

**A Proposal
to endorse the
March to Delhi
by
Bhopal Survivors**

Index

Resources.....	1
Introduction.....	2
Brief history of the Bhopal Gas Disaster.....	2
Since the disaster – the Contamination.....	3
The march.....	3
The Route.....	4
Demands of the March to Delhi.....	5
Proposal to the IAM board.....	5

Resources

1. Blog with daily updates ... <http://www.bhopal.net/march>
2. Fact sheets ... <http://www.bhopal.net/factsheets.html>
3. Testimonials ... <http://www.studentsforbhopal.org/Testimonials.htm>
4. All about the Bhopal struggle ... <http://bhopal.net>
5. Dominique Lapierre and Javier Moro. ***Five Past Midnight in Bhopal***. (Warner Books, 2002)
6. Rashida Bee & Champa Devi's profile from Goldman Environmental Prize ... <http://www.goldmanprize.org/recipients/recipientProfile.cfm?recipientID=136>



Marching to Delhi

WE ALL LIVE  IN BHOPAL

Introduction

On December 3rd, 1984 thousands of people in Bhopal, India, were gassed to death after a catastrophic chemical leak at a Union Carbide pesticide plant. More than 150,000 people were left severely disabled - of whom 22,000 have since died of their injuries - in a disaster now widely acknowledged as the world's worst-ever industrial disaster.

On Feb 20th, 2006 more than 130 Bhopal survivors began walking to New Delhi demanding justice and a life of dignity for those affected by the disaster and those poisoned by ground water contaminated with chemicals left at the site. The march is the biggest and most important action ever organized by the Bhopal campaign and this proposal is a request to the India Association of Minnesota to endorse the demands of the march.



A young victim

photo credit: Raghu Rai

Brief history of the Bhopal Gas Disaster

More than 27 tons of methyl isocyanate and other deadly gases turned Bhopal into a gas chamber in December 1984. None of the six safety systems at Union Carbide plant were functional, and Union Carbide's own documents prove the company designed the plant with "unproven" and "untested" technology, and cut corners on safety and maintenance in order to save money.

In March 1985, through the Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster (Processing of Claims) Act, the Indian Government arrogated to itself the sole powers to represent the victims in the civil litigation against Union Carbide. It then filed a \$3 billion compensation suit on behalf of the victims in US federal court, but the case was sent to Indian courts in May 1986 on grounds of forum non-convenience, under the condition that Union Carbide would submit to the jurisdiction of Indian courts.

After years of delay tactics by Union Carbide, in 1989 a settlement was reached between Carbide and the Indian Government – one made without the consultation or consent of the survivors themselves. The victims were awarded an average of \$500 in compensation (a total of \$470 million), **falling far below international compensation standards and the standards set by Indian Railways for accidents**. In exchange, Carbide was to be absolved of all civil liabilities; criminal cases against the company and its officials were to be dropped; and the Indian government was to defend the corporation in the event of future suits.

Dow Chemicals, which bought Union Carbide, has argued that the 1989 settlement resolved all liabilities. *Bano v. Union Carbide* was filed in United States federal court in 1999 by Bhopal residents against Union Carbide holding it accountable for the tons of chemical wastes left on site that have been poisoning the groundwater and thousands of Bhopal residents. The civil case seeks a comprehensive cleanup of the contaminated site and the properties around the factory, and compensation and medical monitoring for those poisoned by Carbide's chemical waste. The lawsuit has survived four motions to dismiss, and has been reinstated twice by the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals. The case is currently in the discovery process, and will soon proceed to trial.

Since the disaster – the Contamination

Keen to distance itself from the disaster, Union Carbide fled India leaving behind tons of toxic wastes strewn in and around the factory site. A 1990 study by the Bhopal Group for Information and Action found di- and trichlorobenzenes in water samples taken from wells being used by communities living near the factory fence lines. Phthalates, chlorinated benzenes and aromatic hydrocarbons were found in the soil samples. In 1996, the State Research Laboratory conducted its own tests on water and concluded that the chemical contamination found is “due to chemicals used in the Union Carbide factory that have proven to be extremely harmful for health. Therefore the use of this water for drinking must be stopped immediately.”

In 1999, Greenpeace and Bhopal community groups documented the presence of stockpiles of toxic pesticides (including Sevin and hexachlorocyclohexane) as well as hazardous wastes and contaminated material scattered throughout the factory site. The survey found substantial and, in some locations, severe contamination of land and water supplies with heavy metals and chlorinated chemicals. Samples of groundwater from wells around the site showed high levels of chlorinated chemicals including chloroform and carbon tetrachloride, indicative of long-term contamination. Over the years, the groundwater supplying an estimated 20,000 Bhopal residents has become heavily contaminated by Union Carbide’s toxic by-products. Mercury in some sediment samples was found to be between 20,000 and 6 million times the expected levels. According to a 2002 study by the Fact Finding Mission on Bhopal, many of Union Carbide’s most dangerous toxins can now be found in the breast milk of mothers living around the factory.

