The government had assured that the work would be completed last November but later stretched the deadline to March and now says that Kolar water will be supplied to affected settlements by this November," the BGIA's Satinath Shadangi told media here today.

Central Chronicle/ Bhopal/ 24/ 09/ 09

25 years after Bhopal gas tragedy, plant to be open to public

Milind Ghatwai

Twenty-five years after the world's worst industrial disaster shook Bhopal, the locked Union Carbide plant will be thrown open to the public for a week.

"We will put up an exhibition highlighting the work done by the government and throw open the doors to the public for a week," Minister for Gas Tragedy (Relief and Rehabilitation) Babulal Gaur told The Sunday Express.

Except for investigators, government officials, NGOs and journalists, and thieves lured by its iron and steel, the plant has remained closed to the public after December 2, 1984, when a gas leak in the pesticide plant left behind a deadly trail.

"The government hopes that allowing people to visit the site would satisfy their curiosity and remove misconceptions that things at the plant have been kept under wraps," said former chief minister Gaur.

"I have visited the site numerous times and handled the waste on several occasions. There's nothing to worry," he added. Incidentally, a similar remark by Union Environment and Forests Minister Jairam Ramesh during his recent visit to Bhopal had created a furore prompting him to apologise to NGOs and victims.

But Gaur maintained he saw nothing wrong in allowing people to visit the site. "In any case, birds and animals are breathing the same air without coming to harm. Moreover, people live in the close vicinity of the plant," he said.

Not everybody is pleased with the idea though. Says Convenor of Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan Abdul Jabbar, "Jaise jannat ke darwaze khol rahein hai (As if they are opening doors to heaven). They should at least ensure people don't go near MIC Tank No E 610, from where the gas leaked."

Over the years NGOs have been warning that the chemicals buried in the 67-acre plant were poisoning the air and water around the campus.

The Indian Express/ Delhi/ 08/11/09

PM urged to lead the nation in paying homage to gas victims

Mahim Pratap Singh

BHOPAL: Victims of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy have urged Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to visit Bhopal and "lead the nation in paying homage to the gas victims" on the 25th anniversary of the biggest industrial disaster in the world. Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan and Bhopal Gas Peedit Sangharsh

Sahayog Samiti have in a letter to the Prime Minister expressed "shock over the UPA government's silence over the state of the victims".

"We want the honourable Prime Minister to see the condition of the victims and the state of the medical access they have, which is pathetic," said Abdul Jabbar, a prominent activist leading the struggle for justice to the gas victims. The letter also expresses concern over the government's indifference towards the gas victims: "We cannot help notice that your honourable self had led the nation in paying homage to the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on her 25th death anniversary. We gather from personal knowledge and through media reports that a series of events were lined up to commemorate Indira Gandhi's death anniversary from 31 October, 2009, to 19 November, 2009, which happens to be Indira's birth anniversary," said the letter.

It said if Mrs. Gandhi's death anniversary programmes could go on for such a long duration, why couldn't the Prime Minister spare some time for the victims of the tragedy. The gas leak in the pesticide plant of the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal in 1984 had resulted in the death of over 20,000 people and caused injuries to over 550,000 others. The official toll of dead and injured gas victims as determined by the office of the Welfare Commissioner, Bhopal, through the process of adjudication is 574,367. The letter urges the Prime Minister "to visit Bhopal on December 3 so that you could not only pay homage to the victims but also make a direct assessment of the travails that the survivors are continuing to face even 25 years after the tragedy".

Hindu/ Delhi/ 10/11/09

Bhopal show upsets gas victims

RASHEED KIDWAI

Policemen guard the entrance of the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal after the gas leak in 1984

Bhopal, Nov. 13: The Madhya Pradesh government's move to open for a week the Union Carbide factory site to visitors as part of the gas tragedy's 25th anniversary has outraged survivors and activists who suspect a "sinister" ploy to sidestep key issues.

NGOs and activists working for the survivors of the 1984 industrial disaster — which claimed thousands of lives — called the move "foolish".

"The opening of the site is not new as it is done every year, though for shorter durations. It is a sinister attempt to sidestep key issues of relief and rehabilitation," Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan convener Abdul Jabbar said.

"On the 25th anniversary, I wish to seek some answers from the Centre, the state government and civil society — what about accountability and punishment to those who were responsible for the death of thousands?"

The government opens the site every year on December 3 — when hundreds of thousands of people were exposed to the deadly methyl isocyanate gas 25 years ago — to observe a minute's silence in memory of the victims. This year, however, the site will remain open for a week. The Shivraj Singh Chauhan regime has also lined up an exhibition of photographs related to the tragedy.

Rachna Dhingra, spokesperson for the Bhopal Group for Information and Action, said the move to open the site was part of an orchestrated campaign to deny presence of high toxic material inside the plant.

Rachna said that during his recent visit to Bhopal, Union environment and forest minister Jairam Ramesh had denied presence of toxic waste inside the plant.

"I went inside, touched toxic material and I am still alive. I am not coughing," Jairam, who visited the factory, had remarked.

The minister had also said the factory premises looked greener than some forests, implying that if there was stockpile of toxic material, so much of greenery would not have come about.

As if taking the cue, former Madhya Pradesh minister Babulal Gaur, the man in charge of relief and rehabilitation of victims of the tragedy, has defended the government's move.

"The plant is being opened to help people get rid of the apprehension and misconception that chemical wastes lying in the factory are still harmful and are polluting the ground water of nearby localities," he said.

"By visiting the site, people will be able to see for themselves that the government is not hiding anything from them," the former chief minister added. "The chemical waste is confined to a room and it is not polluting water in the area."

Jabbar said he didn't have words to express his disgust. "It is improper and objectionable for the minister to speak like this. The matter is sub judice. Gaur's department and the state government have filed several affidavits in courts justifying our claim that there is a huge stockpile of toxic waste," Jabbar, a gas victim himself, said.

Other voices echoed Jabbar. Tota Ram Chauhan, who was a technician with Union Carbide, insisted the plant still had a large quantity of toxic waste.

Quoting from reports filed by some government agencies, he said the toxic waste was

responsible for the contaminated water in the plant's vicinity.

The NGOs want Dow Chemicals, which took over Union Carbide, to clean up the site. But Dow is unwilling to do so on the ground that all liabilities regarding the disaster were settled when Union Carbide concluded a \$470-million compensation settlement in 1989.

Telegraph/ Calcutta/ 14/11/09

Speed up justice for Bhopal gas victims'

BHOPAL: Pointing to years of alleged official neglect by the Central and State governments, the organisations putting in serious efforts to bring justice to the kin of the victims of the Bhopal gas tragedy have once again expressed concern over the manner in which the whole issue has been treated over the past 25 years.

Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sanghathan (BGPMUS) and Bhopal Gas Peedit Sangharsh Sahayog Samiti (BGPSSS) have submitted a memorandum titled "The Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster: Twenty-five years after" to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh

In the memorandum, the organisations have urged the Centre to set up a 'National Commission on Bhopal' to tackle the whole issue, which they expect will speed up the process of justice that is eluding the victims since the disaster ravaged the city on the night of December 3, 1984.

Establishing a national-level Commission would help in a speedy resolution of issues related to health status, compensation, environmental pollution, rehabilitation and litigation-related matters in the US, says the memorandum.

The organisations have alleged that very few initiatives have been taken by the State Government to rehabilitate the

surviving victims through employment.

Hindu/ Delhi/ 18/11/09

HC permits Govt to open Carbide factory for fortnight

The Jabalpur High Court has permitted the State Government to open the gates of Union Carbide factory to the public for a fortnight.

Talking to The Pioneer, Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Minister Babulal Gaur said the High Court had permitted the Government to go ahead with its plan to allow the public to enter the Union Carbide factory premises. He said, "I have convened a meeting of the officials of the Department to decide the dates when the premises would be open for the people."

The Government's decision had come in for flak from the NGOs working for the welfare of the gas victims because Gaur had said the waste lying in the Union Carbide factory premises for the past 25 years were no longer toxic enough to adversely affect the human beings. If the Supreme Court allows it, the Madhya Pradesh Government would dispose of the waste in the State itself.

He had also said even the groundwater around the factory site, which was earlier considered to be contaminated due to the deadly gas leak on December 2, 1984, did not have anything to do with the disaster.

Gaur had based his statements on the basis of two recent reports, which had concurred that the waste were no more toxic. The Defence Research and Development Establishment (DRDE), Gwalior, conducted tests on samples collected from the factory site last year and concluded that "(i) All the samples viz. excavated waste, lime sludge, naphthol tar, reactor residue, semi-processed pesticide and sevin

tar have very low mammalian toxicity; and (ii) Based on the primary skin irritation test, all the six samples collected from 'Stored Toxic Wastes at the former UCIL, plant site at Bhopal' are non-irritant."

Based on this report, the State Government sought an opinion from National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Nagpur, whether it was safe to open the factory site for the public for 15 days on the occasion of the 25 years of the disaster. NEERI had also given a go ahead in the matter.

Union Minister of State for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh during his visit to the factory site in September, had courted controversy by holding a handful of the waste and commented that he was alive and not even coughing after the adventure.

Buoyed over these developments, the State Government had decided to open the gates for the public for 15 days from the third week of November. But it had to approach the court since there was a ban on opening of gates for the public from the court itself.

For the first time since the disaster took place, the common man would be free to move inside the killer factory's premises. The dates for public entry have yet to be finalised.

Pioneer/ Delhi/ 26/11/09

Gas survivors' organisations to launch agitation against State Govt's lies

Three survivors' organisations of Bhopal gas tragedy would jointly launch the Jhooth Bole Kaha Kaate campaign to expose the State Government's lies. The organisations include Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmachari Sangh, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha and

Bhopal Group for Information and Action.

As part of the campaign, they will be organising a 'Benign Buffet' on November 28 where the members of the State Cabinet and the bureaucracy would be invited to eat such 'delicacies' as Semi-Processed Pesticide on Watercress and Lime Sludge Mousse. The decision regarding organising such a buffet was taken on the basis of the report of Director, Defence Research Development Establishment Gwalior R Vijayraghavan and Director of National Environmental Engineering Research Institute, Nagpur who have certified Union Carbide's chemical wastes to be orally ingestible are also invited.

Three survivors' organisations, while talking to mediapersons hoped that it would not long before they succeed in making Dow Chemical clean up the poisons from Bhopal. Anderson is extradited from USA. The Empowered Commission on Bhopal is set up by the Central Government and the lies being spread by the Madhya Pradesh Government are exposed.

Satinath Sarangi, president of Bhopal Group for Information and Action said that while the Ministry of Bhopal Gas Tragedy has asked for Rs 980 crore from the Union Government for rehabilitation of the Bhopal survivors, the Minister along with the State Chief Minister are busy pronouncing the disappearance of exposure related health problems and contaminants in soil and ground water. They said that the failure of Government agencies is apparent by the facts that over 1,30,000 survivors are still chronically ill from exposure related illnesses, tens of thousands of children born to exposed parents suffer from growth disorders and horrific birth defects and people continue to die untimely deaths from Union Carbide's poisons.

Replying to a query about the dumping of factory waste, Sarangi said, "There is no place in India where the waste could be dumped, the Gujarat Government has earlier declined for providing space for dumping organic waste." He further said that three options have been advised by the survivors' organisations to the State Government, for facility of Bhopal gas waste, which includes Denmark, Germany and Canada.

Pioneer/Delhi/27/11/09

Bhopal Gas Tragedy: All papers in order, but denied their due

Suchandana Gupta

BHOPAL: Eighty-year-old Maqsuda Bi still comes and stands outside the welfare commissioner's office, asking to be compensated like other victims of the deadly methylisocyanate gas that swirled through this erstwhile city of nawabs 25 years ago, killing an estimated 20,000 people and maiming 5,69,160.

"I have all the relevant papers including my ration card and doctors' prescriptions. Everyone in my family, including my grandchildren, have got compensation. Why have I been ignored?" she asks. The "compensation", of course, was so paltry that it had led to a fresh round of litigations.

"I was with my family that night in our house in Ashoka Garden. My husband's lungs were badly damaged and he was bed-ridden for 10 years coughing blood. He died in 1995. I am still fighting for my due," she told TOI. Badli Bai (50) of Rajendra Nagar has a similar story. Her file was lost from the settlement court. She has the documents to prove herself a victim. The doctors certified that her lungs were damaged. She received interim relief of Rs 200 per month after the gas leak, but not a paisa after that.

"I am diseased. No gas victim stays healthy. We all suffer from numerous ailments. I need the money to buy medicines. Hospitals won't treat me for free unless I am a confirmed gas victim. The only proof of this is if one gets compensation. But the court says my file is lost," Badli Bai says. While there are more than 40 cases regarding non-payment of compensation to victims before the high court since 2004, victims' NGOs are still filing petitions arguing that the recompense was insufficient and delayed.

"The Centre got into a settlement with the Union Carbide Corporation, USA, without the victims' consent," said Hamida Bi, a gas victim and activist. "Carbide paid Rs 713 crore (at 1989 prices) on the assumption that only 3,000 persons had died and 1,05,000 were injured. The actual figure is five times more. The government admitted that 4,69,367 victims were kept out of the settlement.

"The compensation amount that was to be distributed among 1,08,000 persons has now been disbursed among 15,200 dead and 5,69,160 injured. The average compensation works out to Rs 12,410 per victim at the 1989 value of the rupee. Compared to this, the US government paid an average of \$1.8 million per victim of 9/11," she adds.

"Those who died that night were fortunate," said Husna Bano of Aish Bagh, adding, "The gas leak left us like walking corpses. I had a seven kg fibroid in my stomach which left the doctors researching on the after-effects of MIC. I do some stitching work to run the family. If I earn Rs 50, I spend Rs 35 on treatment. We spend more money on medicine than on food."

'Doctors treat us like untouchables'

BHOPAL: Rafiq Khan (52) endured the lethal billow of methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas that leaked out of the Union

Carbide plant in Bhopal on December 3, 1984. Twenty-five years later, Khan, who is now also a diabetic, continues to suffer from severe pulmonary ailment as, ironically, a hospital meant for thousands left critically ill by MIC exposure, has shut its door on him.

"Doctors don't even talk to us. My father has the documents including the victim ID, but the hospital — Bhopal Memorial Hospital and Research Centre — treats us like untouchables and refuses to admit him," alleged Khan's son, Faizan. "We can't even sit near the doctor; the hospital staff is so highhanded," alleged Faizan. Faizan said Khan also suffers from kidney dysfunction and needs dialysis twice a week. "I work as a van driver and need Rs 2,000 weekly for dialysis to keep my father alive. We've sold our valuables and borrowed Rs 60,000. People have stopped giving credit because they know we can't pay back," he said.

He said Khan was diagnosed with kidney dysfunction last year and put on dialysis just twice and then discharged. "Since then, they have refused to put him on dialysis despite the fact that the hospital is meant for the gas victims," he said. "The victims are entitled for a lifetime of medical treatment at the hospital, but we were refused a third dialysis."

He said far from curing him, the hospital's faulty laser operation left him blind and the family had to get his eyes operated at a private hospital.

*Times of India/Delhi/
01/12/09*

MPs seek fair deal for Bhopal gas victims

French author Dominique Lapiere, shakes hands with children of victims of the gas tragedy during his visit to Sambhawna Trust Clinic to mark the 25th anniversary of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, in

PTI French author Dominique Lapierre, shakes hands with children of victims of the gas tragedy during his visit to Sambhawna Trust Clinic to mark the 25th anniversary of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, in Bhopal on Tuesday.

A fair deal to the victims of the Bhopal Gas tragedy, a fitting celebration on the 150th birth anniversary year of Rabindranath Tagore and plea for better preservation of remains of the ancient Vikramshila university were among several issues raised in the Lok Sabha today.

Maintaining that the magnitude of those affected by the gas disaster was "five times more" than estimated in the rehabilitation plan, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury (Congress) asked the government to take a fresh look at the situation and, along with the state government, work out plans to provide relief to the victims.

Raising the issue during Zero Hour, he said lakhs of victims were still recuperating from the effects of the poisonous Methyl Iso-cyanate gas and compensation claims of many were to be settled even 25 years after the 1984 tragedy.

Observing that 2010 would be the 150th birth anniversary of Tagore, Gurudas Dasgupta (CPI) urged the government to set up a national committee, headed by the Prime Minister, and evolve a national plan to celebrate this event in a befitting manner.

He said Tagore was a poet and a social activist who stood against all forces of division and fundamentalism and shaped and influenced national history. "His thoughts are as relevant today as before". Mr. Dasgupta was supported by CPI(M)'s Basudeb Acharia and other Left members.

Hindu/ Delhi/01/12/09

Bhopal gas victims still remember industrial tragedy

According to CNN, the Indian government will not open up the Bhopal plant as a public memorial, but many victims still remember the world's worst industrial disaster.

The authorities planned to open up the Union Carbide fertilizer plant, that released 40 tons of methyl isocyanate gas on Dec 3, 1984. This toxic leak caused the deaths of 4,000 people with thousands of people still suffering from exposure to the deadly gas and contaminated land and water. Since the poison cloud enclosed Bhopal, the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal alleges that survivors have received an average of only US\$500 each in compensation.

Marking the 25th anniversary of the industrial disaster, this year's event came to be marked victims' rights and government accountability. Madhya Pradesh state government planned to temporarily open the long-dormant plant which was surrounded by concrete barriers and barbed wire to the public.

"Everyone wants to see the world's worst industrial disaster," said S.R. Mohanty, the secretary for the Relief and Rehabilitation Department for the Bhopal gas tragedy.

It could be the government's way of reassuring its people that the plant no longer posed a threat to society. However, the move sparked protests from victim rights groups and environmental activists. Just days before the anniversary, government officials backtracked on the plan that they had only recently announced, even they had little to do with the gas leak.

Mohanty cited an election rule that prohibits acts that could be construed as attempting to influence voters

ahead of the polls. Bhopal's municipal elections are scheduled for December.

The plant could be opened on a later date.

China Post/ 01/12/09

Programmes, seminars to mark 25th year of gas tragedy

A two-day national seminar, organised by three organisations, will be held on December 1 to draw attention towards the plight of Bhopal gas tragedy victims on its 25th anniversary.

Bhopal Gas Peedith Sangharsh Sahyog Samiti (BGPSSS), All India People's Science Network (AIPSN) and Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) had formed a joint committee on October 31 his year that included 35 organising members.

Apart from the seminar, the committee would also hold a 'Sankalp Sabha' (Resolution meeting) in front of Union Carbide Company gate on December 3 to take vow against imperialism.

To mark the 25th anniversary of gas tragedy, another organisation Zahreeli Gas Kand Sangharsh Morcha Bhopal (ZGKSMB) also announced several programmes to mark the day.

Taking a dig at the imperialistic attitude of multi-national companies, state CITU General Secretary Pramod Pradhan told mediapersons here today that MNCs were being dictated by the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation, which were controlled by the United States. He also criticised the Centre for attempting to bring about the Civil Nuclear Liability Bill allowing companies to set up nuclear plant without responsibility for any disaster.

Terming the Bill as 'dangerous Act', Pradhan said "such Act will not provide any justice to gas victims. On the contrary, it

will pave way for another 'Bhopal Gas Tragedy'. Therefore, we feel a need for strong agitation against such imperialistic attitude," he said. ZGKSMB Convenor Alok Pratap Singh told reporters here today that besides paying tributes to those who died in the world's worst industrial tragedy by organising programme here to pay homage to them.

A souvenir would be released on this occasion. Besides, 5,000 mementos, based on the gas tragedy, and collection of 70 poems would also be released, he said adding that a national seminar on 'Bhopal Se Sabak (Take lesson from Bhopal)' based on environment and dangerous industries, would be organised on December 3.

Singh demanded from the Centre to provide Rs 700 crore, which was announced by the Rajiv Gandhi Government in 1988-89 under an action plan, to the 40,000 gas victim families.

Ensure RS MPs pay homage to gas victims

Two voluntary organisations, the Bhopal Gas Peedith Mahila Udyog Sangathan (BGP MUS) and the Bhopal Gas Peedith Sangharsh Sahyog Samiti (BGPSSS), have urged Vice-President Mohammad Hamid Ansari to take initiative in ensuring that Rajya Sabha MPs pay homage to the victims of the world's worst industrial disaster on its 25th anniversary on December 2 in this city of lakes.

In a joint statement issued here today, the BGP MUS convenor Abdul Jabbar Khan and BGPSSS co-convenor ND Jayaprakash stated that on the intervening night of December 2-3, 1984, over two-thirds of the then 9,00,000 residents of Bhopal were exposed to highly toxic gases that leaked from the plant of Union Carbide India Limited.

BGP MUS and BGPSSS hoped that the MPs would exert pressure on the Centre to make

amends for its past mistakes and do the needful for the benefit of the gas victims.

No less than 6,000 victims continue to visit the hospitals everyday to seek treatment for disaster-related ailments.

UC landfill site dug up: NGO

The landfill site containing the toxic waste officially covered with black soil near the Union Carbide plant, a residue of the world's worst industrial disaster, in this city could turn out to be another thorn in the flesh of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government.

"It's the 25th anniversary of the Bhopal gas tragedy on December 2 and a part of the landfill site which was a lake prior to the tragedy had been dug up to construct a road at Nawab Nagar, a few meters away", stated Abdul Jabbar, convenor of the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan.

Jabbar, who took a group of mediapersons on a trip for taking stock of the various facilities lying under neglect after the tragedy stated that the mud from the landfill site had been dumped partly in the colony nearby.

"There are 10,000 metric tonnes of toxic waste in the lake which was covered with black soil in 1996, twelve years after the tragedy in 1984", he said.

Ideally no colony should have been permitted near the landfill site but it exists and suffers the worst problem of possible exposure to toxic chemicals, Jabbar said.

Earlier, at the Kamla Nehru Hospital, a facility for treating gas victims on the premises of Hamidia Hospital, he said that the hospital constructed at a cost of Rs 23 crore for the treatment of gas victims has most of its modern diagnostic and critical care facilities procured at a cost of Rs 32 crore were being utilised by doctors of Hamidia hospital for non gas victims.

At the Indira Gandhi Memorial hospital established as a centre for treatment of women gas victims and children with abnormality born to them, Jabbar stated that the 100-bed hospital had most doctors available only on call and no proper emergency facilities were available at the hospital.

"This five story hospital has the lift malfunctioning for months now and despite complaints by gas victims nothing was done", he said.

Jabbar said that the Rasool Ahmed Siddiqui Hospital for Pulmonary diseases established for gas victims was Rs 8 crore project exclusively used for treating gas victims." "On one side there are no specialists available to treat gas victims with chest problems while on the other side the Oral Pathology Department is used to treat many general patients with the doctors available at the facility which is now worse than what is available in a general hospital," he said.

The 260-bed Bhopal Memorial Hospital built at a cost of Rs 85 crore for gas victims had become more of a paid hospital instead of carrying out free treatment to the gas victims, he added.

Gas Morcha thanks PM

Jahrili Gas Kand Sangharsh Morcha has congratulated the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, Congress President Sonia Gandhi and former HRD Minister Arjun Singh for establishing Jan Shikshan Sansthan at Bhopal.

The Sansthan has aimed at giving professional training to 2500 gas affected persons during the year 2009-2010. From March 2009 onwards 80 training centres are giving training to gas affected and at present 40 centres are functioning.

Jahrili Gas Kand Sangharsha Morcha along with Rajiv Smriti Gas Peedit Punarvas Kendra, Jan Shikshan Sansthan, Swa

Sahayata Samooh Federation are jointly organising all party public homage meeting in front of Centre Point, New Market on the occasion of 25th anniversary of Bhopal Gas Tragedy on December 3 from 12.30 PM.

On this occasion, among other things, a Souvenir on '25 years of Bhopal Gas Tragedy' would be released, publication of poems on gas tragedy, and national seminar on 'learn from Bhopal'.

Rally to generate awareness about AIDS

The epidemic of AIDS is a challenge before the world. This disease which is result of degradation of moral values has made society helpless before it. The primary reason of helplessness is that even today its cure is not possible.

To mark the World AIDS Day on December 1 an awareness rally will be taken out by Rajeev Smriti Gas Pidik Punarwas Kendra from the Kendra to generate awareness about AIDS which will pass via New Market, MP Nagar, Ashbag, Hamidia Road and end at the starting point.

The press release of Rajeev Smriti Gas Pidik Punarwas Kendra stated that first case of HIV was found in India in 1986 but now there are more than 3.2 million people suffering from this disease. If we talk in context of Madhya Pradesh then first HIV infected person was found here in 1988 and today more than 3046 persons are suffering from HIV. If preventive measures are not taken against AIDS then with the passage of time it will become one of the major problem of the country. To prevent this disease there is need of aware people and the work of disseminating information about AIDS has to be done by every section by getting educated.

**Central Chronicle/ Bhopal/
01/12/09**

Women still affected even 25 yrs after gas disaster

**Kumar Shakti Shekhar |
Bhopal**

Even 25 years after the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, there are several families in Bhopal where the women are not getting married. If in some cases, the gas-affected women are suffering from gynaecological disorders, in others no family is ready to take them in marriage suspecting that either the woman would not conceive or if she does, the child would not be normal and healthy.

Case I: Twenty-six-year-old Nilofar does not keep well. She was about a year old when the Bhopal Gas Tragedy struck. She got affected from the Methyl Iso Cyanate (MIC) gas leak. She is suffering from gynaecological disorders and is not getting married. The doctors she consulted told her that she would not be able to conceive. Her younger sister Farha, 20, was not born when the tragedy had struck but her mother Munni Bee was affected. The ailment passed on to Farha. She too is suffering from the same gynaecological problems as her sister and is unlikely to get married. Sitting in their tattered hut, the two sisters, pale and weak, help their mother in embroidery work to eke out a living.

Case II: Kaushalya has lost all hopes of getting both her daughters, 31-year-old Rukmini and 29-year-old Meera, tied in wedding knots. She says the two are suffering from gynaecological problems and the doctors have pronounced that they would never beget children. Kaushalya herself had suffered a paralytic stroke just after the Gas Tragedy.

Kaushalya said, "We ourselves have decided not to marry off the girls because it is of no use. We know the marriage will not work. Rukmini

always remains sick and suffers from acute stomach ache. She wriggles in pain. She is being treated but it has not worked as yet."

Apart from these cases, there are gas-affected women who have been divorced even after marriage. Meeta was married in Nagpur. She said her husband remained irritated as she did not keep good health. The son she gave birth to was not normal. "Out of anger and frustration, my husband sent me and my son back to Bhopal to our parent's place," she said.

Meeta has sought the help of an NGO for her nine-year-old son's treatment. The boy is getting physiotherapy treatment.

The doctors seem helpless about this problem. Dr HH Trivedi, retired professor (medicine), Gandhi Medical College, Bhopal, said, "The (MIC) gas keeps manifesting itself in some form of infection or the other. The patients keep suffering from breathing problem, cough and the likes. This can also lead to gynaecological disorders. It is a nagging problem and we do not have any treatment for it."

Unfortunately, as usual, the State Government is found wanting in this regard. The NGOs are doing whatever is there in their capacity. Rachna Dhingra, member, Bhopal Group for Information and Action, says all problems arise out of the stress on reproduction given in our society. "The Gas Tragedy has impacted the girls and women the most. Girls remaining unmarried or women getting divorced even after getting married because she is not able to bear child or give birth to healthy children are common in the slums. There are gas-victim women who are tortured if they choose to stay with their husbands."

It is said marriages are made in heaven and performed on earth. But for the hapless gas-victim women, it seems no

marriage was ever made for them anywhere.

Pioneer/ Bhopal/ 01/12/09

Bhopal readies to observe 25th year of gas tragedy

Vivek Trivedi | Bhopal

Non-Governmental

Organisations representing the Bhopal gas survivors are making all out efforts to cash in on the special occasion of 25th anniversary of the infamous disaster. These NGOs through a series of events to mark the occasion, are hogging all the limelight at present. These NGOs have planned extensive activities to observe the occasion, which has already got underway from November 27 and would run till December 3.

The focus of the world has shifted to the State capital as the city is all set to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy this year. Delegates from across the world have started landing in the State capital in advance to witness the event. In addition to them, the bunch of NGOs representing the gas survivors is going all out to cash in this historical occasion.

The organisations have meticulously planned a series of events based on the gas tragedy — one of the world's most infamous industrial disasters — from November 27 to December 3. The events include photo exhibition, poetry night, agitations, marches, sit-in, Press briefings, felicitations programmes and the likes.

The NGOs had swung into action as the Union Minister of State for Environment and Forests (independent charge) Jairam Ramesh during his Bhopal visit had picked up a handful of waste and had said that he was not coughing to vindicate that the waste was not toxic. Later, the Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Minister Babulal

Gaur also said that the waste is no more toxic and underground water has not been contaminated because of the waste. To mark a protest to this, volunteer Rachna Dhingra has organised a lunch on Sunday, in which soil and muddy water were served and the Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Minister Babulal Gaur, Union Minister Jairam Ramesh and State Chief Secretary Rakesh Sahni were invited.

Another seasoned volunteer fighting for the gas survivors, Abdul Jabbar has also grabbed this opportunity to come in the limelight and has written to Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar and Rajya Sabha Deputy Speaker and Vice-President Hamid Ansari, demanding a special mourning to be observed on December 3 to pay homage to the gas victims.

NGOs like Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationary Karmchari Sangh, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangarsh Morcha and Bhopal Group for Information and Action have come on a common platform on the occasion. The events are hogging constant limelight for the last few days as correspondents from national and international media houses have already descended on the city for covering this historical event.

However, all these activities are giving media mileage more to the voluntary organisations rather than the affected survivors. Despite prolonged process to dole out the compensation among the gas-affected people, a lot still need to be done for them and these issues are still to be taken care of and highlighted. However, these crucial issues are hardly given the much-needed importance in the series of events this year.

One of the volunteers Abdul Jabbar on then issue of participation and requirement of the NGOs said that all the groups fighting for the cause consider them as volunteers or

public groups rather than NGOs. He also cited the example of prolonged agitation like Narmada Bachao Andolan and added that their role is still relevant for the struggle of the gas survivors.

Pioneer/ Bhopal/ 01/12/09

Bhopal water still toxic, 25 years on: study

Groundwater at the site of the world's worst industrial accident in India's Bhopal city is still toxic and making residents sick 25 years after a gas leak there killed thousands, a study said on Tuesday.

The analysis conducted by the UK-based Bhopal Medical Appeal (BMA) also cast doubt upon government-sponsored research into the impact of the disaster at the Union Carbide pesticide plant, where methyl isocyanate gas spewed from a storage tank on December 3, 1984.

Activists say more than 350 tonnes of toxic waste strewn around the site still pollute soil and groundwater in the area, leading to cancer, congenital defects, immunity problems and other illnesses.

Internal documents showed the company had been dumping thousands of tonnes of waste around the plant for years before the accident, and while the state government does not deny the material exists, it says it is harmless.

"This report will nail their lie," Satinath Sarangi of the Bhopal Group for Information and Action told AFP.

"There are still high concentrations of carcinogens and birth defect-causing chemicals and heavy metals in the water," he said.

According to research conducted by the state-run Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) until 1994, between 8,000 and 10,000 people were killed within the first three days of the tragedy,

and 25,000 people later died from the effects of exposure.

Government statistics compiled after 1994 concluded that at least 100,000 people living near the factory in Madhya Pradesh state were chronically sick, with more than 30,000 residing in areas with contaminated water.

The BMA report said the infrastructure for clean drinking water set up by the city was inadequate, meaning many residents used groundwater out of desperation.

The charity sent samples of hand-pumped groundwater from 15 Bhopal communities to laboratories in Switzerland and Britain, which showed concentrations of some toxins were actually rising "as the chemicals leach through the soil and into the aquifer", it said.

The document criticised tests conducted by an Indian laboratory saying results showed very low chemical concentrations "despite the fact that some of the samples clearly smelled of solvents".

It was "possible that the laboratory did not wish to pass on the correct results thanks to the ongoing political controversy around the Bhopal disaster," the reports' authors said.

Union Carbide – purchased by Dow Chemical in 1999 -- insists all liabilities toward the plant were cleared in a 1989 out of court settlement worth 470 million dollars, the bulk of which was used to compensate victims.

A 2004 high court order for the state government to clean up the waste has resulted in only a partial clearance of toxins.

"You can't wish them away. They need to be cleaned up," said Sarangi.

**Hindustan Times/ Delhi/
01/12/09**

Waste lying in Union Carbide factory not harmful: Gaur

Waste lying in Union Carbide factory not harmful: Gaur
Close shave for MP governor, CMMP
CM asks officials to ensure time-bound completion of AIIMS
Victims of Bhopal gas tragedy still deprived of clean water
Vajpayee a 'pseudo moderate'?

Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Minister Babulal Gaur on Tuesday claimed that the waste lying in the defunct Union Carbide factory here was not harmful.

"The 350 metric tonne waste lying in the factory is not at all harmful," Gaur said here, two days ahead of the 25th anniversary of the world's worst industrial disaster.

Many NGOs have alleged that toxic and hazardous waste is still present in the factory, causing pollution. Gaur said 40 metric tonnes of waste of the factory has already been carted out and disposed of at Pithampur near Indore.

He rejected the claims made by some NGOs that waste in the factory was causing ground water pollution and said water to the area around the factory is being supplied by the Bhopal Municipal Corporation with the help of tankers.

Ground water around the factory is not polluted, he said. Gaur felt that NGO's associated with the tragedy were not playing a constructive role anymore. "Earlier, NGOs played a constructive role but this is not the case now," he said.

There is no need for them to protest given that the state government is providing Rs 45 crore annually for the welfare of the gas tragedy victims, he added.

**Indian Express/ Delhi/
01/12/09**

Bhopal victims fight for justice 25 years on

Yasmeen Mohiuddin (AFP) –
BHOPAL, India — Laccho Bai's life has gone from bad to worse in the 25 years since the Bhopal gas tragedy, when fumes escaped from a pesticide plant in the central Indian city, killing thousands instantly.

Huddled against the dirt floor of her home – a shack of wooden planks propped against a brick wall with a tin roof -- a thin white mucus covers Laccho's eyes, the apparent result of exposure to more than 40 tonnes of methyl isocyanate gas that filled the neighbourhood on December 3, 1984.

Like many other survivors living close to the Union Carbide facility, she and her family saw none of the multi-million dollar settlement package meant to help those affected.

"People came and told us we could apply for compensation," Laccho's husband, Laxmi Narayan, said. "They took our name down, but we never saw a penny."

The disaster killed between 8,000 and 10,000 people within the first three days, according to independent data by the state-run Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), and hundreds of thousands more still suffer from the effects of exposure to the fumes and contamination of land and water.

In order to claim compensation, survivors had to prove their ailments -- including kidney problems, cancer and respiratory illnesses -- were actually caused by the toxic cloud that belched from the plant.

"This was very hard for people who were poor and illiterate to hire lawyers, doctors and middlemen to go testify," said Rachna Dhingra, coordinator with the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (ICJB), an

umbrella group of survivors' organisations.

The Indian government, after initially demanding 3.3 billion dollars from Union Carbide -- purchased by Dow Chemical in 1999 -- agreed in 1989 to an out of court settlement totalling 470 million dollars which absolved the firm of any liability to clear up 350 tonnes of remaining toxic waste.

A 2004 Supreme Court ruling ordered money left over from the settlement, and the interest accrued on it, be given to survivors, meaning many people received a second payment, or their first one ever.

But the ICJB estimates at least 100,000 people received only interim compensation of 200 rupees (four dollars) per month immediately after the world's worst industrial accident, and never got any final lump sum payment.

Many more received nothing at all, the result of red tape, corruption, and civil servants who rejected claim forms because names had been misspelled, said Dhingra.

"The process itself was very flawed. There was absolutely no sympathy in the whole bureaucratic system," she said.

"Judges were brought from all over the state and country and made a huge amount of money. They had no training to deal with people who had no proof to show they were victims," Dhingra added.

Allegations of fake claims have also emerged over the years.

"There are people who were not even in the area at the time but claimed to have been exposed so they got compensated," said Sanjay Verma, whose parents and five siblings died in the accident.

Most of the victims who did receive compensation got 25,000 rupees (500 dollars) to fund a lifetime of hospital visits -- with the interim payment deducted from that sum.

Relatives of those killed were paid an additional 100,000 rupees for each family member who died.

"If we had received the money all at once I could have helped my family pay for medical treatment. We couldn't do anything with 200 rupees a month," said Aziza Sultan, who says she miscarried on the street while fleeing the site in terror and entered menopause at the age of 32 after being exposed to the gas.

Verma -- who lost seven of his family -- considers himself lucky, having received 700,000 rupees after the 1989 settlement and once again after the 2004 case.

But his remaining brother committed suicide in 2006 after a lengthy fight to see former Union Carbide executives prosecuted for their role in the tragedy.

A handful of individual compensation cases linger in the state high court, brought by victims who felt they received inadequate compensation, but years of tireless legal battles have become the norm for residents.

"People from Bhopal have already suffered a lot and really deserve a life of dignity," said Verma.

"Even though they're illiterate and cannot study, they know what their rights are and they are fighting."

AFP News/01/12/09

Bhopal gas victims write to Parliament

People carry potable water collected from inside the premises of Union Carbide factory in Bhopal. The Bhopal gas tragedy killed about 4,000 people. AP

BHOPAL: Bhopal gas disaster victims Monday wrote to Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar and Vice President Hamid Ansari, the Rajya Sabha chairman, saying parliament should pay homage to the

hundreds of thousands affected by the tragedy 25 years ago.

"We would like to remind you that on the night of 02/03 December 1984, over two-thirds of the 900,000 residents of the city of Bhopal were exposed to highly toxic gases that escaped from the premises of Union Carbide India Ltd, which was controlled by the Union Carbide Corp, a US multinational company," they said in the letter.

"We, hereby, humbly urge you to take the initiative in ensuring that the members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha would, on this occasion, pay homage to the victims of the world's worst chemical disaster."

Abdul Jabbar, convenor of the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sanghathan (BGPMUS), and N.D. Jayprakash, co-convenor of the Bhopal Gas Peedit Sangharsh Sahayog Samiti (BGPSSS), sent the letter separately to Meira Kumar and Ansari.

It also expressed hope that the members of the houses would prevail upon the government of India to make amends for its past mistakes related to the tragedy.

The letter, which mentions the tragedy, its aftermath, the inadequate compensation and improper rehabilitation, also speaks about the adverse health impact that continues to dog the victims.

The claim courts in Bhopal have determined that 574,367 victims had suffered injuries in varying degree causing the untimely death of several thousands.

"The grievousness of the injuries suffered by the victims are such that even 25 years after the disaster no less than 6,000 victims continue to visit hospitals every day due to disaster-related ailments," the letter said.

Progenies of gas victims appear to be suffering from genetic effects and, reportedly, there is a rise in cancer cases of various kinds, it adds. The

letter further mentions that what is equally worse is that each gas victim was in fact awarded less than one-fifth of what he or she was eligible to receive as per the terms of settlement, which itself was a paltry sum compared to the magnitude and gravity of the disaster.

"What is equally worse is that the settlement amount of \$470 million, which was determined on the assumption that there were only about 105,000 gas victims, including 3,000 dead, was actually disbursed to 574,367 gas victims, including over 15,000 dead," it says.

The next of kin of each of the dead were awarded a sum of Rs.200,000 on an average and each of the injured was awarded a sum of Rs.50,000 on an average. However, none of the gas victims was paid interest for the period of delay in the award of compensation despite the fact the process of adjudication of claims stretched from 1992 to 2006, that is eight to 22 years after the disaster.

Moreover, the accused officials of Union Carbide are yet to be punished for their criminal negligence that led to the tragedy.

"In fact, the government of India has made little effort to bring prime accused Warren Anderson and concerned officials of accused companies Union Carbide Corporation and Union Carbide Eastern to face trial in India," it says.

"Instead, the government of India is doing all it can to please Dow Chemical Co, the present owners of Union Carbide Corp."

***New Indian Express/
Chennai/ 01/12/09***

Letter urges parliament: Right the wrongs, pay homage to Bhopal victims

Bhopal, Nov 30: Bhopal gas disaster victims on Monday wrote to Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar and Vice

President Hamid Ansari, the Rajya Sabha chairman, saying parliament should pay homage to the hundreds of thousands affected by the tragedy 25 years ago.

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The claim courts in Bhopal have determined that 574,367 victims had suffered injuries in varying degree causing the untimely death of several thousands. "The grievousness of the injuries suffered by the victims are such that even 25 years after the disaster no less than 6,000 victims continue to visit hospitals every day due to disaster-related ailments," the letter said. Progenies of gas victims appear to be suffering from genetic effects and, reportedly, there is a rise in

cancer cases of various kinds, it adds. The letter further mentions that what is equally worse is that each gas victim was in fact awarded less than one-fifth of what he or she was eligible to receive as per the terms of settlement, which itself was a paltry sum compared to the magnitude and gravity of the disaster. "What is equally worse is that the settlement amount of \$470 million, which was determined on the assumption that there were only about 105,000 gas victims, including 3,000 dead, was actually disbursed to 574,367 gas victims, including over 15,000 dead," it says. The next of kin of each of the dead were awarded a sum of Rs.200,000 on an average and each of the injured was awarded a sum of Rs.50,000 on an average. However, none of the gas victims was paid interest for the period of delay in the award of compensation despite the fact the process of adjudication of claims stretched from 1992 to 2006, that is eight to 22 years after the disaster. Moreover, the accused officials of Union Carbide are yet to be punished for their criminal negligence that led to the tragedy. "In fact, the government of India has made little effort to bring prime accused Warren Anderson and concerned officials of accused companies Union Carbide Corporation and Union Carbide Eastern to face trial in India," it says. "Instead, the government of India is doing all it can to please Dow Chemical Co, the present owners of Union Carbide Corporation." (IANS)

Sentinel/ Guwahati/ 01/12/09

Groundwater slow poison in Bhopal'

SUDHIR SINGH

Twenty-five years after Union Carbide's accused chemical plant spewed 42 tonnes of poisonous methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas, killing 8,000-10,000 people, and debilitating thousands of others, a study conducted by the Delhi-based

Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has found that toxic waste lying at the plant premises still contaminates the city's land and water.

Tests done at the CSE's Pollution Monitoring Lab with the help of one water and eight soil samples collected from the factory show that groundwater in areas even three kms away from the plant premises contained almost 40 times more pesticides than the permissible standards.

Releasing the report at a crowded press conference on Tuesday, CSE director Sunita Narain said it's time the government stopped denying the problem.

"Accept the fact that there is contamination." This is not so much because of the accident per se, but because of the "criminally negligent" housekeeping. For instance Carbide was buying muck which was nothing but isomers of hexachlorocyclohexane (HCH) from which they extracted gamma used in the production of lindane.

The rest was thrown out of the factory. What wasn't foreseen was the abnormally long life of these chemicals which not only did not decompose, but seeped into the groundwater, rendering it unfit for human consumption. Such was the level of contamination that soil samples had to be diluted 1000 times to know their chemical composition. The presence of heavy metals like mercury and chromium had been confirmed.