The march

Far from addressing the Bhopalis' demands, the Government of India has openly made moves to facilitate the business of Union Carbide's new owner Dow Chemicals. Union Carbide is at large, with unanswered court summons against the company and its former CEO Warren Anderson. All this while the company's new owner Dow Chemicals continues to profit from doing business in India. More than 20,000 people in Bhopal are forced to consume poisoned water daily. Medical facilities for survivors are virtually non-existent, and survivors have to beg and bribe to access health care. Unemployment and desperation are at an all-time high – the inhaled gases have left them with severe respiratory disorders that leaves them incapable of doing manual labor. Toxic wastes abandoned at the site continue to poison people, and create a new generation of victims.

The march for justice and dignity is being led by four Bhopal-based survivor and advocacy organizations: Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmachari Sangh, Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha, Bhopal Group for Information and Action, and Bhopal ki Aawaaz. The Bhopal marchers expect to reach New Delhi in the last week of March covering nearly 800 kms. Meeting up with local communities and building solidarity with those affected by industrial pollution, the march hopes to attract the attention of the government and the people of India to the plight of those suffering in Bhopal.

A meeting with the Prime Minister Shri. Manmohan Singh to present a six-point charter of demands has been sought. Depending on the response of the government the marchers may decide to go on an indefinite fast to press their demands.

The Route

The March to Delhi will take the Bhopalis through five different states, visiting several other pollution impacted communities along the way. The complete route may vary between 750 and 900 km, and may take the Bhopalis as long as five weeks to complete on foot.

Day	State	Start	End	kms
1	MP	Bhopal	Gandhi Nagar	10
2	MP	Gandhi Nagar	Duraha	30
3	MP	Duraha	Pillukhedi	20
4	MP	Pillukhedi	Kurawar	20
5	MP	Kurawar	Narsinagarh	22
6	MP	Narsinagarh	Biaora	34
7	MP	Biaora	Binaganj	32
8	MP	Binaganj	Kumbhraj	23.5
9	MP	Kumbhraj	Rajohogarh	20
10	MP	Rajohogarh	Guna	25
11	MP	Guna	Miana	28
12	MP	Miana	Lukwasa	32
13	MP	Lukwasa	Shivpuri	36
14	MP	Shivpuri	Dohlagarh	35
15	MP	Dohlagarh	Mohana	25
16	MP	Mohana	Ghatigoan	18
17	MP	Ghatigoan	Gwalior	32
18	MP	Gwalior	Banmore	17
19	MP	Banmore	Morena	30
20	MP/Raj.	Morena	Dhaulpur	26
21	Raj./UP	Dhaulpur	Jagau	21
22	UP	Jagau	Agra	29
23	UP	Agra	Farah	28
24	UP	Farah	Mathura	25
25	UP	Mathura	Chhata	31
26	UP	Chhata	Hodal	24
27	UP	Hodal	Palwal	29
28	UP	Palwal	Ballabgarh	28
29	UP/Har.	Ballabgarh	Faridabad	12
30	Har./Del	Faridabad	Nizamudin	30
31	Delhi	Nizamudin	Jantar Mantar	15
TOTAL KILOMETERS (Bhopal-Delhi)				787.5



Demands of the March to Delhi

1. **National Commission on Bhopal:** Set up a National Commission on Bhopal to address health and economic needs of the impacted community.
2. **Provide Safe Drinking Water:** Commit full funds to provide clean Kolar water to those drinking poisoned water.
3. **Prosecute Union Carbide and Anderson:** Set up a Special Prosecution Cell to pursue Bhopal's outstanding fugitives.
4. **Make Dow Clean Up and Pay:** Properly assess the contamination and require Dow to clean it up.
5. **Blacklist Dow and Union Carbide:** Stop Government of India purchases of Dow products and Dow's expansion in India until Dow faces its liabilities.
6. **Remember Bhopal:** Do not undertake any activities to memorialize the disaster without full survivor support and participation; declare the anniversary a national holiday; include Bhopal disaster and its aftermath in school and college curricula.

Proposal to the IAM board

The IAM board is requested to consider the following proposal of endorsement:

The India Association of Minnesota expresses solidarity with the March to Delhi undertaken by the Bhopal Gas Survivors and endorses the demands of the march. We further appeal to the Prime Minister Shri. Manmohan Singh to give the Bhopal gas survivors a favorable hearing upon their arrival in New Delhi, and correct the wrongs committed against these strong, peace loving people of Bhopal.

WE ALL LIVE  IN BHOPAL