Asian Age/Delhi/02/12/09

CSE laboratory releases study report of Union Carbide

Bhopal, Dec 1: For more than 25 years, the Union Carbide (UCIL) factory has been contaminating the land and water of Bhopal. Latest tests show that groundwater in areas even three km away from the

factory contains almost 40 times more pesticides than Indian standards.

These are the findings of a study released here today by the New Delhi-based research and advocacy organization, Centre for Science and Environment (CSE). CSE's Pollution Monitoring Lab has tested water and soil samples from in and around the Union Carbide factory, and found high concentrations of pesticides and heavy metals inside the factory as well as in the groundwater outside.

Sunita Narain Director tells- the lab study and its results UCIL used to manufacture three different kinds of pesticides: Carbaryl, Aldicarb and a formulation of Carbaryl and gamma-hexachlorocyclohexane. The plant also used heavy metals like mercury and chromium. Most of these products and elements are persistent and toxic. The CSE laboratory chose the same chemicals for its tests. One water and eight soil samples were collected from various places inside the factory. Eleven more water samples came from locations outside, ranging from colonies next to the factory's boundary to those 3.5 km away.

All the samples collected from within the factory were found to be highly contaminated. The waste stored within the premises had Carbaryl content of 9,856 parts per million (ppm) and mercury content of 1,065 ppm. The soil sample near the Sevidol plant had 2,782 ppm of Lindane; soil from solar evaporation pond had chromium content of 1,065 ppm, while that from the Sevin plant had mercury concentration of 8,188 ppm. It must be noted that there is no standard for these pesticides. Surface water samples had a pesticide concentration of 0.2805 ppm – which is 561 times more than the Indian standard- She Informs.

"The reason this is extremely worrying is because

we have found the toxins in the groundwater we have checked from almost 3 km below the factory," says Chandra Bhushan, Associate Director, CSE and in-charge of the CSE laboratory. All 11 groundwater samples collected from colonies around the UCIL factory were found to be contaminated with chlorinated benzene compounds and organochlorine pesticides. Carbamates were found in four samples. The concentration of pesticides was 1.1 to 38.6 times higher than the Indian standard. The water sample from a hand-pump near the Chaurasia Samaj Mandir in Shiv Nagar – more than 3 km from the factory – was the most contaminated. It had the highest concentration of Carbaryl, Lindane, and mercury.

Adds Bhushan: "The profile of chemicals found within the UCIL factory and in the waste disposal site of UCIL matches the chemicals found in the groundwater sample in the colonies outside. There is no other source of these chlorinated benzene compounds and pesticides than UCIL."

Speaking at the release of the study report, Sunita Narain, said: "Our findings suggest that the entire site is highly contaminated. The waste stored within the factory is a small part of the total contamination present in the site. The focus of the government to just dispose off the stored waste and ignore the site contamination problem is, therefore, not going to solve the environmental problems from the UCIL factory."

Chronic toxicity: the health implications-"The factory site in Bhopal is leading to chronic toxicity – continuous tiny exposure leading to poisoning of our bodies," explains Narain. "This is different from acute poisoning and so the claim that the factory is not dangerous because people can touch the waste is misleading." The

problem, CSE says, is that the chemicals present in the soil of the factory are leaching into the groundwater and leading to slow and deliberate poisoning of residents.

The health impact of this slow poisoning will be enormous, says CSE. Chlorinated benzene compounds can affect and damage the liver and blood cells, while organ chlorine pesticides can lead to cancers and bone defects. The two key products of UCIL – Carbaryl and Aldicarb – were as deadly. Their health impacts include damage to the brain and nervous system, chromosomal abnormalities etc.

CSE researchers have found that people living around the accident site continue to suffer from diseases ranging from chronic ailments to abnormalities. No one, however, is certain how much of it is related to the gas release and how much has been exacerbated because of continuing exposure to toxins. Says Chandra Bhushan: “The Indian Council for Medical Research was asked to conduct long-term epidemiological research right after the disaster, but these studies were summarily discontinued in 1994. The initial reports suggested long-term and deadly health effects on the survivors.”

Who will pay for the clean-up? - If this contamination is accepted, the question is, who will pay for the clean-up? If the entire site of the factory needs to be carefully checked and cleaned up, the cost of the operation will be very high. Who will pay for this continuing environmental damage? Dow Chemical Company, which has bought over Union Carbide, says it is not responsible. It wants the High Court to delete it from the list of respondents. Based on letters accessed by RTI activists, it is also clear that there is pressure to dilute the liability of Dow Chemicals, arguing that the company had

nothing to do with Union Carbide India Limited, which operated the plant.

**Central Chronicle/Bhopal/
02/12/09**

CSE finds toxins in groundwater outside plant

Shiv Karan Singh

Bhopal, 1 Dec: Courtesy contaminated groundwater, residents living around the now abandoned Union Carbide plant in Bhopal are being subject to chronic toxicity in the form of chlorinated benzene compounds and organochlorine pesticides for over 25 years. Laboratory tests conducted by the Center for Science and Environment (CSE), the findings of which were released in Bhopal today, have found that the same toxins still present in the Union Carbide site have over years leached into the groundwater. This pollution was not caused by the Bhopal Gas Disaster, but during inappropriate handling of the toxic waste when the plant was in operation between 1969 and 1985.

The testing team, headed by CSE Associate Director Mr Chandra Bhushan, have found a concentration of pesticides 1.1 to 38.6 times the Indian standard in each of the 11 collected groundwater samples. The highest concentration of toxins was found in a water sample taken from a hand pump near the Chaurasia Samaj Mandir in Shiv Nagar Colony, which is located about 3 kms down-slope from the Union Carbide plant. This sample has the highest concentration for Carbaryl (0.011 ppm or 110 times the standard), and also contains Lindane (0.004 ppm or 40 times the standard), and Mercury (0.024 ppm or 24 times the Indian standard). The health effects of Carbaryl are damage to the brain and nervous system, endocrine disruption, and abnormal child

development, while that of Mercury, a neurotoxin, are higher incidence of spontaneous abortions, adverse effects on memory, concentration, and language skills amongst children exposed.

According to Mr Bhushan, the reason numerous studies in the past did not find these toxins is that none of them ever tested for the chemicals involved in the actual processing in the Union Carbide plant. Tests were conducted for numerous unrelated chemicals like DDT, which had nothing to do with manufacture at the Union Carbide plant. The CSE test studied for 20 specific toxins. Ms Sunita Narain, Director CSE, took pains to explain the difference between acute and chronic toxicity, with the latter being “continuous tiny exposure leading to poisoning of our bodies.” Recent government studies by Defense Research & Development Establishment and National Environmental Engineering Research Institute had tested for acute rather than chronic toxicity with samples taken from the factory site and not groundwater in surrounding housing colonies.

Incidentally, CSE had made an unofficial agreement to take the soil and water samples along with the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) on 28 and 29 October this year. Joint samples were taken by teams from CSE and CPCB on 28 October, but on 29 October the CPCB informed M. Bhushan that they had already collected ground water samples by themselves on October 14. According to sources, the CPCB study has also found high levels of toxins of soil samples from the Union Carbide site, but that study has not been completed. There is no word yet on what levels of pollution the CPCB found in groundwater samples collected separately on 14 October.

Speaking to The Statesman, Ms Narain opined that “the government cannot deny that the factory site is contaminated, but might try and deny contamination of groundwater.” According to the CSE Director, the first step is acknowledging that Bhopal citizens have a major chronic pollution problem in the waste present in and around the site that has leached into the groundwater. Then a detailed study needs to be conducted on the actual scale of the pollution, and on the health impacts on the population, which ended when the ICMR discontinued its studies in 1994. Finally, Ms Narain spoke about remediation costs of pollution and on who is liable. In its December 2008 annual report, Dow Chemicals disclosed that its present and future liabilities associated with asbestos cases against Union Carbide are expected to be \$2.2 billion dollars. “How can Union Carbide accept this asbestos related burden of liability in the U.S. and refuse to accept the same in the case of Union Carbide in India”, asked the CSE Director.

Statesman/ Kolkata/ 02/12/09

Groundwater around leak site is still contaminated: Report

‘Pesticide Level 40 Times Over Standard Even 3Km From Plant’

Suchandana Gupta | TNN

Bhopal: Yet another report on the persisting disastrous effects of the gas tragedy has claimed that the erstwhile pesticide factory of Union Carbide, from where the toxic methyl isocyanate leaked 25 years ago, has been contaminating the soil and underground water in Madhya Pradesh’s capital.

The new report by New Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) released here on Tuesday said the “groundwater in areas even

3 km away from the factory site contains almost 40 times more pesticides than normal Indian standards”. “Continuous intake of this groundwater can have drastic effects on the human body,” CSE’s director and activist Sunita Narain claimed. “This is like slow poisoning.”

According to Narain, the CSE pollution monitoring labs have tested water and soil samples from in and around the Union Carbide factory and found high concentration of pesticides and heavy metals inside the factory premises as well as the groundwater outside. All 11 groundwater samples collected by CSE found large quantities of mercury, chlorinated benzene compounds and organochlorine, said the CSE report.

Earlier research conducted by the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Pollution Control Board, City Environmental Laboratory (Boston) and environmental NGO Greenpeace also found extremely high levels of toxins like carbaryl, lindane and alpha naphthol in the soil and water around the factory areas. Residents of 18 gasaffected areas continue to consume the water that these surveys have termed “contaminated”. In July 1998, Union Carbide handed over the factory to the Union government with 8,000 tonne of toxic effluent and 10,000 tonne of toxic silt in ponds. Former Union Carbide employee T R Chouhan had told a US court that between 1969 and 1984, the factory had dumped over 1,900 tonne of chemicals in and around the factory. Another 390 tonne of toxic waste, which was the raw components for the pesticide, has been packed and kept for disposal. NGOs claim that this poisonous waste has spread through the soil and water making Bhopal gas tragedy “not a one-time but a continuing disaster for human life”.

Union Carbide manufactured three kinds of pesticides in this factory including Carbaryl (Sevin), Aldicarb (temik) and a third formula of carbaryl with gamma-hexachlorocyclohexane (Sevidol). “The plant used heavy metals like mercury and chromium. Most of these products and elements are persistent, toxic and harmful for the human body. We decided to test for these chemicals. The water in Shiv Nagar, which is 3 km away from the factory, tested the highest concentration of carbaryl at 0.011ppm which is 110 times the normal standard. Lindane was found at 0.004 ppm, 40 times higher than normal and mercury was 0.024 ppm, 24 times greater than normal.” Narain said 25 years after the worst industrial disaster, the Union government thinks that the situation is far from alarming. She drew attention to the remarks by Union minister of state for environment and forests Jairam Ramesh, who had said: “I held the toxic waste in my hand. I am still alive and not coughing. It’s 25 years after the gas tragedy. Let us move ahead.”

Narain argued that the Union government was ignorant about the difference between acute toxicity and chronic toxicity. “No one has explained to Jairam Ramesh that when victims inhaled the gas and died, it was acute toxicity. Chronic toxicity, on the other hand, is a longterm slow poisoning. We are talking about chronic toxicity and its harmful effects on the body,” she said.

Hiroshima-like memorial planned

The premises of the defunct Union Carbide factory will be opened for public from January, a senior minister said on Tuesday. “The state also has plans to build Hiroshima-like memorial there depicting detailed account of the disaster,” Bhopal gas tragedy relief and rehabilitation minister Babulal Gaur said. He said the

state has sought Rs 116 crore from the Centre to build a memorial for the victims in the factory premises. PTI
Times/ of India/ Delhi/ 02/12/09

25 years on... litany of complaints continues

Shashikant Trivedi

As governments and NGOs fight on contamination levels, Bhopal gas tragedy victims continue to die a slow death

Lachho Bai, who lives in a hovel made of planks, is a towering challenge to our politicians who so often make hollow promises to the Bhopal gas tragedy victims. She also can contest any analysis, research reports, fund figures and above all arrest warrants issued in 'favour' of Warren Anderson.

Unfortunately, at the age of 51, thanks to the effects of methyl isocyanate (MIC), psycho-socio disorders, mental agonies and impaired vision have made her too ill to speak against anyone. Reduced to barebones, she seems to be in her eighties.

On December 2, 1984 when the worst-ever industrial disaster took place, her fate was sealed. She was no longer the cheerful lady in the narrow lanes of Jaypee Nagar near the Union Carbide India Limited factory. For all those who survived the disaster, cheer was something which no longer existed in their lexicon. At 16 she was married to hotel waiter Laxmi Narayan and used to assist him financially by rolling bidis. Lachho lost her four children, the fifth one was a daughter two-year-old when the venomous night pushed people like her into darkness.

"She cannot speak, sometimes she smiles, sometimes cries. She lost her mind 15 years ago," recalls Hazira Bi, an activist and survivor of the tragedy. For Lachho, her husband, a labourer now and also a gas victim, suffering from various

ailments, is the only hope to fight against extreme poverty.

Unlike Lachho Bai, her neighbour Jagdish Ahirwar looks a healthy teenager. But in fact he is suffering from a growth-related disorder. The disaster has gifted him diabetes at an early age. He is a man of 22 and takes a full dose of insulin each day to maintain his sugar, mocking facilities of world-class Bhopal Memorial Hospital and Research Centre, its expert doctors and world class diagnosis medicines. No medicine can make him taller. "You tell me which doctor should I consult, with this swollen hand and face?" he asks.

His three-and-a-half feet sister Renu is also a teenager in appearance. At 27, a mother of two, she is struggling to survive without medical aids. Renu has discontinued all medicines and now has pinned her hopes on God. "I have consumed tons of medicines. How long should I keep on consuming? We are very poor, we cannot afford medicines and harassment at government hospitals," she said. "I do not breast-feed my child, otherwise he will also fall sick," she added. Among 25-lakh patients treated at six government hospitals during 1985-2008, Lachho Bai never figured. Like her, many unknown victims are languishing in some filthy lanes of twenty localities near the Union Carbide's closed unit, consuming toxic water, inhaling poisonous toxic dust and eventually falling seriously or terminally sick. Many have developed complicated diseases years after the tragedy. Vasheer Khan (60) has developed an unidentified disease in his foot. He was a skilled truck driver few years ago but resigned from his job. "Jab aankh se di khta nahi hai to kya truck chala kar kisi ki jaan leta (Should I have killed someone, when I know I have a poor eyesight?)" he said. Now he is on mercy of his sons who are also jobless and sick. He is

so poor that free medical facilities available at nearby Sambhavana Trust Clinic or Jawahar Lal Nehru Hospital and Research Centre are miles away. "Aane Jaane ka kiraya kahan se layen? (From where should I arrange to-and-fro fare to nearby hospital?)" he asks.

In the faces of all problems, authorities keep on chewing fat. "We pay crores of rupees to Jawaharlal Nehru Cancer Hospital for free cancer treatment of gas victims, Rs 45 crore annually for all six gas relief hospitals of 634-bed capacity. These hospitals are fully equipped with ultra-modern medical facilities where we provide medical care to 4,000 outdoor patients and 30,000 indoor patients each day, perform 2.5 lakh investigations and 10,000 special investigations each year. What else can we do for the patients?" director of Kamla Nehru Hospital Dr KK Dubey said.

He may be right, but Nafees, a young man of 32 has now few options left for her sister, who is suffering from a nephrological disorder multicystic kidney displasia, which she had developed in 2004. "I have arranged more than 116 dialysis sessions at a private hospital for my sister Shabana, who was already suffering from various ailments after the gas disaster. Now I hardly have any option, I am ready to donate my kidney to her but I cannot afford the medical expenses," said Nafees.

Business Standard/ Delhi/ 02/12/09

Chronic toxicity from Union Carbide'

Milind Ghatwai

A day before the Bhopal gas tragedy completes 25 years, the Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) claimed that chemicals dumped in the Union Carbide plant continue to contaminate land and groundwater.

The Centre came out with its findings, based on laboratory analysis of samples collected in October from the plant's premises and surrounding areas, on Tuesday .

The Madhya Pradesh government, however, has declared the plant safe and was about to throw open its doors for the public before it backed out in view of the outcry from NGOs. Even Union Environment and Forests Minister Jairam Ramesh had declared that the waste stored in the plant was no longer hazardous but apologised after organisations and activists working for the gas tragedy victims criticised him for his "insensitivity." The state government had cited reports from organisations like the NEERI and Defence Research and Development Establishment (DRDE).

However, CEC's Sunita Narain said the above reports were misleading since they talked of "acute toxicity", which meant adverse effects occurring within 14 days of administration of a substance. "It's a case of 'chronic toxicity'," she said adding that continuous exposure leads to poisoning. "The claim that the factory was not dangerous because one could touch the waste was misleading because the poison takes effect slowly."

She said the samples collected from within the factory were highly contaminated and added that the alarming finding was that the surface water samples had a pesticide concentration of 0.2805 PPM, 561 times more than the Indian standard. "The reason this is extremely worrying is because we have found the toxins in the groundwater almost three kms away," CSE's associate director Chandra Bhushan said
Indian Express/ Delhi/ 02/12/09

25 yrs on, Bhopal victims' fight for justice continues

YASMEEN MOHIUDDIN

Laccho Bai's life has gone from bad to worse in the 25 years since the Bhopal gas tragedy, when fumes escaped from a pesticide plant in the central Indian city, killing thousands instantly. Huddled against the dirt floor of her home – a shack of wooden planks propped against a brick wall with a tin roof -a thin white mucus covers Laccho's eyes, the apparent result of exposure to more than 40 tonnes of methyl isocyanate gas that filled the neighbourhood on December 3, 1984. Like many other survivors living close to the Union Carbide facility, she and her family saw none of the multi-million dollar settlement package meant to help those affected. "People told us we could apply for compensation," Laccho's husband, Laxmi Narayan, said. "They took our name down, but we never saw a penny."

Asian Age/ Delhi/ 02/12/09

25 years and still waiting

Vidya Subrahmaniam

The Anderson saga is one more reminder that the powerful can always count on official help.

In the fall of 2002, Greenpeace campaigner Casey Harell paid a surprise visit to the New York State private estate of Warren Anderson, and found him living a "life of luxury". Nothing odd about the discovery except that in the eyes of the law Mr. Anderson was untraceable, and had been so since 1992 when an Indian court, exasperated by his refusal to heed multiple summons for trial, declared him a fugitive from justice.

Mr. Anderson was chairman and chief executive officer of the United States-headquartered Union Carbide

Corporation (UCC) at the time of the lethal December 2-3 methyl isocyanate leak from Carbide's pesticide plant in Bhopal and faced charges on many counts, including culpable homicide. The UCC chief, or "Accused no 1" in a December 1, 1987 chargesheet filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation against him and 11 others, including UCC, USA; Union Carbide (Eastern), Hong Kong; and Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL), had been placed under house arrest soon after the disaster but won his release on a promise to return to India to stand trial.

Neither Mr. Anderson nor Carbide would turn up in the Indian court and for obvious reason. The toxic gas leak had caused a human tragedy of unprecedented proportions: Around 4,000 (unofficially 8,000) immediate deaths and over a lakh people permanently disabled. In the years to come, the death toll from long-term exposure would mount to 20,000, tens of thousands of children would have birth defects, and many millions would fall gravely ill from drinking water contaminated by the massive amounts of chemical waste dumped in and around the Carbide factory grounds. UCC and its CEO would have had hell to pay had they chosen to face charges.

Mr. Anderson had been in hiding for ten years when Greenpeace, and before that a British newspaper, tracked him down. Mr. Harell would remark after the meeting: "If a team of journalists and Greenpeace managed to track down India's most wanted man in a matter of days, how seriously have the U.S. authorities tried to find him in all these years? The U.S. has reacted swiftly on curbing the financial corporate crimes of Enron and WorldCom, but has clearly not made much of an effort to find Anderson, responsible for the deaths of 20,000 people in India."

The searing comment underscored the dubious role

played by the world's most powerful democracy in protecting the key perpetrator of the world's worst industrial disaster. Seventeen years after he was proclaimed an "absconder", Mr. Anderson, now 88, continues to elude the long reach of the law. However, it is not just that the wheels of justice showed no inclination to move in the U.S. The Indian government has been no less lethargic in bringing Mr. Anderson to justice. It sent out a formal request for his extradition in May 2003, close to two decades after the crime. As Bhopal activist Nityanand Jayaraman would tell The Hindu on the 25th anniversary of the gas leak: "In the case of Anderson, the [Indian] government's heart is just not on the job."

Indeed, the Bhopal saga is a painful reminder of the unconscionable way justice plays out for the poor in this country — with victims fighting a battle so long and hard that justice has little meaning when it finally arrives. Following an unjust settlement reached between Carbide and the Indian government in 1989 (the Indian government sued the corporation for \$3 billion but settled for 15 per cent of the amount), survivors were awarded a lifetime average compensation of Rs.25,000, far below international compensation standards. But even this meagre amount would reach the awardees after long delays, protracted red tape and bribes paid to lawyers, middlemen and touts. Compensation would not reach some survivors until 2005, and till date no compensation has been awarded to those born with disabilities and those drinking contaminated water.

The struggle for compensation at least got somewhere, unlike l'affaire Anderson which shows no signs of coming to fruition. In all these years, the gas leak survivors have got used to being told that they must move

on, that they must put their tragic past behind them. It is a familiar story. Sikh victims of the 1984 pogrom have heard this nugget of wisdom as have Muslim victims of Ayodhya 1991 and Gujarat 2002. It is as if the perpetrator of a criminal act somehow becomes less guilty if he holds out long enough.

Astonishingly, this was the official stand taken by the Indian government with regard to Mr. Anderson. On August 6, 2001, then Attorney-General Soli Sorabjee advised the Vajpayee government in writing against pursuing Mr. Anderson's extradition. He argued that it would be difficult for the Indian government to satisfy the "probable cause" requirement necessary for securing Mr. Anderson's extradition. As the phrase itself suggests, "probable cause" means something more than a mere suspicion but less than the quantum of evidence required for conviction.

Mr. Anderson exercised managerial control and supervision over the operations of UCIL, he approved and ratified the standards in design, safety and operations at UCIL, which were far inferior compared to UCC's plant in West Virginia, he knew that Carbide had sent a team to inspect the Bhopal plant before the disaster which noted leaking valves in the plant and warned of the "potential for the release of toxic materials". To show Mr. Anderson prima facie guilty of a grossly irresponsible act that killed, maimed and continues to cause grievous hurt to millions of people was hardly a huge challenge.

Mr. Sorabjee thought otherwise. Worse, he also pointed to "humanitarian considerations" likely to be cited by the U.S. government against Mr. Anderson's extradition. "The reasons are humanitarian concerns, such as Mr. Anderson's age, said to be 81 years old, and [his] health and length of time that

has elapsed, almost 17 years, between the event and the Indian government's decision to make a formal request for extradition." In other words, it was the fault of the victims that Mr. Anderson had grown old while the Indian government took its own time — despite countless petitions to successive governments and prayers before the Bhopal District Court — to take up the extradition question with the U.S. government.

Yet the more the government dithered, the stronger was the survivors' determination to fight to the end. They organised themselves under various banners and fought simultaneous battles on many fronts — in India as well as in the U.S. Each setback spawned a further round of protest marches, hunger strikes and petition-making. In November 1999, survivor organisations filed a class action suit against UCC and Mr. Anderson in the Southern District Court of New York, charging them with violating international human rights law, environmental law and international criminal law. Federal Judge John F. Keenan would twice throw the case out before agreeing to hear the case again following a partially successful appeal in the Second Circuit Court of Appeals (New York).

A fresh twist in the case came with the 2001 acquisition of UCC by The Dow Chemical Company. The latter persisted with the lie that it had acquired the assets of UCC without its liabilities. It also refused to surrender Carbide (now its subsidiary) for trial. To add insult to injury, Dow also landed law suits on protestors who besieged its offices in India, shouting, "Dow, you now have Union Carbide's blood on your hands". Dow claimed \$10,000 in compensation for alleged loss of work resulting from the demonstrations.

In all this, the CJM's court in the Bhopal District Court remained as the lone flicker of hope for the Bhopal gas survivors. The court struck blow after blow for them. From the 1988 letters rogatory issued to the U.S. administration seeking permission for the CBI to inspect the safety systems at UCC's West Virginia plant to proclaiming Mr. Anderson an absconder in 1992 to persistently seeking information from the CBI on the status of extradition proceedings to quashing the agency's 2002 attempt to dilute the charge against Mr. Anderson from culpable homicide (punishable with imprisonment up to 10 years) to criminal negligence (punishable with imprisonment up to two years), the District Court was as pro-active as the Indian government was laid back.

The CBI's 2002 attempt at dilution of charges was of a piece with Mr. Sorabjee's 2001 advice to the government against seeking Mr. Anderson's extradition. However, with the Bhopal magistrate standing firm, the CBI was left with no option but to request the Ministry of External Affairs to seek Mr. Anderson's extradition, which the MEA did, obviously reluctantly, in May 2003.

In July 2004, the U.S. government expectedly rejected the Indian request. It stated that the request did not meet the requirements of Article 2(1) and 9 (3) of the extradition treaty between the U.S. and India.

What now? On July 22, 2009, the CJM's court in Bhopal issued a fresh warrant of arrest against Mr. Anderson, and ordered the CBI to produce him before the court for trial. Unfortunately, the meandering path the case has taken so far gives no cause for hope. Indeed, it is difficult to believe that the Indian government, even less its U.S. counterpart, will persuade the 88-year-old "Accused no 1" to come to

India one last time — to stand trial for a crime he committed a quarter of a century ago.

Hindu/ Delhi/ 02/12/09

Bhopal tragedy needs closure

Dow And Industry Must Take The Lead

FOR most of us, the Bhopal gas tragedy is an industrial accident, in which, 25 years ago to this day, large quantities of poisonous methyl isocyanate escaped from the Union Carbide factory at Bhopal, killing thousands of people and maiming the lives of half a million others. However, that was only the beginning of the tragedy, which continues to unfold as a saga of official callousness, political and administrative ineptitude, legal procrastination, botched medical study of the effects of mass poisoning, large-scale, prolonged human suffering and its cynical exploitation by a few and overall failure to leave the accident behind and move ahead. Natural degradation of chemicals has cleaned up the factory site, to the extent it can, rather than any organised attempt by any agency. An initiative by Ratan Tata to clean up the toxic site proved stillborn. American chemical giant Dow, which purchased Union Carbide 16 years after the Bhopal accident, continues to encounter public hostility on account of this failure of the system to achieve closure at least on those aspects of the tragedy on which closure is possible. Not that Dow is blameless on this count. When it bought Union Carbide, it bought into its moral and legal liabilities, of which the plight of five lakh victims form a large chunk. Dow has chosen not to recognise this, taking an entirely legalistic view of things.

As as far as the victims are concerned, no one has played fair — not the courts that put their seal on a paltry monetary settlement that remains final

although the actual number of victims has turned out to be five times as large as the group for whom the compensation was worked out; not the government that distributed compensation 20 years after the accident and arbitrarily terminated a judicial probe; not the Indian Council of Medical Research, which discontinued its studies for mysterious reasons; not industry, which turned its back on the accident. It was easy for Dow to step into this breach and do something tangible to help the victims of the world's worst industrial disaster — as an act of good faith, even if it did not itself play a role in creating it. Instead, Dow has chosen to pretend that its philanthropy with the Jaipur foot would wash away the Bhopal stain. It still is possible for Dow to heed the call of 24 US Congressmen to make amends. And for Indian industry to join in, not because it is legally obliged to, but because it is a stakeholder in India and in this country's humanity.

Economic Times/ Delhi/ 03/12/09

25 yrs on, Bhopal lives in minds & lungs (edito rial)

In case we do have another major industrial accident, Bhopal serves as an example of what not to do by way of legal, political, administrative and medical remediation, says Praveen S Thampi

IN SANER societies, the 82-acre compound at Kali Parade, Berasia Road, in Bhopal would have been a public monument where you would be compelled to bow down, probably stand a moment in silence, praying for the more than 10,000 men, women and children who fell prey to the toxic fumes that billowed out from here on a midnight 25 years ago. Instead, stray dogs, grazing goats and a police contingent greet you at

the Union Carbide factory, amid clumsily drawn chalk lines on the ground meant to keep permitted visitors away from touching the rusting carcass of the plant, which was set up in 1969 to produce Sevin, a pesticide key to India's green revolution.

If nothing else, the mess captures what Bhopal's balancesheet looks like after quarter of a century. Victims taken for a ride by their own governments, a criminal justice system that has failed to deliver, and the continuing contamination at the plant site abandoned by the polluter — Union Carbide, now part of Dow Chemicals — as well as the regulator, the state and central governments. That's three Cs — compensation, contamination and criminal justice — that keep the 25-year-old catastrophe alive, posing questions on the moral fibre of the Indian society and the sensitivity of its successive governments. Then there are the mysteries.

On February 15, 1989, the government of India reached a settlement with Union Carbide for \$470 million climbing down from its demand of \$3.3 billion. Incidentally, just a day before, after a long-drawn out process, the administration in West Virginia, US, had given its permission to Indian investigators to inspect the 'sister' Union Carbide plant at South Charleston to assess the disparity in safety standards followed at the two units. The plant has since changed hands to Bayer CropScience, but continues to be America's biggest storage site for the lethal methyl isocyanate.

While the official figures still stand at 1,05,000 victims (including 3,000 dead), the government records show compensation was paid for 5,74,367 (5,207 dead) people. If the number of victims were five times higher than the original estimates, why did the administration slice the paltry

sums even thinner instead of adding to the corpus?

Going by the rupee-dollar exchange rate of 1989 — on which the compensations were meted out even as late as in 2004 — the sum that Union Carbide deposited with the government amounts to Rs 713 crore. That's an average of Rs 12,410 per victim doled out after almost a decade of the disaster, an abysmally low sum for the affected families, most of them rendered too debilitated to earn a livelihood on their own.

Stack it up against the Uphaar tragedy in 1997 where a movie theatre went up in flames killing 59 and injuring 104 in the heart of New Delhi. Each of the victims was paid between Rs 15 lakh and Rs 18 lakh, and the injured Rs 1 lakh. And since the cheques were given out in 2003 — still a year before the last Bhopal compensation was paid — the Uphaar victims were awarded a 9% interest on their compensations from the date of filing the claims.

Union Carbide's \$470 million would be worth some Rs 2,847 crore, assuming a dollar interest rate of 2% per annum for 15 years and conversion at the 2004 exchange rate of Rs 45 to the dollar. So where is the rest of the money that should still be left in the account since only the Rs 713 crore had been distributed any way? Madhya Pradesh's minister for gas rehabilitation and relief says there is not a single paisa left in the kitty to give out to anyone. "We have done our job," says Babulal Gaur, a former chief minister of the state.

IN FACT, the first nail in the Bhopal coffin was struck by the state government itself. Three days after the tragedy, it set up the Bhopal Poisonous Gas Leakage Inquiry Commission headed by Justice N K Singh, then sitting judge of the Madhya Pradesh High Court. The commission was wound up a year later without any explanation.

The ICMR, the country's apex body for formulation, co-ordination and promotion of biomedical research, started its study on the medical effects of Bhopal in 1985. It commissioned 24 projects, but when it closed the Bhopal chapter in 1994, only two of the studies had seen the light of the day.

Dr N R Bhandari was the resident medical officer in the Hamidia Hospital in Bhopal when thousands poured into its emergency wards on the midnight of December 3, 1984. Later, he was drafted into the ICMR team that had started its research on the long-term effects of Bhopal.

A pediatrician, Dr Bhandari says that 2,500 pregnant women had suffered serious exposure to MIC on December 3. His team had followed even the last one of them to deliver, on October 1, 1985. "The gas didn't seem to affect new-borns to any alarming levels," he says, adding that these kids should have been tracked till the pre-puberty stage to make any concrete observations. Till date, ICMR hasn't given any explanation what happened to those 22 reports, which, according to Dr Bhandari, could have helped the victims get custom-made care since they would have triggered a wider debate within the global medical community.

From where the ICMR left, Dr N Banerjee has taken over, with his underpaid, understaffed team. He is the chief research officer at the Centre for Rehabilitation Studies, the only body conducting studies on the long-term impacts of Bhopal. A part of the state's ministry of gas relief & rehabilitation, Dr Banerjee and his 46-member team — 25 of them go out to the field to collect data — live a hand-to-mouth existence. The entire CRS, an organisation that even the most critical NGOs operating in Bhopal admit is doing a commendable job given its constraints, continues

to be on the temporary payroll of the state government 15 years after it was set up. A process to automate the set-up and convert the data currently stored in paper folders in dozens of steel almirahs is underway.

The ministry has a network of hospitals that give free care to anyone who has received compensation as a gas victim, but both Dr Bhandari and Dr Banerjee say a gas-victim and a non-gas victim diagnosed with, say, pulmonary tuberculosis, cannot be treated in the same way. "The normal person doesn't carry the burden of history, but the gas-victim's lungs would have already been damaged before he contracted TB. So the cure just can't be the same," Dr Banerjee says.

Today, Bhopal is a city ridden with quacks offering steroid injections to those with breathing problems. The low oxygen levels in blood, a fallout of the gas impact, makes the patient constantly fatigued, and quacks often rush in with instant gratification.

Economic Times/ Delhi/ 03/12/09

6 get death for killing four women

Victims Were Killed In 2005 Following Land Feud Between Two Families

Dwaipayan Ghosh | TNN

A trial court in Ghaziabad on Wednesday sentenced six convicts to death in a four-year-old murder case in which four women were brutally killed over land dispute. Additional District Judge A K Srivastav found the accused guilty of murdering the women on November 25, 2005.

Terming it the rarest of rare cases, the judge held that all the accused deserved death sentence. Three others — also arrested in the same case — were acquitted for want of evidence.

According to the police chargesheet, two families from

Nurpur village under Masoori police station were involved in a property dispute. Both the families staked claim to six-and-a-half bighas of land. While one family was headed by one Bhopal Singh the other was headed by one Ranvir.

On November 25, four women belonging to Bhopal's family — his wife Chandroo, his daughters Siksha and Sharda, and his nephew's wife Bijendra — were shot dead by several assailants when they were coming back from their crop field. During investigation police found that one of the deceased, Siksha, was a prime witness in another case and with her death the trial proceedings of that case was going nowhere.

Based on the complaint lodged by Bhopal Singh and police's investigation into the murder cases, an FIR was lodged against 13 people — all of whom were arrested later by Ghaziabad police.

On Wednesday, the court found six of the accused directly involved in the murder. The convicts are Bunty, Kale, Pappu, Inderpal, Jitendra and Kiran Pal. The three who were acquitted by the court are Rupan Singh, Rampal Sharma and Sanjay Sinha. The rest of the 13 accused died due to illness or old age. Two others died in police encounters during the course of the trial.

A senior police officer involved in the investigations hailed the court's decision and said, "It was one of the most brutal killings investigated by Ghaziabad police. We would have been pleased if all the accused were convicted. We hope this acts as a deterrent."

Meanwhile, lawyers representing the accused told TOI that they would appeal against the verdict in Allahabad High Court after they get a written copy of the verdict.

According to police, the feud started after Bhopal Singh took seven bighas of land from one Ramnath, who was the elder brother of Ranvir. Ramnath died without an heir and Ranvir

staked his claim on the land and moved court. But when the court's verdict came in favour of Bhopal Singh, Ranvir's men attacked Bhopal's son Somveer. However, Somveer survived the attack and later murdered Ranvir and one of his acquaintances. In a revenge attack, Somveer was later murdered by Ranvir's kin and Siksha was the prime witness in the case.

Times of India/ Delhi/ 03/12/09

PM promises cleanup of abandoned plant, help to affected

New Delhi: On the eve of the 25th anniversary of the Bhopal gas tragedy, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Wednesday promised early clean-up of the deserted Union Carbide site and continued support to the affected population.

In a statement, he said that the government would take steps to provide safe drinking water to the people in the affected area and support medical research to help those carrying the scar of the deadly Methyl Isocyanate (MIC) in their body systems over the generations.

"The families that suffered and lost their dear ones can never really be fully compensated," he said. Singh, however, said his government was committed to resolving all outstanding issues related to the tragedy.

"We owe it our fellow citizens to put in place procedures and precautions to ensure that such a tragedy never occurs again," he said.

Times of India/ Delhi/ 03/12/09

Bhopal poison still lingers - Toxic traces in water

A physically challenged boy in Bhopal on Tuesday sings at a

ceremony to mark the 25th anniversary of the Union Carbide gas leak. (Reuters)

New Delhi, Dec. 1: Toxic residues from the Union Carbide factory that spewed a poisonous gas into Bhopal's environment 25 years ago continue to contaminate soil and water in the city, a non-government organisation claimed today.

The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) said it has detected unacceptably high levels of pesticide residues in groundwater samples from an area up to 3km from the factory, which was the site of the world's worst industrial disaster in 1984.

A tank in the factory had leaked a gas called methyl isocyanate on the night of December 2-3, 1984, turning the city into a gas chamber, killing an estimated 3,700 persons and causing lung injury and illness to tens of thousands more.

The CSE analysed 11 groundwater samples from neighbourhoods around the factory in October this year and found all samples contained potentially toxic residues of specific chemicals that were being made in the factory, the NGO's officials said. The concentrations of these residues were 1.1 to 38.6 times higher than limits prescribed by standard-setting authorities in India, the CSE said.

A water sample from a hand-operated pump in the area had the highest level of carbaryl — 110 times the limit. Soil samples from within the factory also had high levels of carbaryl and other contaminants, the NGO said.

"The factory site in Bhopal is leading to chronic toxicity — continuous tiny exposure leading to poisoning," said Sunita Narain, director of the CSE. The chemical residues in the soil are leaching into the groundwater and getting transported away from the site.

The CSE said the residues were likely to contribute to "slow poisoning" of the population exposed to the contaminated water. Chlorinated benzene compounds may adversely affect blood cells and the liver, while organochlorine pesticides can lead to cancer.

The CSE analysis did not take into account residues elsewhere as control samples.

"We didn't have to do that because we were looking at residues that are signature degradation products of the chemicals that were made at the factory," said Kushal Yadav, a CSE analyst.

The Madhya Pradesh government's Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Department has spent Rs 29 crore over the past 18 years on environmental rehabilitation such as planting trees, creating green belts and improving water supply programmes. But it has classified the disposal of hazardous industrial wastes and residues lying in the Union Carbide plant as "work under progress".

Narain said the waste stored in the factory was only a small part of the contamination issue. "The focus of the government to just dispose of the stored waste and ignore site contamination is not going to solve environmental problems from the factory," she said in a statement issued in Bhopal today.

Telegraph/ Calcutta/ 03/12/09

Bhopal Gas Tragedy: Endless nightmare

Twenty-five years have passed since that night of terror and death in Bhopal, which saw a cloud of deadly gases explode out of a faulty tank in a Gas victims pesticide factory and silently spread into the homes of sleeping people. Although no official count of casualties has ever been done, estimates based on hospital and rehabilitation records show that

about 20,000 people died and about 5.7 lakh suffered bodily damage, making it by far the world's worst industrial disaster ever.

Many who breathed the highly toxic cocktail that night suffered a horrible death with multiple organ failure. Those who survived have suffered multiple diseases for 25 years. A report of the Gas Tragedy Relief Department of the state says that the morbidity rate (occurrence of ailments) is nearly 20% among gas-affected persons compared to about 5% among the unaffected population.

Following the disaster, there was an international outcry for relief for the victims and punishment to those responsible for the gas leakage. The pesticide plant from where the gas leaked belonged to Union Carbide India, a subsidiary of the US-based Union Carbide Company. They were asked to pay compensation and arrange for medical treatment. The matter immediately got embroiled in legal controversies. Thus began a long and painful struggle of the victims for compensation, medical attention and rehabilitation that has spluttered along for a quarter century.

In February 1989, the Supreme Court announced that it was approving a settlement for Bhopal victims under which Union Carbide agreed to pay Rs 713 crore for compensation to victims, while the government agreed to drop all criminal cases against it. However, due to intense public shock and anger at letting off the culprits, the court agreed to reopen the criminal cases in 1991. Two installments of compensation — of up to Rs 25,000 each — have been given till now to the injured, one in 1994 and the next in 2004.

N D Jayaprakash of the Bhopal Gas Peedit Sangharsh Sahyog Samiti (BGPSSS), one of the groups fighting for the rights of gas victims, calls this a massive fraud because the number of gas-affected persons was arbitrarily fixed by the government at 105,000, including about 3,000 dead. In reality, nearly 20,000 people have died, and 5.7 lakh have suffered injuries. The compensation amount — Rs 713 crore, paid by Union Carbide — was meant for about 1 lakh persons but has been distributed among nearly 6 lakh people. Of the Rs 713 crores, Rs 113 crores was for loss of livestock and property. The balance Rs 600 crore distributed among 5.74 lakh persons works out to about Rs 12,410 per victim on average. In contrast, in the Uphaar tragedy in Delhi, families of those who died got between Rs 15 lakh to Rs 18 lakh each, while injured persons got Rs 1 lakh each. In addition, they got interest at the rate of 9% per annum for the roughly six years that the legal proceedings took.

Stung by this injustice, the victims approached the apex court, which told them to approach the state government. In Bhopal, the Welfare Commissioner rejected their demand. They appealed to the MP high court. On November 30 this year, the HC too dismissed the petition. "We will go back to the Supreme Court," says Jayaprakash.

Even after 25 years, gas victims are suffering serious health problems. On an average, 6,000 gas-affected patients visit hospitals in Bhopal every day, that is, about 2 million visits per year. The government adopted a one-size-fits-all policy for categorisation of injuries — a person with compromised lungs may ultimately develop other diseases, besides being unable to work fully. But such distinctions were not maintained and meagre compensation was doled out.

Sadhana Pradhan, who has worked among the gas victims since the disaster in 1984 points out that no line of treatment was ever evolved. "The government has treated the victims on an ad hoc basis," she says. Medical records are yet not centralized as recommended by the monitoring committee set up by the Supreme Court in 2004. As a result, doctors have no idea about the patients' history. "This has led to development of multi-drug resistant (MDR) TB in many cases," says Dr Saxena, who spent 11 years in the government's TB hospital in Bhopal.

Another dimension of the ongoing tragedy of Bhopal is the poisonous chemical waste lying around in the abandoned premises of the pesticide plant. Several committees have inspected it and found 44,000 kgs of tarry residues and 25,000 kgs of alpha naphthol lying in the open since 1984. Various studies have established that the soil, ground water, vegetables and even breast milk have traces of toxic chemicals.

Abdul Jabbar Khan of the Bhopal Gas Peedith Mahila Udyog Sangathan (BGPMS) says that actually there is much more poisonous waste, which the company used to routinely bury in the premises since 1969. "There is no piped water supply. People still use contaminated groundwater daily," he says.

Times of India/ Delhi/ 03/12/09

For some, no light at end of tunnel

Subodh Varma

Bhopal: Prem is a strapping young man with combed-back wet hair and an eardrum. He works as a driver for a car-hire agency. He was born just a few months before the Carbide gas disaster hit Bhopal, and the poisonous gas affected his whole family. "We used to stay in Govindpura. My mother fled

with me and my brothers and sisters after the cry went out that gas was leaking from the factory," he says.

They have all got compensation of about Rs 25,000 each. The family used it to build a new two-room house on the other side of the city, far from the gas-affected area. The money also helped in getting the sisters married off. Prem doesn't know anything about the various cases in the courts, the issues of cleaning up the contamination, or criminal liability. He is one of the new generation from the affected families that have moved on mentally.

Many like him want to move on. But, the effects of that night still drag them down. For gas-affected people, proper medical treatment and jobs are the two main issues. "If we or our children had got suitable jobs, at least the future would not have been so dark," says Sharif, who lives across the Carbide factory and is unable to work because of breathlessness. His two sons couldn't continue their studies after he stopped working. Now, they work as coolies, he rues.

Raj Kumar is an auto-driver. At the time of the gas leak, he was 23, and worked in the Union Carbide factory as a maintenance man. He came off duty at 9.30pm on the fateful night. "On hearing the uproar, I rushed back to the factory to help. But Pandeji, the security guard, turned me back saying save your lives while there's still time," he recounts. He spent the night helping people flee the place. "I developed a tumour in my abdomen. It was removed at Hamidia hospital. But I started getting breathless at the slightest exertion. I am an electrician, but I can't climb a pole to fix a fault," he says.

Recent research by Dr Ganesh of the Cancer Registry in Bhopal has confirmed that genetic changes in gas-affected people lead to increased incidence of cancer, infertility and spontaneous

abortions. "Chromosomal studies of 1,131 cases since 1996 show typical changes in gas-affected people," he explains.

According to Dr H H Trivedi, member of the Monitoring Committee set up by the Supreme Court, lungs were recognized as the primary target of methyl isocyanate, the gas that leaked from the Carbide factory. This caused breathing problems, and also laid the body open to many diseases like TB.

The monitoring committee has submitted seven reports so far to the government, but minimal action has resulted. Crucial issues like a centralized case registry with case histories available online have still not been implemented. Since June 2008, the Monitoring Committee itself is defunct as its chairman, Dr O P Mehra died, and no replacement has been found yet.

At a meeting of doctors working with gas victims, organized by the Madhya Pradesh Vigyan Sabha last week, several doctors express bitterness at the lack of coordination and planning in dealing with the patients. Dr G D Tiwari said that the government procured a CT scan machine for Rs 1.5 crore but has not yet provided a printer which costs just Rs 1,500.

Although there is a government order that all gas victims should be treated free of cost at all government hospitals, only at the Bhopal Memorial Hospital & Research Centre (BMHRC) is treatment free. In other hospitals, charges are levied. Even in the Rs 600 crore BMHRC, there is a private option where charges are levied. Mohammed Saeed, a gas victim, says doctors don't care in the free OPD, but if you pay Rs 150 and go to the private section, the same doctor will give you proper attention.

Haliman Bi is over 80 years old. She and her husband live in a dark room, with hardly any possessions, in J P Nagar. She gets short of breath even as she talks. Her husband, Abdul Rahman, was a tonga driver. "We had four horses and several goats. All died that night. Since then, we are like this," she says angrily. Her four sons do not provide much help. The old couple together get a pension of about Rs 400 from the government.

As she talks, she runs a lice-comb through her short-cropped hair, peers at it and with a deft click, kills the louse — except that there is no louse. Only she can see them, nobody else can, explains her grandson Assu. "I have been troubled by these lice since the gas tragedy," she moans. This crawling sensation under the scalp is a typical symptom of a psychiatric condition, explain doctors.

Rahul Sharma, a clinical psychologist, has recently completed a survey of 200 affected households spread over some of the worst affected colonies. Over 73% of the surveyed families have incomes below Rs 1,500 per month. "They have to spend Rs 300-400 on medicines every month. They are thus being forced to remain poor," he says.

Most of the half-baked systems set up to help the victims have become diluted. "The government spent Rs 70 crore on setting up 152 industrial sheds at Govindpura, where gas victims were to set up enterprises. Not one of them is today run by a gas-affected person," says Abdul Jabbar, an activist. An Industrial Training Institute was set up for children from these areas. But its certificates were not recognized. Now, the ITI is open for everybody.

**Times of India/ Delhi/
03/12/09**

High level of contamination found in Bhopal

A student holds a placard during a protest against the delay in justice for Bhopal gas tragedy victims in Bangalore on Wednesday. AFP Groundwater in areas around the Bhopal gas tragedy site contain almost 40 times more pesticides than allowed under the Indian standards, the Centre for Science and Environment has claimed.

The Pollution Monitoring Lab of the NGO tested water and soil samples from in and around the Union Carbide factory, and found high concentrations of pesticides and heavy metals.

All 11 groundwater samples collected from colonies around the UCIL factory were found to be contaminated with chlorinated benzene compounds and organochlorine pesticides, the test results showed.

"The reason this is extremely worrying is because we have found the toxins in the groundwater we have checked from almost 3 km below the factory," said Chandra Bhushan, associate director, in-charge of the CSE laboratory.

The Bhopal gas tragedy occurred on December 3, 1984 when the plant accidentally released Methyl Isocyanate (MIC) gas, killing around 5000 people and permanently incapacitating many others.

All the samples collected from within the factory were found to be highly contaminated. The waste stored within the premises had Carbaryl content of 9,856 parts per million (ppm) and mercury content of 1,065 ppm, Bhushan said.

The concentration of pesticides was 1.1 to 38.6 times higher than the Indian standard, the study claimed.

"The profile of chemicals found within the UCIL factory and in the waste disposal site

of UCIL matches the chemicals found in the groundwater sample in the colonies outside. There is no other source of these chlorinated benzene compounds and pesticides than UCIL," Bhushan said.

CSE Director Sunita Narain said, "The factory site in Bhopal is leading to chronic toxicity — continuous tiny exposure leading to poisoning of our bodies. This is different from acute poisoning and so the claim that the factory is not dangerous because people can touch the waste is misleading."

Deccan Herald/ Bangalore/ 03/12/09

ENDLESS NIGHTMARE

A quarter of a century has passed since death was unleashed by a faulty valve at the Union Carbide plant on a sleeping Bhopal, but traces of the killer toxins can still be found in survivors and their children

Subodh Varma

Twenty-five years have passed since that night of terror and death in Bhopal, which saw a cloud of deadly gases explode out of a faulty tank in a pesticide factory and silently spread into the homes of sleeping people. Although no official count of casualties has ever been done, estimates based on hospital and rehabilitation records show that about 20,000 people died and about 5.7 lakh suffered bodily damage, making it by far the world's worst industrial disaster ever.

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Following the disaster, there was an international outcry for relief for the victims and punishment to those responsible for the gas leakage. The pesticide plant from where the gas leaked belonged to Union Carbide India, a subsidiary of the US-based Union Carbide Company. They were asked to pay compensation and arrange for medical treatment. The matter immediately got embroiled in legal controversies. Thus began a long and painful struggle of the victims for compensation, medical attention and rehabilitation that has spluttered along for a quarter century.

In February 1989, the Supreme Court announced that it was approving a settlement for Bhopal victims under which Union Carbide agreed to pay Rs 713 crore for compensation to victims, while the government agreed to drop all criminal cases against it. However, due to intense public shock and anger at letting off the culprits, the court agreed to reopen the criminal cases in 1991. Two installments of compensation — of up to Rs 25,000 each — have been given till now to the injured, one in 1994 and the next in 2004.

N D Jayaprakash of the Bhopal Gas Peedit Sangharsh Sahyog Samiti (BGPSSS), one of the groups fighting for the rights of gas victims, calls this a massive fraud because the number of gas-affected persons was arbitrarily fixed by the government at 105,000, including about 3,000 dead. In reality, nearly 20,000 people have died, and 5.7 lakh have suffered injuries. The compensation amount — Rs 713 crore, paid by Union Carbide — was meant for about 1 lakh persons but has been distributed among nearly 6 lakh people. Of the Rs 713 crores, Rs 113 crores was for loss of livestock and property.

The balance Rs 600 crore distributed among 5.74 lakh persons works out to about Rs 12,410 per victim on average. In contrast, in the Uphaar tragedy in Delhi, families of those who died got between Rs 15 lakh to Rs 18 lakh each, while injured persons got Rs 1 lakh each. In addition, they got interest at the rate of 9% per annum for the roughly six years that the legal proceedings took.

Stung by this injustice, the victims approached the apex court, which told them to approach the state government. In Bhopal, the Welfare Commissioner rejected their demand. They appealed to the MP high court. On November 30 this year, the HC too dismissed the petition. "We will go back to the Supreme Court," says Jayaprakash.

Even after 25 years, gas victims are suffering serious health problems. On an average, 6,000 gas-affected patients visit hospitals in Bhopal every day, that is, about 2 million visits per year. The government adopted a one-size-fits-all policy for categorisation of injuries — a person with compromised lungs may ultimately develop other diseases, besides being unable to work fully. But such distinctions were not maintained and meagre compensation was doled out. Sadhana Pradhan, who has worked among the gas victims since the disaster in 1984 points out that no line of treatment was ever evolved. "The government has treated the victims on an ad hoc basis," she says. Medical records are yet not centralized as recommended by the monitoring committee set up by the Supreme Court in 2004. As a result, doctors have no idea about the patients' history. "This has led to development of multi-drug resistant (MDR) TB in many cases," says Dr Saxena, who spent 11 years in the government's TB hospital in Bhopal.

Another dimension of the ongoing tragedy of Bhopal is the poisonous chemical waste lying around in the abandoned premises of the pesticide plant. Several committees have inspected it and found 44,000 kgs of tarry residues and 25,000 kgs of alpha naphthol lying in the open since 1984. Various studies have established that the soil, ground water, vegetables and even breast milk have traces of toxic chemicals.

Abdul Jabbar Khan of the Bhopal Gas Peedith Mahila Udyog Sangathan (BGPUS) says that actually there is much more poisonous waste, which the company used to routinely bury in the premises since 1969. "There is no piped water supply. People still use contaminated groundwater daily," he says.

THE EVENT

WHEN Night of 2-3 Dec 1984

What Happened | At 11.30pm, workers at the Union Carbide fertilizer plant in Bhopal reported burning in the eyes and suffocation due to gas leaking from a pressurized tank containing deadly methyl isocyanate (MIC). At 12.30am, the alarm siren was sounded and water spraying started. At 3am, the safety valve collapsed and the tank exploded, releasing a cloud of 40,000kg of lethal gases. A gentle breeze blew this cloud of death over sleeping people in 36 wards of Bhopal

WHY | MIC needs to be kept at below 5°C, under pressure. But the refrigeration system had been shut down since June 1984. The tank and valves were defective. Temperatures up to 350°C are estimated to have been reached in the tank as the highly reactive gas decomposed and created a cocktail of poisonous gases. The final explosion was just waiting to happen

THE RESULT | Death and injury came without warning to a sleeping population. Initial

estimates put casualties at 3,000 dead and over 1 lakh hurt. Symptoms ranged from suffocation, blindness and vomiting to spontaneous abortions, lung, kidney, liver and brain damage. Over the years, more have succumbed — current estimates are 20,000 dead and over 5 lakh injured. Cattle and birds died in surrounding areas. Dead fish floated in lakes. Even trees perished

Times of India/ Delhi/ 03/12/09

25 years on, still waiting for Bhopal gas research

Victims of the Bhopal gas disaster shout slogans during a torch light procession on the eve of 25th anniversary of the disaster.

This January, 25 years after the Bhopal gas tragedy, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) invited research to study the effects of methyl isocyanate (MIC) poisoning. After 11 months, ICMR has received only two proposals. A disappointed Council has now decided to keep the 'call for research proposals' open till it gets some noteworthy submissions.

The biggest failure, according to medical experts, is that the line of treatment given to patients exposed to MIC has remained essentially unchanged since the morning of the disaster, when nothing was known about the poisonous gas.

"Two generations of victims exposed to MIC have been indiscriminately prescribed antibiotics, steroids and psychotropic drugs to 'manage' their ailments instead of finding a cure. No focused research has been conducted in developing an antidote to cyanide poisoning," said Dr DK Satpathy, who retired as director of Medicolegal Institute, Government of MP, this September. "If a patient

has headache, she will be given Saridon, the same for breathlessness and all other symptoms caused by MIC."

Following the disaster, ICMR temporarily set up the Bhopal Gas Disaster Research Centre under Gandhi Medical College to monitor the health effects of MIC exposure. The Centre stopped monitoring mortalities in 1992. In 1994, the Centre was shut down, without publishing the findings of the studies conducted between 1984-94. No research has been conducted since.

"All medical data has indicated serious genetic mutation but no autopsy studies have been conducted. No government body can explain why the prevalence of cancer among female victims is three times the national average. No one can conclusively say what are the outcomes of MIC exposure," said Dr Alok Banerjee, director, Centre for Rehabilitation Studies.

Union Carbide Corporation (UCC), now Dow Chemicals, is yet to reveal the composition of MIC; it calls it a 'trade secret'. After initially recommending sodium thiosulphate as a detoxifying agent, Union Carbide's Dr Bipin Awasthi said he had been 'mistaken' in 1984.

"Sodium thiosulphate was an effective treatment but it was given only to 500 odd patients. Carbide officials were worried about legal repercussion as the success of the treatment would prove that the gases had broken the blood-lung barrier and increase the compensation amount," says Dr Satpathy.

The research proposals from ICMR — focusing on genetic disorders, low birth weight, congenital malformations, growth/developmental disorders and biological markers of MIC exposure — came after directives from the Central government.

"This could have been an opportunity to develop an

antidote to cyanide poisoning but not enough research has been conducted. We cannot force researchers to take up subjects against their interest. Genetic abnormalities cannot be ruled out but we do not have a study that clearly establishes the extent of genetic mutation. More requires to be done in the field of medical data to understand cyanide poisoning better," said Dr V M Katoch, Director General, ICMR.

**Indian Express/ Delhi/
03/12/09**

Bhopal gas survivors still poisoned'

The waste left behind at the Union Carbide India Limited(UCIL) factory that was closed 25 years ago after a fatal gas leak continues to poison people around the plant, says the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE).

"Latest tests show that groundwater in areas even three km from the factory contains almost 40 times more pesticides than Indian standards," CSE Director Sunita Narain said here on Tuesday, a day before the 25th anniversary of the gas leak that killed 3,500 people at once and maimed thousands more.

The pollution monitoring lab of the CSE has tested water and soil samples from in and around the closed factory and found high concentrations of pesticides and heavy metals inside the factory as well as in the groundwater outside.

"One water and eight soil samples were collected from various places inside the factory in October this year and 11 more water samples came from locations outside — from colonies next to the factory's boundary to those 3.5 km away and toxins were found in the groundwater checked from almost 3 km from the factory," CSE Associate Director Chandra Bhushan said.

"All 11 groundwater samples collected from colonies around the factory

were found to be contaminated with chlorinated benzene and organochlorine pesticides. Carbamates were found in four samples. The concentration of pesticides was 1.1 to 38.6 times higher than the Indian standard," he said. "Also, the profile of chemicals found within the factory and in its waste disposal site matched the chemicals found in the groundwater sample in the colonies outside. There is no other source of these chlorinated benzene compounds and pesticides," Narain said. The entire site is highly contaminated, she added.

The problem is that chemicals present in the soil of the factory are leaching into the groundwater and leading to slow poisoning of residents. "The entire site of the factory needs to be carefully checked and cleaned up," Narain said.

**Deccan Herald/ Bangalore/
03/12/09**

Toxic gas effects may be seen in future generations

The deadly methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas released by the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal this day 25 years ago affected even the unborn, researchers say.

The toxic gas altered the immune system of those who were still in their mothers' wombs when the disaster struck, according to a recent study by researchers at the Bhopal Memorial Hospital and Research Centre (BMHRC) in Bhopal.

"Our study shows, for the first time, that in-utero MIC exposure during the Bhopal gas tragedy has caused a persistent immune system hyper-responsiveness in affected individuals," Pradyumna Kumar Mishra said. The findings have been published in the journal Occupational and Environmental Medicine.

Whether this "immune hyper-responsiveness" has any clinical implications will be clear only after follow-up of the exposed individuals, the BMHRC researcher said.

The release of 30-40 tonnes of MIC spreading over approximately 75 sq km killed at least 3,500 and injured thousands more. There are more than 500,000 registered survivors of the tragedy, Mishra said.

The survivors continue to experience higher incidence of health problems, including respiratory, neurological, psychiatric and ophthalmic symptoms, Mishra said.

To understand the long-term implications of MIC exposure, doctors at BMHRC have conducted chromosomal studies in cultured mammalian cells using MIC as an experimental agent. "The results of the study have provided evidence to hitherto unknown molecular mechanisms of immunotoxic consequences of MIC exposure at a genomic level," he said.

According to Mishra, MIC had played havoc with the reproductive health of women and their girl children.

Menstrual abnormalities, vaginal discharge and premature menopause have emerged as common problems. "Besides affecting the reproductive health of the women, these conditions are also leading to social problems in conservative communities," he said.

Mishra said that investigations conducted so far at BMHRC and other places have raised a new question: for how long the gas victims would continue to suffer from multi-system disorders and whether future generations would also be affected by these abnormalities.

"In-depth molecular studies of ocular, respiratory, reproductive, immunological, genetic and psychological health must be continued if we wish to understand the extent

and severity of long-term effects associated with the disaster," Mishra said.

He pointed out that the importance of such experimental studies cannot be understated "since any alterations at genomic level can have long-term health consequences that may range from accelerated ageing, carcinogenesis, immuno-compromised states and, more importantly, vertical transmission of genetic aberrations."

RS mourns Bhopal gas tragedy victims

New Delhi: The Rajya Sabha Wednesday mourned the victims of the Bhopal gas disaster of 1984, expressing the members' 'heartfelt sympathies' for the 'human tragedy of unparalleled magnitude'. As soon as the upper house assembled at 11 a.m., House Chairman and Vice President Hamid Ansari read out a statement, saying that the 'scars of the tragedy still haunt us'. 'It was a human tragedy of unparalleled magnitude and shocked the world. It is incumbent on us to do the utmost for the victims,' Ansari said. 'Compensation claims should be settled on a time-bound manner,' he added. 'I am sure the house will join me in conveying our heartfelt sympathies to those who suffered from this gruesome incident,' Ansari said. The tragedy occurred on the night of Dec 2: -3, 1984 when tonnes of Methyl Iso Cyanate (MIC) spewed out of the Union Carbide Corp's pesticide plant in Bhopal, killing more than 3,500 people instantly.

Central Chronicle/ Bhopal/ 03/12/09

Gas tragedy victims lash out at Centre

Under the series of events going on at present to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, more than a thousand victims marched towards the pesticide plant

while holding the torches (mashals) in their hands here on Wednesday. The agitators demanded justice and the right to lead respected lives.

The agitators lashed at the Central Government for its apparent failure to execute the fresh non-bailable arrest warrant issued against former Union Carbide chairman Warren Anderson in July.

The angry agitators did not spare the State Government and these victims of gas tragedy criticised the State Government that allegedly left Dow Chemicals Company to go scot free despite its liabilities of environment and health damage in the city.

The agitators were of the view that the recent survey of contamination by Centre for Science and Environment would help put forward the case strongly in the Federal Court of New York. Leaders of the three organisations:

Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmchari Sangh, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha and Bhopal Group for Information and Action, that organised the march stated that the false claims of Union Minister Jairam Ramesh, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and State Minister for Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Babulal Gaur have been exposed after the release of recent surveys of ground water and soil contamination.

The agitators also demanded immediate setting up of the Empowered Commission on Bhopal for long-term medical care and economic and social rehabilitation as well as supply of safe water to people drinking contaminated ground water.

They alleged that 15 months have passed since the Prime Minister gave a written promise regarding setting up the Commission but the same is yet to be formed.

Pioneer/ Delhi/ 03/12/09

Jamuna Devi prays for gas victims

Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly Jamuna Devi has expressed grief and prayed for the 2,000 people, who died in the world largest industrial disaster in Bhopal.

She said that even after 25 years of the disaster, the UCIL has not been punished and people are still suffering from the poisonous gas in the capital. She also said that the trauma and medical facilities for the gas victims are also not sufficient and the victims are bound to buy medicines from the market. He appealed Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Minister Babulal Gaur to provide better facilities to the victims.

Jamuna Devi expressed grief on the sudden demise of State Congress vice-president Sobaran Jatav and prayed for his family. She said that the Congress has lost a simple and gentle leader. State BJP president and the Lok Sabha MP Narendra Singh Tomar also expressed grief on the sudden death of Jatav.

Pioneer/ Bhopal/ 03/12/09

25 years after Bhopal

Effects of toxic gas may last for generations

The deadly methyl isocyanate gas released by the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal this day 25 years ago affected even the unborn, researchers say. The toxic gas altered the immune system of those who were still in their mothers' wombs when the disaster struck, according to a recent study by researchers at the Bhopal Memorial Hospital and Research Centre (BMHRC) in Bhopal.

"Our study shows, for the first time, that in-utero MIC exposure during the Bhopal gas tragedy has caused a persistent immune system hyper-responsiveness in

affected individuals," Pradyumna Kumar Mishra said. The findings have been published in the journal Occupational and Environmental Medicine.

Whether this "immune hyper-responsiveness" has any clinical implications will be clear only after follow-up of the exposed individuals, the BMHRC researcher said.

The release of 30-40 tonnes of gas spreading over approximately 75 sq km killed at least 3,500 and injured thousands more. There are more than 5,00,000 registered survivors of the tragedy, Mishra said.

The survivors continue to experience higher incidence of health problems, including respiratory, neurological, psychiatric and ophthalmic symptoms, Mishra said. — IANS

Tribune/ Delhi/ 03/12/09

Centre, MP failed to support case of gas victims'

Charging the Centre and State Government with not doing enough for the Bhopal gas victims in getting justice, US-based attorney Himanshu Rajan Sharma, representing the victims in New York against the Union Carbide, said that the case could have been much in favour of the victims, had the Centre and State Government supported the cause.

He told mediapersons on Wednesday that Warren Anderson is one of the prime accused in the case, but the American court has not summoned him so far. The Union Carbide India Limited (UICL) officials had been appearing in the hearings, but now they have claimed that the case does not come under the jurisdiction of the American law.

He said that the court of appeal in the United States had reinstated their claims in 2008 and that Union Carbide has been directed to produce

additional documents concerning its involvement in the Bhopal plant.

"Union Carbide transferred polluting technology to the Bhopal plant," Sharma said, adding that the documents show the Bhopal plant's technology was based on a UCC-USA facility at Institute, West Virginia that discharged wastes into a running body of water. "In Bhopal, the technology was not located next to any running waterbody and all of these wastes were stored on the campus of the plant and in the solar evaporation ponds," Sharma pointed out. Since they could not be dispersed in this manner in Bhopal, the wastes were stored in 11 burial pits on the plant campus, where an additional 346 metric tons of above-ground toxic wastes are still lying around the premises.

Sharma said that Union Carbide also approved the creation of a massive toxic landfill containing thousands of metric tons of toxic waste stored in those solar evaporation ponds located 400 meters north of the Bhopal plant where they could reach the water table beneath the ground. Nearly 30,000 people living in residential communities near the plant continue to be exposed to toxic chemicals in their drinking water.

"Irresponsible statements by Indian politicians, at the State and Central levels, as well as misguided efforts to promote 'disaster tourism' at Bhopal only assist Union Carbide in persuading the American courts that no pollution problem exists and help it to escape liability." As the owner of the land on which the Bhopal plant is located, Sharma noted, the Government of India has a responsibility to hold the polluter liable and follow up on its own request in 2004 to the American courts to order Union Carbide to clean up. In 2004, the US court invited the Indian Government to intervene in the current litigation.

According to Sharma, the Union Carbide has argued that the American law and American courts are powerless to provide remedy for this problem because it was caused in India and affects Indians while, at the same time, refusing to submit to Indian law and courts contradicting its own earlier claim that cases involving Bhopal should be heard in India. "Union Carbide is suggesting that neither the Indian law nor American law applies on them, therefore, they are effectively above the law."

Pioneer/ Bhopal/ 03/12/09

Bhopal water highly toxic

NEW DELHI:Groundwater in areas around the Bhopal gas tragedy site contain almost 40 times more pesticides than allowed under the Indian standards, the Centre for Science and Environment has claimed.

The Pollution Monitoring Lab of the NGO tested water and soil samples from in and around the Union Carbide factory, and found high concentrations of pesticides and heavy metals.

All 11 groundwater samples collected from colonies around the UCIL factory were found to be contaminated with chlorinated benzene compounds and organochlorine pesticides, the test results showed.

"The reason this is extremely worrying is because we have found the toxins in the groundwater we have checked from almost 3 km below the factory," said Chandra Bhushan, associate director, in-charge of the CSE laboratory.

New Indian Express/ Chennai/ 03/12/09

Gas disaster - no end to sufferings, governments indifferent

We are observing the silver jubilee of world's worst industrial disaster so far, Bhopal gas tragedy, today. The environment would have been enthusiastic for celebrating any other silver jubilee but the case is different. We do remember with shiver death of thousands on that fateful day, the travails we had to undergo during these last 25 years, the pittance of compensation received and the problems faced to get even this in installments. Lakh of people are still suffering from after effects of gas disaster and the authorities are least bothered. Responsible persons for the disaster will never be punished, people will keep suffering, governments have better things to do, and the ritual of observing anniversary of the disaster will go on...

A 'Sarva Dharma Sabha (all religion meeting)' has been organised to pay tributes to the victims of 1984 Bhopal Gas tragedy on the occasion of its 25th anniversary on Thursday. The meeting has been organised at Central Library in Barkatullah Bhavan at 1030 hrs. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will take part in the 'Sarva Dharma Sabha'. Various religious texts would be read out during the meeting. The government has expected officials to take part in the meeting.

The General Administration Department has issued directions to the Commissioner (Bhopal division), the district Collector, department heads, principal secretaries and secretaries in this regard.

Doctor dying from exposure to MIC

The doctor who conducted autopsies of Bhopal gas disaster victims killed when

lethal gases leaked from the Union Carbide pesticide plant in 1984 is now dying from exposure to the same pesticides.

Dr S Sriramachari of a Government Pathology Laboratory, discovered the scale of the tragedy when he carried out post mortem examinations on the victims and concluded that they had been killed by hydrogen cyanide poisoning.

He is now being treated for a fatal lung condition his doctors say was caused by his regular exposure to a cocktail of 21 lethal chemical compounds in the victims he examined 25 years ago.

His own conclusion that the victims were killed by hydrogen cyanide was contested, because, according to colleagues, such an admission would have led to more multi-million dollar lawsuits.

Dr Sriramachari said that the victims had shown key signs of cyanide poisoning - pink blood, cherry coloured organs - while his daughter, Dr S Sandhyamani, said the evidence had been suppressed.

Today his breathing is weak, his voice is barely audible, and he continues to read the case notes of those victims whose symptoms now ail him.

Campaigners say Sriramachari is one of thousands of people still suffering the effects of environmental poisoning by the chemical leak. An estimated 25,000 have died since the accident from gas poisoning and water contamination.

A report by the Centre for Science and Environment released earlier this week to mark the 25th anniversary of the tragedy found groundwater two miles from the plant contains 40 times more pesticides than Indian safety laws permit.

Dr Sriramachari said he has no regrets for his work on the Bhopal victims - in which he and his colleagues had only

thin surgical masks to protect them from gases in the corpses. "I just did my duty," he said.

JSM vows to oust MNCs, provide justice to victims

Raising voice against multinational companies (MNCs), Jan Sangharsh Morcha (JSM), an amalgamation of several voluntary organisations to mark the 25th year of Bhopal gas tragedy, today vowed to launch agitation to provide justice to the victims.

Briefing media after a seminar on 'Bhopal Gas Tragedy' at Shahjani Park here, JSM activist Sunil Kumar alleged that the government had given a 'free hand' to the MNCs to set up industries in Inida, which would lead to another gas tragedy. He said the Bhopal disaster was not an isolated incident as several chemical companies working in the country were lacking safety measures.

"Several MNCs are working in India which are potentially accident-prone and the government is not ready to take lesson for Bhopal tragedy," Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan (BGPMUS) Convenor Abdul Jabbar said. He held some Union ministers including Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh responsible for airing irresponsible statements on Bhopal tragedy and alleged that the Dow Chemicals played a role in this regard.

Sunita Narain, Director of the New Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) said if proper step could not be taken to stop recurrence of Bhopal tragedy, it would be happening in our daily life. Talking about the Copenhagen Summit on climate change, she said a new strategy should be evolved for the developing countries like India.

Ms Narain, who did a research on water and soil on Bhopal

gas tragedy and found presence of toxic chemicals in water and soil, said she did not make any compromise and there was no lapse in the report.

Scientist and Academician Anil Sadgopal said wrong information was given about Bhopal tragedy and also held the judiciary for giving 'incorrect' verdict on the tragedy.

Azadi Bachao Andolan President Banwari Lal Sharma compared the Bhopal tragedy with Jallianwalabagh incident and said MNCs were the symbol of new colonialisation. He urged the people to boycott all MNCs products.

Earlier, during the convention, which was attended by social activists from all over the country, the speakers announced to launch a long-term agitational programme against the 'wrong development policy' of the government that was formulated after the Bhopal gas tragedy and also vowed to oust the MNCs from the country.

Amidst spotlight pain lingers

"This seems some kind of celebration rather than the anniversary of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy," says Rashid (45) while sporting a sarcastic yet painful smile as he views hordes of Indian and foreign media persons besides representatives of voluntary organisations.

Rashid a victim of the deleterious effects of inhaling methyl isocyanate on the intervening night of December 2-3, 1984 when the world's worst industrial disaster catapulted this city into undying infamy - is just one among numerous sufferers who are sick and tired of the annual remembrances.

The scenario is radically different this year round on account of it being the tragedy's 25th anniversary. A multitude of foreigners made a

beeline here from various parts of the globe even as the organisations working among victims became hyperactive. Seminars are the order of the day.

Turning the pages of the past yet again unveils the horrors of that nightmare when the poisonous gas leaked out of the now-closed Union Carbide factory and descended shroud-like on hapless thousands.

Rashid, a scrap-dealer, was a young man of 20 at that time and lived with his family in Chhola area adjoining the unit. "At around midnight that night, I awakened amid chaos and it immediately seemed as if somebody was burning red chili nearby. Abba and Ammi were having a coughing bout. My mother looked at me and only managed to say, 'Bhaag ja yahan se' (Run away from here)," he recalls.

Rashid ran like he must have never run before and returned after two whole days only to find that his parents and brother were no more. Of his two younger sisters, one died two years after the tragedy. Rashid's lungs are severely affected and he valiantly attempted to start life anew but his treatment is yet to end.

For Rashid and hundreds like him still to be found in settlements around the plant interviews by print and television media have no meaning. The only subject that lights up their eyes is whether more compensation will come their way.

Jaiprakash Nagar-resident Bhaiyyalal (52) ails from asthma. He has scant interest in why the sufferers are being denied justice and why the criminal case relating to the tragedy - that claimed thousands of lives and affected lakhs - is still being argued only in the Chief Judicial Magistrate's court.

"The compensation must be higher as my body is nothing more than a corpse and

nobody supports me," he laments.

Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan Convenor Abdul Jabbar points out that ex gratia and compensation were doled out within a year of the September 11 attacks in the United States. No action was taken on the arrest warrant on Carbide's then chairman Warren Anderson.

CPI to burn Anderson in effigy

The Communist Party of India (CPI) will burn former Union Carbide Chairman Warren Anderson in effigy at Berasia road here tomorrow on the occasion of 25th anniversary of the 1984 Bhopal Gas tragedy to oppose imperialistic and anti-public economic policies.

In a release issued here, the party said homage would be paid to the victims of the disaster. An appeal has been made to keep business close on the occasion.

The party appealed for people to take part in large numbers to warn imperialistic multinational companies and to unite with communist political consciousness against capitalism.

Jamuna Devi pays homage to gas victims

Leader of Opposition in Madhya Pradesh Assembly Ms Jamuna Devi is angry over the gas victims not getting justice even after 25 years. She said that so far the Union Carbide directors responsible for this worst industrial disaster was not punished even though thousands of people are still suffering from its after effects. She paid rich tributes to the gas victims who died in the disaster.

Ms Jamuna Devi expressed displeasure over the fact that the gas victims are not getting proper treatment at the hospitals exclusively set up for them. "The gas- affected

patients are asked to buy medicines from the market while the medicines purchased at the hospitals are throwing out after expiry date', she said. The Congress leader appealed the Gas Relief Minister Babulal Gaur to arrange better treatment and rehabilitation facilities to the victims.

Gas peedit morcha to observe 'black day'

The Gas Peedit Nirashrit Pension Bhogi Sangharsh Morcha has decided to observe 25th anniversary of Bhopal Gas Tragedy as 'Black Day'. The Morcha will take out a homage rally from Neelam Park and going through different localities will reach Union Carbide. Morcha president Balkrishna Namdev said that an effigy of Warren Anderson would be burnt in front of main gate of Union Carbide.

Namdev said that even after 25 years of the gas tragedy lakh of citizens are suffering from dreaded diseases like cancer, TB, skin diseases, breathing trouble, stomach ailments, eye troubles, mental diseases, no hungry, shortage of mental and physical growth among children etc. On top of the above more than 50 thousand citizens living around the Union Carbide factory are forced to drink water mixed with deadly chemicals.

He said that during the last 25 years the Central and State Governments spent over Rs 400 crore for economic, environmental, social, medical treatment of gas victims. But this was not sufficient. The gas affected destitute widows are still struggling for their daily bread. They are not getting any pension from the gas relief department. Earlier they had BPL ration cards but the government cancelled them from August 2007.

Namdev said that the state government could not provide permanent employment even to 100 gas victims.

Prayer meeting at Seva Sadan Madhya Pradesh Isai Mahasangh organised a prayer meeting at Seva Sadan to pay homage to the deceased persons in the Bhopal Gas Tragedy. At the meeting Fr Anand Mutungal said that thousands of people of the city died in the gas tragedy but their memory is still fresh in our mind. Let god give peace to all departed souls. Menis Mathews said that Bhopal Gas Tragedy is the worst in the history of the world and pay to god that such tragedy should not happen in future. Richard De Silva said that we pray that such industrial disaster should not happen again in future. Paying homage Mrs Sheila Santiago said that the injury the city received 25 years ago is still fresh. John Roy Thatta said that such disaster should not happen in the world again. John Paul, John Antony, Ms Rajni Rawate, Rano Mary, Stephen Khalko, Tony Antony, Eroll Williams and several other members of the Mahasangh attended the meeting.

Cycle rally today

Zee High Bhopal will be organising a cycle rally to pay tribute to Bhopal gas tragedy victims on December 3 from Smt Ramadevi Smriti Sansthan, Chna Bhatti to Boat Club, Upper Lake. The rally will start at 8.30 AM.

Communists express solidarity
At the International Communist Conference held at Delhi recently expressed solidarity on Bhopal Gas victims on the occasion of 25th anniversary of gas tragedy. Bhopal Gas Peedit Sangharsh Samiti Organiser Sadhana Karnik had requested CPM General Secretary Prakash Karant and polit bureau member Sitaram Yachuri to pass such a resolution at the conference.

Meeting at Union Carbide gate

Ms Sadhna Karnik said that a meeting would be organised in front of Union Carbide gate at 12 noon. CITU national secretary Dr MK Pandhe would address the meeting.

Seminar held

The two-day seminar organised by Gas Peedit Sangharsh Sahyug Samiti has concluded here on Wednesday. The seminar discussed ways and means to stop environmental effects, industrial pollution and danger. Senior scientists, trade union representatives and social workers attended. CITU national secretary Ardhendu Dakshi, environmentalist D Raghunandan, scientists T Jayaraman, trade union leader Badal Saroj and representatives from industries expressed their views. They came to the conclusion that even after 25 years of Bhopal gas tragedy the governments and security agencies did not learn any lesson. The seminar was held at NITTR auditorium.

CITU national seminar

Centre of Indian Trade Union (CITU), Bhopal Gas Peedit Sangharsh Sahyog Samiti and AIPSN jointly organised a two-day seminar at Sanskriti Bhavan which was concluded today. The subject was Bhopal Gas Tragedy and Our Responsibility. Gas Peedit Organisation's Sadhna Karnik, Dr Amit Sengupta (AIPSN), and AT Padmanabhan of CITU presided. Addressing the seminar CITU national secretary and former MP Deepankar Mukherjee said that the persons responsible for increasing industrial disasters are not punished these days. This show that the Central and State Governments are not with the people.

BU teachers, students visit carbide site
Teachers, students, research scholars of Department of

Zoology & Applied Aquaculture, and Department of Environment, Barkatullah University visited Union Carbide plant site. At the site HOD, Department of Zoology, Applied Aquaculture and Environment explained the technical and scientific aspects of the incidence. Professor Arun Raghuvanshi of department of bioscience, BU, explained the social, political and environmental aspects of the disaster and incidence to the students. Dr Vipin Vas of Limnology Department inspired students to take care of social responsibility aspects of environment. Dr Shriparna Saxena of Limnology department informed students about technical aspects of the tragedy.

**Central Chronicle/ Bhopal/
03/12/09**

25 years on, Bhopal gas victims still suffering

Bhopal: The world's worst industrial disaster the Bhopal gas tragedy which claimed scores of lives will complete 25 years tomorrow even as the woes of gas victims still continue.

The incident took place when the lethal Methyl Iso Cyanate (MIC) Gas leaked from the Union Carbide factory that was producing pesticides here.

The case is still being fought at the chief judicial magistrate level and after that it may be challenged again in the Madhya Pradesh high court.

Meanwhile, various NGOs, fighting for the cause of the Bhopal gas tragedy victims, here today charged the Centre and the Madhya Pradesh government with being responsible for not extraditing former Union Carbide chairman, Warren Anderson.

They also charged that inadequate compensation to the gas affected persons were paid and non-disposal of toxic

waste from the plant site even after 25 years continues. A number of events including photo exhibition related to the Bhopal gas tragedy, agitations, sit-in, poetry night, press briefings and felicitations programmes are being organised since last couple of days. Apart from these, an all-party religious prayer meeting in which Madhya Pradesh chief minister is also expected to take part, that claimed 15,274 lives and affected 5,74,000 persons after leakage of MIC gas from Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) plant here on the intervening night of December 2-3, 1984.

Various NGOs including Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan (BGP MUS) and Bhopal Group for Information and Action (BGIA) came under an umbrella and alleged that huge toxic waste was still lying in the Union Carbide factory premises, spread over an area of 67 acres.

They also alleged that despite issuing several arrest warrants against the former Union Carbide chairman Warren Anderson by local courts for gas tragedy charging him with culpable homicide not amounting to murder, the CBI has not extradited him for trial in India.

The NGO leaders said that Anderson may be proclaimed offender in India but he is leading a luxurious life in a palatial home in Bridgeton in Long Islands near New York.

Anderson, who never faced any court for Bhopal gas tragedy, had been released on bail on December 7, 1984 soon after his arrival in the city after the incident but since then he never ventured on Indian soil, they said.

"It is surprising that no one was punished for the Bhopal gas tragedy even after 25 years of the world's worst industrial disaster," the NGOs said. "We have launched a campaign along with Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationary Karmchari

Sangh (BGPMSKS) and Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangarsh Morcha (BGPMP SM) from November 28 to disprove the Madhya Pradesh government's claim that there was no toxic and hazardous waste there," BGIA Convener, Satinath Sarangi said.

He alleged that Union environment and forests minister Jairam Ramesh and Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation minister Babulal Gaur were favouring Dow Chemicals which has taken over Union Carbide by saying that waste lying in the factory premises was not harmful.

The three NGOs would intensify protests against Dow Chemicals from tomorrow to press for the removal of waste from the factory and seek financial and medical help to the gas tragedy victims who are still suffering, Sarangi said.

Meanwhile, BGP MUS convener, Abdul Jabbar alleged that the Bhopal gas tragedy victims have not been paid adequate compensation till now and asked the Centre to release fund immediately for this purpose.

He said that according to an agreement of February 15, 1989 facilitated by the supreme court, Union Carbide Corporation, US provided a compensation of \$470 million (Rs715 crore) meant for 1,02,000 affected people and 3,000 persons who lost their lives in the toxic gas emission.

However, later the number of victims was increased more than five times -- affected people 5,74,000 and deceased persons 15,274 -- and Rs715 crore was distributed to a total of 5,79,274 persons instead of 1,05,000 victims as compensation, Jabbar said. Jabbar said a meagre flat amount of Rs25,000 each as compensation was given to the affected people while for death Rs1 lakh was provided between 1992 to 2004.

The NGOs also opposed government's proposed plan to build a Rs116 crore memorial for the gas victims and urged the Centre and the Madhya Pradesh government instead of wasting funds in constructing it, this money should be used in other welfare activities for gas victims including health, rehabilitation and education.

DNA/ Mumbai/ 03/12/09

Bhopal gas tragedy victims' woes continue

French writer and activist Dominique Lapierre, gestures during a press conference about the Bhopal gas tragedy, in Bhopal on Tuesday. The royalties from Lapierre's book 'It was Five Past Midnight in Bhopal will go to the Sambhavna clinic in Bhopal which provides free medical treatment to the victims of the 1984 Union Carbide gas disaster. Photo: AP.

AP French writer and activist Dominique Lapierre, gestures during a press conference about the Bhopal gas tragedy, in Bhopal on Tuesday. The royalties from Lapierre's book 'It was Five Past Midnight in Bhopal will go to the Sambhavna clinic in Bhopal which provides free medical treatment to the victims of the 1984 Union Carbide gas disaster.

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They also charged that inadequate compensation to the gas affected persons were paid and non-disposal of toxic waste from the plant site even after 25 years continues.

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Hindu/ Delhi/ 03/12/09

Bhopal gas tragedy: PM promises to address all issues

Paying condolences to the victims of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Wednesday affirmed the government's commitment to addressing all issues connected to the tragedy, including safe drinking water and expeditious clean-up of the site.

In a statement here on the 25th anniversary of the leakage at the Union Carbide pesticide plant, Mr. Singh said the government owes it to citizens to put in place "procedures and precautions" to ensure that such a tragedy never occurs again.

"Twenty five years ago, the country woke up to a terrible tragedy in Bhopal... I share the grief of those affected by this horrible incident," he said about the mishap in which 5,000 people were killed and many others incapacitated permanently.

"The enormity of that tragedy of neglect still gnaws at our collective conscience," he said.

Noting that the families which suffered and lost their dear ones can never really be fully compensated, he said, however, the government has implemented several measures to provide relief to them, including improvement in their living conditions and socio-economic and medical rehabilitation.

"Those affected by the catastrophe deserve our continuing support and sympathy," Mr. Singh said.

"I reaffirm our Government's commitment to resolving issues of safe drinking water, expeditious cleaning-up of the site, continuation of medical research, and any other outstanding issues connected with the Bhopal Gas Tragedy," he said.

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*Express India/ Delhi/
03/12/09*

REMEMBERING A CITY COVERED IN A CLOUD OF DEATH

In Bhopal, Uddalak Mukherjee discovers that the State's attempt to influence the people's memory of the gas tragedy has failed, but only for now

Twenty-five years ago, on the night of December 2-3, nearly 41 tonnes of methyl isocyanate were released into the cold night air in Bhopal. The highly toxic chemical had been stored in an underground tank inside the premises of Union Carbide India Limited — a pesticide plant that was a subsidiary of the American multinational organization, Union Carbide Corporation. On that night, the factory had been closed for some urgent repair work. A few days after the accident, it was learnt that faulty maintenance had led to water seeping into the underground tank with its deadly content. The resultant, immensely powerful,

exothermic reaction released noxious fumes on a sleeping city. Thirty six of Bhopal's 56 wards were badly affected. The immediate official death toll was put at 2,500, and the number of injured at 600,000. Subsequently, the government acknowledged that nearly 8,000 people had died in the first three days after the disaster. Another 15,000 people have died since, as a result of the fatal after-effects. The Central government has admitted, ipso facto, that the total number of people affected by India's worst industrial disaster is over 574,367.

Recently, the Madhya Pradesh government decided to open the Union Carbide factory to the public for seven days to commemorate 25 years of the incident. The opening of the doors of the doomed site was set to be a symbolic act by which the government hoped to erase the people's memories of a terrible night, and to dispel doubts that the factory was still a repository of toxic waste.

The act of remembering a traumatic event can be a complicated process. Even in a liberal democracy such as ours, sinister attempts are made by the State to influence how people choose to remember events such as the Bhopal gas tragedy. In the course of shaping public memory, the people are made to abandon truths that should never be forgotten. I visited Bhopal in the last week of November to see how a Welfare State goes about its task of tweaking public memory. Some of the people I met in Bhopal are members of the present government, and have been the architects of an intelligent and devious programme meant to represent Bhopal's horror selectively. I also met others — ordinary men and women — who are resisting the State's insidious attempts. This is their story. It is also the story of a city, and perhaps, in the larger context, of a democracy whose future depends on which

version of the truth is allowed to prevail in collective memory.

Gaur stated that the government was only trying to assuage the people's feelings. What he didn't say was that this move by the political class was being seen as another endeavour to bury the memories of the State's own failings in relation to the disaster. But burying the truth was proving to be a difficult task, even for an astute politician like Gaur. This is because, in a way, that night in Bhopal has never really ended.

Bhopal's survivors made 2,000,000 visits to medical centres for treatment in 2008 alone, a fact that indicates that people continue to suffer from debilitating health conditions. In February 1989, the Indian government had entered into a settlement in which the Union Carbide Corporation agreed to disburse a sum of Rs 600 crore among 105,000 people at an average of Rs 57,143 per victim at the prevailing value of the rupee. Subsequently, the government found that the number of victims was over 574,367. The paltry compensation offered by the American company could never be enough to sustain the long-term medical costs of the survivors. Moreover, litigations continue to be filed over the non-receipt of compensation.

Gaur pinned the state government's lapses on an inherent weakness in India's federal polity. The Centre, said Gaur, seldom acts on "local" issues such as this one. This lack of political will to engage with the demands and rights of Bhopal's survivors is endemic to India's politicians. Gaur admitted that none of the BJP's central leaders, including L.K. Advani, has shown much interest in this matter. The Congress has proved to be as indifferent as its rival. In 2007, Kamal Nath, a Union minister in the ruling alliance, is said to have written a letter to the prime minister demanding that the cases against Dow

Chemicals be dropped. The BJP is in power in Madhya Pradesh, and Gaur, expectedly, promised that he would continue to fight for the victims. Before I left, he told me two more things. He has not forgotten that December night, and that he, too, is its victim.

There are others who remember that fateful night, but for reasons that are different from Gaur's. Qamar Saeed Khan worked as a production supervisor in the MIC unit at the Union Carbide factory. That night, 25 years ago, Khan remembers hearing the sound of sirens first. He had rushed out of his house and seen a white cloud descending slowly over Bhopal, even as people coughed, vomited, and died on the streets. After the accident, the factory was shut down and Khan lost his job. The management denied him his employee benefits. Khan is also critical of the government for failing to establish a transparent mechanism to dole out compensation. He said that he knows of people who had received compensation even though they lived outside Bhopal. Khan's daughter, who was born after the disaster, was detected with a kidney ailment. The former executive now runs a poultry farm to help his family survive.

Not surprisingly, Khan told me things that Gaur could not have, even if he had wanted to. For instance, this is what Khan had to say about the allegations that the factory is contaminated — in the early 1990s, in compliance with the court's orders, a decontamination operation was started inside the factory. Khan, an expert in this field, was involved in the process, and by his estimate, nearly 120 tonnes of contaminated soil had been removed before the operation was stalled. The deeper recesses of the soil in the factory are certainly contaminated, said Khan, and there is a possibility that tonnes of hazardous waste have been

left behind in drums inside the premises. I showed him a copy of the DRDO report, and also reminded him how the Union environment and forests minister, Jairam Ramesh, on a visit to the factory, had held a clump of soil, and declared that he was alive. Khan smiled tiredly, and wondered whether Ramesh knew that the residents of Arif Nagar near the factory still complain of a foul smell in the water. Or that livestock have reportedly died after falling into a well inside the factory. Khan's assumptions are consistent with the findings of the Centre for Science and Environment, which has detected unacceptable levels of toxic residues in a three kilometre stretch around the factory. The concentration of the residues, according to the CSE, was 1.1 to 38.6 times higher than the permissible limits.

Some people in Bhopal are also working hard to remind the world what had transpired after the disaster. Abdul Jabbar Khan, the convener of the Bhopal Gas Peedith Mahila Udyog Sangathan, is one such person. For Jabbar, the story that unfolded after the calamity is one of deliberate, institutional failure. For proof, he listed a few of the lapses at every level of State care: health, law and the environment. For instance, despite the apex court's instructions, the state government has not maintained the medical records of the victims, and the medical centres that were established to provide care to the survivors lack the desired infrastructure. In January 2005, a legal notice was issued against Dow Chemicals to appear on behalf of the Union Carbide Corporation in the criminal cases. However, the Madhya Pradesh High Court disposed of the case in five weeks, after ruling in favour of the accused. In 2006, a technical sub-committee of the task force for the removal of toxic waste lying inside the factory had

recommended that the waste be transported to the US for treatment. But the state pollution control board is yet to act upon the recommendations of the sub-committee.

It is not enough to remember what has and has not taken place in Bhopal over two-and-a-half decades. There are important lessons that need to be kept in mind from what Bhopal experienced. The gas disaster is an example of the State colluding with a corporate body to exploit its own people. There are many examples of this lethal union between the State and big business in liberalized India: the sale of the Niyamgiri hill, rich in bauxite, to the mining firm, Vedanta, the agreements that have allegedly been signed to extract the minerals from huge swathes in central Indian states, and so on. But Bhopal is unique as it had set a precedent in an urban setting long before the opening of India's markets.

Another message from Bhopal is that in our democracy, the State, at times, acquires a totalitarian edge. The State is invested with supreme powers, and the absence of strong checks and measures means that it may succeed in repressing people, as well as pivotal institutions such as the judiciary, that are supposed to safeguard public interest. Finally, Bhopal also reminds us that the resources the State uses in pursuit of a particular agenda may not be tangible entities, such as the bureaucracy, media or police. It often utilizes intangible resources — public memory, for instance — to succeed in its dishonourable objectives.

After meeting Jabbar, I visited the Union Carbide factory but I was denied entry (I wondered why, considering that the government claims it to be completely safe). From the rusty gate outside, the factory resembled a ghost town. Its yellow walls were covered with slogans protesting against 25 years of injustice, the paint was

peeling off its iron gates, and a tower, partially covered by foliage, loomed in the distance. I watched the factory standing among activists who were painting slogans on another wall to mark the occasion. Some local residents had gathered and they, in turn, watched us. Their faces were inscrutable, but I thought I saw in them a sense of resignation.

After my return, I read that the government of Madhya Pradesh had decided against opening the factory. Babulal Gaur had fished out another of his improbable excuses. Municipal elections were scheduled to take place soon, and the electoral code of conduct, apparently, prohibited the government from making "major policy announcements". Perhaps Gaur and the other elected representatives had realized, a little late in the day, that even if they were to open the factory doors, those who had survived that long night are unlikely to forgive or forget.

Telegraph/ Calcutta/ 03/12/09

Bhopal tragedy scientist stricken - Researcher who helped demystify poison gas battles lung disease

G.S. MUDUR

New Delhi, Dec. 2: From the bed of an intensive care unit, Samavedam Sriramachari today recalled his two decades of research that helped demystify the poison gas which caused the worst chemical disaster in human history.

The Indian pathologist, who helped the world fathom how the methyl isocyanate gas that leaked from the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal 25 years ago killed and harmed thousands of people, is now himself fighting a lung disease probably linked to the tragedy.

Sriramachari, 84, who was director of the Institute of Pathology, a government

research centre in New Delhi at the time of the Bhopal gas disaster on the night of December 2-3, 1984, entered the city within a week after the leak.

He spent several days there performing autopsies, seeking clues in globules of froth around mouths, in cherry red coloured lungs and pink-discoloured bodies. Any clues that might help treat the survivors.

Toxic residues of the gas that scientists believe lingered in the city's air for days after the leak entered his own lungs. And bursts of trapped gas released from body tissues during the autopsies worsened his own exposure.

"When the Bhopal disaster occurred, no one had a clue about the toxic effects of methyl isocyanate on humans," said Samavedam Sandhyamani, Sriramachari's daughter who is herself a trained pathologist. "It was an emergency, but without toxicity information, doctors weren't sure what was the best way to help the survivors," Sandhyamani told The Telegraph.

The government estimates that 3,700 people died of exposure to toxic gases during the early days after the leak. But thousands more have suffered the long-term adverse effects over the years.

Sriramachari and his colleagues helped demonstrate that the toxic cloud over Bhopal wasn't just methyl isocyanate. Their research established that the gas, which is heavier than air, breaks down at high temperatures and leads to the production of two other lethal compounds — hydrogen cyanide and carbon monoxide. Bhopal's residents were exposed to multiple toxic threats that night.

The first autopsies by local pathologist Heeresh Chandra had indicated acute cyanide poisoning — and severely ill survivors injected with sodium thiosulfate, an antidote to

cyanide, showed rapid signs of recovering.

But, Sriramachari recalls, the cyanide theory encountered a barrage of criticism from sections of medical community. Some doctors insisted it was only methyl isocyanate that was causing symptoms and not cyanide.

"We lost time," said Arun Jain, a senior scientist at the Institute of Pathology. The Institute team conducted a study to show that toxic residues were excreted in the urine of patients to make the sodium thiosulfate therapy become acceptable.

In subsequent years, their studies showed that the gases produced from the leak interacted with a certain enzyme in the body to cause long-term effects in the lungs that could last for years.

"The lungs of some of the victims from Bhopal who had never smoked show changes that are typically observed in the lungs of long-term smokers," said Jain. The studies also helped unravel the molecular mechanisms of the gas byproducts in the body.

Sriramachari himself began to experience symptoms of lung disease about two years after returning from Bhopal. "We suspect it had to do with his exposure while he was there. He had never shown any lung symptoms before that," said Sandhyamani.

He's been diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and was admitted to the intensive care unit of the Vallabhbai Patel Chest Institute here a few days ago after he had bouts of breathlessness.

Many scientists believe Sriramachari's investigations from 1984 through 2004 have spawned the most comprehensive body of toxicity research on methyl isocyanate, a legacy for pathologists of the future.

"The techniques he used to solve the puzzle of methyl isocyanate could also help in

future disasters involving toxic gases," said Sandhyamani. "There are lessons for the future -- whether it's to study emissions from a burning factory or an oil refinery."

Telegraph/ Calcutta/ 03/12/09

Woes of Bhopal gas victims still continue

BHOPAL: The world's worst industrial disaster the Bhopal gas tragedy which claimed scores of lives will complete 25 years on Thursday even as the woes of gas victims still continue.

The incident took place when the lethal Methyl Iso Cyanate gas leaked from the Union Carbide factory that was producing pesticides here.

The case is still being fought at the chief judicial magistrate level and after that it may be challenged again in the Madhya Pradesh High Court. Various NGOs, fighting for the cause of the Bhopal gas tragedy victims, here today charged the Centre and the Madhya Pradesh government with being responsible for not extraditing former Union Carbide chairman, Mr Warren Anderson.

They also charged that inadequate compensation to the gas affected persons were paid and non-disposal of toxic waste from the plant site even after 25 years continues. A number of events including photo exhibition related to the Bhopal gas tragedy, agitations, sit-in, poetry night, press briefings and felicitations programmes are being organised since last couple of days.

Apart from these, an all-party religious prayer meeting in which Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister is also expected to take part, that claimed 15,274 lives and affected 5,74,000 persons after leakage of MIC gas from Union Carbide India Limited plant here on the intervening night of December 2-3, 1984.

Various NGOs including Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan and Bhopal Group for Information and Action came under an umbrella and alleged that huge toxic waste was still lying in the Union Carbide factory premises, spread over an area of 67 acres.

They also alleged that despite issuing several arrest warrants against Mr Anderson by local courts for gas tragedy charging him with culpable homicide not amounting to murder, the CBI has not extradited him for trial in India. The NGO leaders said that Mr Anderson may be proclaimed offender in India but he is leading a luxurious life in a palatial home in Bridgehampton in Long Islands near New York. Mr Anderson, who never faced any court for Bhopal gas tragedy, had been released on bail on December 7, 1984 soon after his arrival in the city after the incident but since then he never ventured on Indian soil, they said.

"It is surprising that no one was punished for the Bhopal gas tragedy even after 25 years of the world's worst industrial disaster," the NGOs said.

"We have launched a campaign along with Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationary Karmchari Sangh and Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangarsh Morcha from November 28 to disprove the Madhya Pradesh government's claim that there was no toxic and hazardous waste there," the BGIA convener, Mr Satinath Sarangi said.

He alleged that the Union Environment and Forests Minister, Mr Jairam Ramesh and Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Minister, Mr Babulal Gaur were favouring Dow Chemicals which has taken over Union Carbide by saying that waste lying in the factory premises was not harmful.

The three NGOs would intensify protests against Dow Chemicals from Thursday to

press for the removal of waste from the factory and seek financial and medical help to the gas tragedy victims who are still suffering, Mr Sarangi said. The BGPMUS convenor, Mr Abdul Jabbar alleged that the Bhopal gas tragedy victims have not been paid adequate compensation till now and asked the Centre to release fund immediately for this purpose.

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Navhind Times/ Goa/ 03/12/09

Bhopal disaster doctor dying from exposure to same pesticides

The doctor who conducted autopsies of Bhopal disaster victims killed when lethal gases leaked from the Union Carbide chemical plant in 1984 is now dying from exposure to the same pesticides.

Dean Nelson in New Delhi

S. Sriramachari, then director of a government pathology laboratory, discovered the scale of the tragedy when he carried out post mortem examinations on the first victims and concluded that they had been killed by hydrogen cyanide poisoning.

He is now being treated for a fatal lung condition his doctors say was caused by his regular exposure to a cocktail of 21 lethal chemical

compounds in the victims he examined 25 years ago.

His own conclusion that the victims were killed by hydrogen cyanide was contested, because, according to colleagues, such an admission would have led to more multi-million dollar law suits.

Mr Sriramachari told Mint newspaper the victims had shown key signs of cyanide poisoning – pink blood, cherry coloured organs – while his daughter, Dr S. Sandhyamani, said the evidence had been suppressed.

Today his breathing is weak, his voice is barely audible, and he continues to read the case notes of those victims whose symptoms now ail him.

Campaigners say Mr Sriramachari is one of thousands of people still suffering the effects of environmental poisoning by the chemical leak. An estimated 25,000 have died since the accident from gas poisoning and water contamination.

A report by the Centre for Science and Environment released earlier this week to mark the 25th anniversary of the tragedy found groundwater two miles from the plant contains 40 times more pesticides than Indian safety laws permit.

Mr Sriramachari said he has no regrets for his work on the Bhopal victims – in which he and his colleagues had only thin surgical masks to protect them from gases in the corpses. "I just did my duty," he said.

**Telegraph/ United Kingdom/
03/12/09**

Bhopal water still toxic, 25 years on: study

NEW DELHI: Groundwater at the site of the world's worst industrial accident in India's Bhopal city is still toxic and making residents sick 25 years after a gas leak there killed

thousands, a study said Tuesday.

The analysis conducted by the UK-based Bhopal Medical Appeal (BMA) also cast doubt upon government-sponsored research into the impact of the disaster at the Union Carbide pesticide plant, where methyl isocyanate gas spewed from a storage tank on December 3, 1984.

Activists say more than 350 tonnes of toxic waste strewn around the site still pollute soil and groundwater in the area, leading to cancer, congenital defects, immunity problems and other illnesses.

Internal documents showed the company had been dumping thousands of tonnes of waste around the plant for years before the accident, and while the state government does not deny the material exists, it says it is harmless.

'This report will nail their lie,' Satinath Sarangi of the Bhopal Group for Information and Action told AFP.

'There are still high concentrations of carcinogens and birth defect-causing chemicals and heavy metals in the water,' he said.

According to research conducted by the state-run Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) until 1994, between 8,000 and 10,000 people were killed within the first three days of the tragedy, and 25,000 people later died from the effects of exposure.

Government statistics compiled after 1994 concluded that at least 100,000 people living near the factory in Madhya Pradesh state were chronically sick, with more than 30,000 residing in areas with contaminated water.

The BMA report said the infrastructure for clean drinking water set up by the city was inadequate, meaning many residents used groundwater out of desperation.

The charity sent samples of hand-pumped groundwater from 15 Bhopal communities to laboratories in Switzerland and

Britain, which showed concentrations of some toxins were actually rising 'as the chemicals leach through the soil and into the aquifer', it said.

The document criticised tests conducted by an Indian laboratory saying results showed very low chemical concentrations 'despite the fact that some of the samples clearly smelled of solvents'.

It was 'possible that the laboratory did not wish to pass on the correct results thanks to the ongoing political controversy around the Bhopal disaster,' the reports' authors said.

Union Carbide — purchased by Dow Chemical in 1999 — insists all liabilities toward the plant were cleared in a 1989 out of court settlement worth 470 million dollars, the bulk of which was used to compensate victims.

A 2004 high court order for the state government to clean up the waste has resulted in only a partial clearance of toxins.

'You can't wish them away. They need to be cleaned up,' said Sarangi.

Dawn/ Pakistan/ 03/12/09

Bhopal survivors demand action

Hundreds of residents of the Indian city of Bhopal have held a vigil to mark 25 years since a deadly chemical leak in the city caused the world's worst industrial disaster.

Survivors and local residents joined activists late on Wednesday to remember the thousands of victims of the leak from a pesticide plant owned by US chemical company Union Carbide on December 3, 1984.

According to research conducted by the state-run Indian Council of Medical Research, between 8,000 and 10,000 people were killed in the immediate aftermath of the disaster.

About 25,000 others later died from the effects of exposure while government estimates say the fumes affected half a million.

Toxic legacy

Activists say tens of thousands of people in Bhopal - many not even born at the time of the disaster - still suffer chronic illnesses related to the leak.

Bhopal disaster

Shortly after midnight on December 3, 1984, about 40 tonnes of the highly poisonous methyl isocyanate gas leaked from a tank at the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal.

The state-run Indian Council of Medical Research says 8,000-10,000 people were killed within three days and 25,000 more subsequently died from the effects of exposure.

More than 500,000 people are estimated to have been affected by the leak.

US chemical firm Union Carbide says the leak was an act of sabotage by a disgruntled employee - never identified - and not lax safety standards or faulty plant design, as claimed by some activists.

Union Carbide, owned by Dow Chemical, says the legal case was resolved in 1989 when it settled with the Indian government for \$470m - compensation some activists say has not reached many victims.

They say children born to parents exposed to the gas leak or poisoned by the contaminated water are suffering from cleft lips, missing palates, twisted limbs, varying degrees of brain damage and a range of skin, vision and breathing disorders.

The state government says it has complied with a 2004 High Court order to clean up the waste at the site but critics say only a partial clearance of toxins was done.

Studies released on the eve of the anniversary said more than 350 tonnes of toxic waste strewn around the site still pollutes soil and groundwater in the area, leading to cancer, congenital defects, immunity problems and other illnesses.

The UK-based charity Bhopal Medical Appeal (BMA) said on Tuesday that there was evidence that "high levels of toxic chemicals" remained in the drinking water supply in 15 communities near the plant.

Tests at Swiss and British laboratories indicated concentrations of some toxins were actually rising "as the chemicals leach through the soil and into the aquifer", it said.

The group said the government was not providing enough clean drinking water, forcing many residents to use the contaminated groundwater.

"Not surprisingly, the populations in the areas surveyed have high rates of birth defects, rapidly rising cancer rates, neurological damage, chaotic menstrual cycles and mental illness," BMA said in the report.

A separate study also released on Tuesday by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), showed a hand-pump 3km from the former Union Carbide plant contained 110 times the maximum concentration of the pesticide carbaryl deemed safe in Indian bottled water.

Government denial

New studies say the area around the abandoned plant remains contaminated [AFP]

The state government says residual chemicals in the ground are harmless and it is providing clean water to residents by tankers.

It also dismisses assertions that the birth defects are related to the disaster.

But the protesters gathered for Wednesday night's vigil disagreed, demanding the government clean up the

chemical waste from the site and the drinking water in the area.

They also called for an official panel to work on social, economic and medical rehabilitation for the gas victims, saying that only part of the \$470m compensation Union Carbide paid in settlement with the Indian government has reached victims.

Union Carbide, which ran the Bhopal plant when the leak occurred, is now a subsidiary of Dow Chemical, having been bought in 2001.

Dow says responsibility for the factory now rests with the Madhya Pradesh government.

*Aljazeera/ Saudi Arab/
03/12/09*

Manmohan extends support to Bhopal victims

Aarti Dhar

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Wednesday extended support and sympathy to the victims of the Bhopal gas tragedy that occurred 25 years ago.

"The families that suffered and lost their dear ones can never really be fully compensated," Dr. Singh said in a statement to mark the 25th anniversary of the incident. "We owe it to our fellow citizens to put in place procedures and precautions to ensure that such a tragedy never occurs again," he added.

Sharing the grief of those affected by the "horrible tragedy," Dr. Singh reaffirmed his Government's commitment to resolving issues of safe drinking water, expeditious clean up of the site, continuation of medical research, and any other outstanding issues connected with the disaster.

The Government has implemented several measures to provide relief to the affected families, including socio-economic and medical

rehabilitation and improvement in living conditions.

"Here, I would also like to salute the civil society groups who have persisted in pursuing justice and compensation to those who suffered," Dr. Singh said.

Methyl Isocyanate, a lethal gas, leaked into the atmosphere from the pesticide plant of the Union Carbide India Ltd at Bhopal on the night of December 3, 1984. The leakage resulted in over 5,000 people losing their lives and many others being incapacitated permanently.

The issue also echoed in the Rajya Sabha, where chairman Hamid Ansari called upon the Centre and the Madhya Pradesh government to expeditiously settle the victims' compensation claims.

"The scars of the tragedy still haunt us in the form of incapacitated people and children born with deformities," Mr. Ansari said when the House met for the day.

Hindu/ Delhi/ 03/12/09

Bhopal, Chernobyl, Lop Nor

Sreeram Chaulia

The 25th anniversary of a dark day in industrial history is an occasion to reflect upon the crucial role of the state as a monitor and regulator of economic enterprise. When gas leaked from the Union Carbide pesticide factory in Bhopal on the midnight of December 3, 1984, and unleashed poison into air and water to kill over 30,000 and maim hundreds of thousands of exposed people, the world had scarcely encountered a horror of this magnitude in peacetime.

Ironically, the Bhopal tragedy occurred in a country that was an electoral democracy, in which governments were theoretically accountable for their people's safety and security. Yet, a postmortem of the ghastly gas disaster reveals that the Indian state failed to honour its social

contract of protecting citizens against threats to life.

The Bhopal calamity was allowed to occur when the Indian economy was in the throes of the 'licence permit raj', where politicians and state bureaucrats wielded unlimited power over industrial activity.

Dirigisme was justified for decades prior to the Bhopal accident on the grounds that India was a poor country in which socialist goals could only be achieved if the state took control and acted as a redistributive force.

How did this supposedly paternalistic system—meant to be 'pro-poor' and against 'blood-sucking capitalists'—end up overseeing a shameful episode like Bhopal and its aftermath of woefully inadequate rehabilitation, compensation and cleanup of toxic waste?

The warning bells of lax safety norms from the pesticide plant were there for the omnipotent 'raj's' mandarins to have acted on long before the fateful night of December 3, 1984. From 1976, excess pollution and toxic attacks on workers had been occurring on a regular basis at the factory site, but the super-interventionist Indian state prone to harassing harmless entrepreneurs barely took the opportunity to enforce stricter inspections and standards on Union Carbide's management.

The state was certainly not unaware of the risks posed by the factory's accident-prone record, but it did not muscle its will onto Union Carbide. Some low-level local authorities did advise the company to build the plant in another part of Bhopal, out of range of the populated areas, but Carbide refused, saying relocation was 'too expensive'. The story of a cost-cutting and greedy multinational ignoring local laws and placing citizens of developing countries in direct line of harm has been told often enough, but the question arises

as to why the Indian state did not up...

Financial Express/ Delhi/ 03/12/09

Bhopal: A city where tragedy has stopped time

Akshai Jain

bhopalTime for a large swathe of Bhopal seems to have stopped on December 3, 1984, the day a cloud of poisonous gases erupted from the Union Carbide factory and swept through the city, killing over 3,000 people and affecting many thousands more. "We were happy people before that," is the most common refrain you'll hear in the city today.

There are many places in India where time has stood still. Some are very remote or have just been forgotten by the 'establishment', but Bhopal's case is different. It's a big bustling city in the heart of India. Far from being forgotten, the city has got more world attention than most other cities.

Nearly all of it however, has been focused on the gas tragedy or gas kaand as it is better known. On the continuing health effects on the victims, the state of the hospitals set up to provide them treatment, corporate responsibility for the accident and the cleanup, current groundwater contamination from the plant and future plans on what to do with the site.

While the attention has ensured that the 'issues' remain alive, it has, quite ironically, meant that Old Bhopal, the most affected area, has not moved beyond that day.

You wouldn't notice at first glance. Its narrow, dusty and dirt-ridden lanes seem like testaments to Indian industriousness. Mechanic shops, groceries, butchers and small clinics jostle with each other for space. It's always noisy and the traffic is chaotic.

But talk to anyone for more than ten minutes and it's likely that the gas tragedy will come up. This part of the city is divided into those who are gas peedit or suffering from direct exposure to the gases, and those who're paani peedit or suffering from the effects of groundwater contamination that activists attribute to the chemical wastes stored in the Union Carbide factory.

Both sets will trace their problems, health and otherwise, back to the disaster. They'll point out how meager the compensation was, how polluted the water they get is and how little has been done for them.

The longer you speak to them the more things return to December 3, till you realize they see most of the present through that prism.

What about the future? I asked a number of people. The answers were usually listless and vague. "We're waiting for redressal," they'd say.

Mint/Delhi/03/12/09

Poisoned water haunts Bhopal 25 years after deadly accident

Twenty-five years after a toxic gas cloud from a pesticide factory killed thousands of people in Bhopal, India, groundwater at the accident site -- a drinking water supply for 15 communities -- remains contaminated, according to a report released on Tuesday by an advocacy group and a medical clinic.

The UK-based Bhopal Medical Appeal and the Sambhavna Clinic say water contamination is worsening as chemicals leach through soil into the aquifer.

"A huge proportion of the factory site is full of very toxic waste," said Colin Toogood, the report's author. "There are parts of the factory where the soil you walk on is 100 percent toxic waste, and there are

areas where you still see pools of mercury on the ground."

At issue is one of the most famous industrial accidents of all time.

On the evening of Dec. 2, 1984, methyl isocyanate gas escaped from the former Union Carbide pesticide factory in Bhopal, killing at least 3,000 people immediately. Thousands more are said to have since died or been injured as a result of the toxic cloud, although the exact death toll remains unclear.

The government of the Madhya Pradesh state took responsibility for the site in 1998, and Union Carbide is now a subsidiary of Midland, Mich.-based Dow Chemical Co.

Indian officials say the contamination around the factory is largely contained and is not a public health threat. The Indian government announced last week that it would open the site to the public to help people come to terms with the disaster.

And Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan told the BBC today that communities are being supplied with clean drinking water. "There is nothing hazardous to human life. ... People should not be worried," Chouhan said. "We have secured the site."

But the new report claims site contamination has had lasting consequences on people exposed to it. "Not surprisingly," the report says, "the populations in the areas surveyed have high rates of birth defects, rapidly rising cancer rates, neurological damage, chaotic menstrual cycles and mental illness."

Researchers collected groundwater samples from 20 locations and sent them to a lab in Delhi, India. The lab did not report finding chemicals in its samples, so researchers sent duplicate samples to a lab in Switzerland, which reported high levels of chlorinated compounds in two of its three samples.

"It would be nice to think the contamination had cleared up, but it does make you wonder," Toogood said. "The Swiss results just confirmed what we were expecting to find. There's absolutely no doubt their [the Indian lab's] samples were flawed, but we're not able to speculate why that is."

Swiss lab results show chloroform concentrations as many as 3.5 times higher than drinking-water guidelines from the World Health Organization and U.S. EPA, and carbon tetrachloride at up to 2,400 times higher than the guidelines.

Because of the highly contaminated samples and the discrepancies between labs, Toogood is pushing for an independent analysis of water quality around the site, including a large-scale groundwater sampling project and a long-term monitoring program.

"We would like to see a complete cleanup in Bhopal, but you can't have that unless you have a full environmental assessment, and that would have to be done by an independent body," Toogood said. "There's too much going on with politics for it to be done by the Indian government. Our tests show that -- there are clear discrepancies there."

Advocates like Toogood insist that Dow Chemical, which bought Union Carbide in 2001, is responsible for the cleanup even though the site is now the property of the Indian government.

"Dow bought Union Carbide and inherited all of the assets and liabilities," Toogood said. "One of the liabilities is the Bhopal cleanup. ... Dow would like to pass the buck elsewhere, but as far as we're concerned, they're responsible. The Indian government took responsibility of the site, and they may own land, but they're not the polluter."

Union Carbide spokesman Tom Sprick said in an e-mail that the company never owned

or operated the plant because Union Carbide India Ltd. managed and operated the site, and that Union Carbide sold its stake in that company -- which continues to operate today under another name -- in 1994. Furthermore, he said Union Carbide provided financial and medical aid to the victims of the accident.

Finally, Sprick said the state government is responsible for cleanup activities and should deal with the groundwater contamination.

Tehran Times/ Iran/ 03/12/09

The Bhopal health saga - battling for survival

BHOPAL: More than 3,500 people died that night and 7,000 more in the next three days; and 25 years later, 6,000 people visit hospitals every day and about 120,000-150,000 people in the city continue to be ill. The Bhopal gas leak is a continuing tragedy told through countless tales from those who survived and those not even born on Dec 2/3, 1984.

Diseases of the eyes, lungs, liver and kidney, loss of sensation in the limbs, cancer, menstrual irregularities, depression, hypertension, infertility, mental disorders... the victims of the world's worst industrial disaster continue to wage a daily battle on the health front.

Hazira B, who still lives in JP Nagar opposite the Union Carbide plant from where over 40 tonnes of toxic methyl isocyanate gas leaked out on the night of Dec 2/3, says it would have been better had they died.

"My entire family suffers from breathlessness, body pain and weak eyesight. My daughter suffers from fainting fits while my youngest son has tuberculosis. I have had two miscarriages before reaching menopause at 39," said the 51-year-old mother of three who

was deserted by her husband a few years after the disaster.

There are many like her, still reeling from the after effects that are too many to list. Besides those directly impacted were the pregnant women, many of whose children were born with genetic defects and mental retardation. The reproductive cycle of women, the quality of their breast milk and menstrual cycles were impacted too.

"I had my first pregnancy aborted while running for a safer place after the gas leak. I never conceived again as menstruation stopped. The gas left me infertile and also gave me several other diseases," said Pyari Bai, 42.

NGOs estimate that 120,000 to 150,000 residents of Bhopal continue to be ill. Clinics report a regular stream of patients with a host of diseases.

In a letter to Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar and Rajya Sabha Chairman Hamid Ansari this week, activists Abdul Jabbar and N.D. Jayprakash said: "The grievousness of the injuries suffered by the victims are such that even 25 years after the disaster no less than 6,000 victims continue to visit hospitals every day due to disaster-related ailments."

Mohammed Ali Qaiser, who has been treating gas victims at the Sambhavna Clinic for several years, says problems have also increased manifold because people continue to be affected by the contaminated groundwater.

According to Qaiser: "Every day, more than 150 people visit our clinic. They include those who have been exposed to toxic gases in December 1984, their children and those exposed to contaminated groundwater."

A preliminary house-to-house survey by the Sadbhavna Trust that runs the clinic estimates that the incidence of birth defects in

Bhopal is at least 10 times that of the national figure.

It's a sorry saga that is yet to be fully studied.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) studied the gas victims from 1984 to 1994.

"The treatment of the victims is impeded to this day because Union Carbide refused to share all its medical information on the toxic effects of the gases released that night and with all research and monitoring of the long-term health effects of 'gases' being abandoned in 1994, no treatment protocols have been found so far," said Sainath Sarangi of the Bhopal Group for Information and Action (BGIA), who also runs the Sambhavna clinic.

Also, there has been no scientific follow-up nor any study on the long-term impact of MIC on the reproductive tracts of men and women since 1994 when ICMR stopped its research. Gynaecological disorders are not even listed among effects of MIC exposure in official records.

"Generations of women were affected by the gas. Among women who were pregnant at the time of the disaster, 43 percent aborted. For several years, spontaneous abortion rates remained very high. And now girls who were exposed in infancy and in their mother's wombs are experiencing 'menstrual chaos'," added Sarangi.

These conditions are also leading to social problems. Rehana of JP Nagar, who has three daughters, speaks of the stigma.

"Men don't like to marry our daughters because they feel that these girls cannot produce children. There have been cases of our girls getting married and divorced soon after. One girl was divorced after she gave birth to two children, because of irregular menses."

Besides, children of affected parents, conceived and born after the disaster, were significantly different from children of the same age born to unexposed parents, reports a study carried out by Sambhavna Trust.

"Such children were shorter, thinner, lighter and had smaller heads. Also, they showed abnormal growth of the upper part of their bodies - disproportionately smaller than their lower bodies," it states.

**New Indian Express/
Bhubaneswar/ 03/12/09**

Twenty-five years after

SIR, ~ Your editorial, 'One Score and Five' (29 November) recalled chilling memories of the Bhopal gas leak exactly 25 years ago. I was travelling on the Gorakhpur-Bombay VT Express. The train suddenly came to a halt. Each one of us in the AC II-tier compartment woke up with a feeling of nausea.

We realised that we were inhaling some sort of smoke, but had no idea what it was. The almost suffocating atmosphere persisted for about ten minutes. Then there was a jerk and the train started moving again.

Next morning we learnt that our train had actually stopped at Bhopal when the deadly MIC gas was leaking. We thanked Providence and, of course, the brave station master in Bhopal who gave the green signal to the train, thus saving the lives of a few hundred passengers. Unfortunately, he himself was among the thousands who perished in the world's worst environmental disaster.

Yours, etc., PS Ghoshdastidar, (Professor, Dept. of Mechanical Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur), Kanpur, 2 December.

Statesman/ Kolkata/ 03/12/09

Bhopal: Will it affect more of the unborn?

K.S. Jayaraman

BANGALORE: The deadly methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas released by the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal this day 25 years ago affected even the unborn, researchers say.

The toxic gas altered the immune system of those who were still in their mothers' wombs when the disaster struck, according to a recent study by researchers at the Bhopal Memorial Hospital and Research Centre (BMHRC) in Bhopal.

"Our study shows, for the first time, that in-utero MIC exposure during the Bhopal gas tragedy has caused a persistent immune system hyper-responsiveness in affected individuals," Pradyumna Kumar Mishra told IANS. The findings have been published in the journal Occupational and Environmental Medicine.

Whether this "immune hyper-responsiveness" has any clinical implications will be clear only after follow-up of the exposed individuals, the BMHRC researcher said.

The release of 30-40 tonnes of MIC spreading over approximately 75 sq km killed at least 3,500 and injured thousands more. There are more than 500,000 registered survivors of the tragedy, Mishra said.

The survivors continue to experience higher incidence of health problems, including respiratory, neurological, psychiatric and ophthalmic symptoms, Mishra said.

To understand the long-term implications of MIC exposure, doctors at BMHRC have conducted chromosomal studies in cultured mammalian cells using MIC as an experimental agent. "The results of the study have provided evidence to hitherto unknown molecular mechanisms of immunotoxic

consequences of MIC exposure at a genomic level," he said.

According to Mishra, MIC had played havoc with the reproductive health of women and their girl children.

Menstrual abnormalities, vaginal discharge and premature menopause have emerged as common problems. "Besides affecting the reproductive health of the women, these conditions are also leading to social problems in conservative communities," he said.

Mishra said that investigations conducted so far at BMHRC and other places have raised a new question: for how long the gas victims would continue to suffer from multi-system disorders and whether future generations would also be affected by these abnormalities.

"In-depth molecular studies of ocular, respiratory, reproductive, immunological, genetic and psychological health must be continued if we wish to understand the extent and severity of long-term effects associated with the disaster," Mishra said.

He pointed out that the importance of such experimental studies cannot be understated "since any alterations at genomic level can have long-term health consequences that may range from accelerated ageing, carcinogenesis, immuno-compromised states and, more importantly, vertical transmission of genetic aberrations."

**New Indian Express/
Bhubaneswar/ 03/12/09**

Bhopal: EU Parliament seeks answers

Bhopal, 2 Dec: Mr Graham Watson (MEP), chair of the European Parliament's India delegation has tabled a written declaration in the EU Parliament today on the 25th anniversary of the Bhopal disaster, urging India and the company responsible to ensure

immediate decontamination of the Union Carbide site, where toxic chemicals continue to pollute groundwater.

Mr Watson's declaration came in the wake of a study released in Bhopal yesterday, where researchers from the Center of Science and Environment (CSE) have found that the same toxic pesticides have leached into the groundwater. There has been no response from the Centre so far on the damning CSE report, while the Madhya Pradesh state government has gone into denial mode. Mr Babulal Gaur, minister for Bhopal Gas Relief, has gone on record saying that the groundwater in colonies near the plant is not contaminated.

In response to Mr Watson's declaration tabled today, the Swedish Embassy in New Delhi contacted the CSE seeking answers to three questions. The Embassy wanted to know the status of all settlements with regard to the contaminated site and the legal status of Dow Chemicals in India. In addition, information was sought on what has been the EU's role in solving Bhopal's problems. "Dow Chemicals should take responsibility for the clean up of the site, and the European Commission should offer its full support", said Mr Watson to the EU Parliament.

Statesman/ Kolkata/ 03/12/09

Torch rally to mark Bhopal tragedy

BHOPAL: As the sun went down on Bhopal Wednesday, victims of the gas tragedy set out on a torch light rally from one landmark, Bhopal Talkies, to another unfortunate landmark - the now defunct Union Carbide factory.

The procession was taken out by the Bhopal Group of Information and Action (BGIA) - working for victims of the gas disaster that occurred at the factory exactly 25 years ago - and groups affiliated to it.

"People living next to the Union Carbide factory - where the ground water is contaminated by poison from the hazardous chemical waste of the factory - will also join the march while the children who were poisoned by contaminated ground water form a prominent part of the rally," said Rachna Dhingra of the BGIA.

Another torch light profession was taken out separately by Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udhog Sangathan (BGPMUS) led by activist Abdul Jabbar.

"Since Mashaal (torch) means Jaagte Raho (keep awake), our procession is aimed at appealing to the people to beware of the designs of various governments who are soft on Union Carbide, which has taken the lives of thousands of people and even now people are still dying," Jabbar said.

The organisations condemned the union government for its alleged failure to take action on the non-bailable arrest warrant issued in July this year against Warren Anderson, former chairman of Union Carbide.

The survivors have also been demanding immediate setting up of an Empowered Commission on Bhopal gas tragedy for long-term medical care, economic and social rehabilitation and supply of safe drinking water, besides cleaning up of the hazardous waste.

They said that 15 months have passed since the prime minister gave a written promise regarding setting up the commission, but it has not yet been formed.

"The problems that we faced at the time of the gas tragedy are nothing in comparison to what we are facing now. The government is not providing us with proper medicines. We don't have money to get ourselves treated by private doctors. The situation is just worsening

now," said Sayyed Irfan, a victim of the gas tragedy.

Thousands of tonnes of methyl isocyanate (MIC) spewed out of the Union Carbide factory on the night of Dec 2-3, 1984, killing over 3,500 people instantly and maiming several thousands for life.

***New Indian Express/
Bhubaneshwar/ 03/12/09***

Bhopal protests on 25th anniversary of killer gas leak

Indian activists marked the 25th anniversary of the Bhopal gas leak disaster on Thursday with protests and demands that those responsible for thousands of deaths finally be held to account.

Demonstrators and survivors capped a week of commemorations with a planned march to the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, where on December 3, 1984 a cloud of methyl isocyanate gas killed up to 10,000 people within three days.

Studies released earlier this week showed the shantytowns surrounding the site were still laced with lethal chemicals that polluted groundwater and soil, causing birth defects and a range of chronic illnesses.

"The survivors of the tragedy, through these protests, are venting their ire against the state government for its inaction in clearing the toxic waste," said Satinath Sarangi of the Bhopal Group of Information and Action.

Research by the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) showed 25,000 people have died from the consequences of exposure since 1984.

After those studies concluded, government statistics said 100,000 people were chronically sick, with more than 30,000 people living in water-contaminated areas around the factory.

The government of Madhya Pradesh, of which Bhopal is capital, assumed responsibility for the site in 1998, and has only partially cleared the hundreds of tonnes of toxic materials scattered around the plant.

Thousands more tonnes lie just yards away from the plant in man-made "solar evaporation ponds" where Union Carbide was dumping waste for years before the accident.

The state government says the material is not harmful, and to prove this planned last month to open the site to visitors. It later reversed the decision.

In a statement released to coincide with the anniversary, Dow Chemical - which purchased Union Carbide in 1999 -- said a \$470 million settlement reached in 1989 with the Indian government "resolved all existing and future claims" against the company.

Union Carbide "did all it could to help the victims and their families" until the settlement and said the Indian government should be responsible for providing clean drinking water and health services to residents.

It said at the time and continues to insist that sabotage was behind the leak.

Most of the settlement money was used to pay compensation of between \$1,000 to \$2,000 to victims who were left unable to work or with long-term ailments, but many received nothing at all.

"People came and told us we could apply for compensation," Laxmi Narayan, whose wife suffers terrible eye complaints apparently caused by the industrial accident, told AFP. "They took our name down, but we never saw a penny."

Demonstrators of all ages would rally to "push our longstanding demands of compensation, medical and health facilities and rehabilitation of victims," said

Javed Naqi, a coordinator with the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal.

Criminal cases against former Union Carbide executives are pending in various Indian and US courts which hold them and Dow liable for the catastrophe.

Amnesty International called on Dow to "cooperate fully in the ongoing legal proceedings in order to ensure that those responsible are held accountable."

***Hindustan Times/ Delhi/
03/12/09***
