

REPORT BHOPAL 25th ANNIVERSARY



Photo Collage of Dec 3 Anniversary Actions from different states in India

This report outlines the campaign activities carried out by Youth Desk to mark the 25th anniversary of Bhopal Gas Tragedy. It also offers a glimpse into some of the achievements of the campaign in relation to the activism around the anniversary day.

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YOUTH DESK
International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal

Background to the activities

2009 was the 25th anniversary year since 27 tons of a deadly gas leaked from a Union Carbide plant in Bhopal on the night of December 3rd, 1984, immediately killing 8,000 people and poisoning thousands of others. Tens of thousands have died from the toxic exposure in the years since, and the death toll continues to rise as a result of long-term effects.

25 years later Bhopal survivors' are still fighting for their rights, including setting up an empowered commission to ensure that the survivors get clean drinking water, adequate medical facilities and care, adequate financial compensation, and social and economic rehabilitation. Other demands include cleaning of Union Carbide factory site, restarting medical research and the extradition of former CEO Warren Anderson to face trial in India.

Marking the 25 years of injustice in Bhopal, hundreds of International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (ICJB) supporters and activists in 22 states across the country organized solidarity actions for Bhopal, including activities like Die In Action, Bhopal Photo Exhibition, Bhopal Film Screening, Candle vigil, Public meeting, Protest Rally, Pledge-making campaign, Sit in Dharna and other creative campaign activities. The locations include that of Andhra Pradesh (Hyderabad), Bihar (Samastipur), Delhi (New Delhi), Goa (Panaji), Gujrat (Ahmedabad), Haryana (Sonapat), Jammu and Kashmir (Kathua/Rajouri), Karnataka (Bangalore/Harihar), Kerela (Cochin), Maharashtra (Mumbai/Pune), Manipur (Imphal), Orissa (Bhubaneshwar), Puducherry (Puducherry), Punjab (Chandigarh/Faridkot), Tamil Nadu (Chennai/Cuddalore), Uttar Pradesh (Lucknow), Uttarakhand (Almora), West Bengal (Jalpaiguri/Jadhavpur) et.al. With the Bhopal campaign's major thrust toward sensitizing youth, at least half the solidarity actions are being organised by youth groups for youth.



No More Bhopal in Rajouri, J & K



Bhopal Blues on Wheels, Delhi

These activities were carried out nationwide with the following objectives –

- To capitalize on the occasion of the 25th anniversary to generate awareness with increased media coverage about the largely forgotten issue.
- To mobilize the youth across the country in support of the cause
- To create support constituencies across various regions for the cause of justice in Bhopal

The months of October and November 2009 were spent in preparation for coordination with individuals, institutions and civil society organizations in all the above mentioned locations for carrying out of solidarity actions therein. There were rigorous follow ups with supporters over mails and phones for motivation as well as assistance with respect to the carrying out of action plans by them for the 25th anniversary events. An action circular was issued at the start of quarter 2 (in November 2009), as planned. The action circular presents a campaign strategy and recommends a full range of carefully prepared actions for the supporters to help achieve our goal and objectives. Campaign tool kits were prepared and dispatched to organizers nation-wide physically as well electronically. A postcard was also created for the youths calling them to make a pledge to not to work for Dow Chemicals. All this and a lot more happened in the run up to the preparation of successful execution of action plans for the 25th anniversary of the Bhopal gas tragedy.



Candle vigil in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

Protest march in Chandigarh, Punjab

Activities in Different States

Delhi

To mark the occasion in Delhi, ICJB launched Campaign Caravan for Bhopal titled "BHOPAL BLUES ON WHEELS: Capturing 25 years" with a mobile photo exhibition on 1st December 2009 at Jantar Mantar which travelled henceforth to educational institutions across Delhi during Dec 2-3 2009 and concluded with a public display at Jantar Mantar on evening of 3rd Dec. Apart from the photo exhibition, with its pictographic representation of agonizing and abhorring stories of pain, in the hope of generating sensitivity in the minds of the youth, the campaign also aimed at inspiring them to respond to the appeal to be a signatory to the pledge saying, "WE WILL NOT WORK FOR DOW". And a huge banner with hundreds of signatures by students under the pledge majestically draped one side of the caravan when seen on 3rd evening at Jantar Mantar.

Children of survivors of the tragedy who are members of Children Against Dow-Carbide also visited Delhi on this occasion and were there as part of the journey to talk about their experiences to students so that they get to see, hear and possibly feel for real the actual effects which this grave irresponsible act of a representative of brute capitalism has had on people. Film screenings and photo exhibitions in different colleges along with the Caravan journey enhanced the efforts to spread the message in a manner which will have the maximum impact on people to help them understand and even empathize with the issue. The Delhi action by selling literature and merchandise on Bhopal, with the tour of the caravan to colleges and universities like Jamia Milia Islamia, Hindu College, Ramjas College, Lady Shri Ram College for Women and Jawaharlal Nehru University also succeeded in raising funds for the campaign corpus.



Students March in Amroha, Uttar Pradesh



Citizens Rally and Candle Vigil in Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu

Andhra Pradesh

A candle light vigil and public meeting was held in Hyderabad as part of International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (ICJB) activities, on December 3rd, to mark the 25th anniversary of Bhopal disaster, by Indian Liberal Group (ILG), Jana Chaitanya Vedika, Association for Promoting Social Action (APSA) and PUCL. Jana Chaitanya Vedika president V Lakshmana Reddy presided. On this occasion a photo exhibition was arranged depicting the consequences of Bhopal disaster. The meeting demanded that the impact of the gas leak should be fully remediated by cleaning up and decontaminating the former Union Carbide factory site and surrounding areas; people affected from the gas leak should be provided adequate rehabilitation that includes adequate economic compensation, medical care, social rehabilitation, and the provision of information on the impact of the leak; and finally Union Carbide should be held accountable for its decisions, its failure to take preventive measures to avoid the gas leak disaster and its failures in the aftermath of the leak. APSA Director S Srinivasa Reddy led the participants in paying tributes to the Bhopal gas leak victims by lighting candles. Speaking as chief guest, Forum for a Sustainable Environment convener Dr S Jeevananda Reddy warned that many cities are under the verge of similar disasters as chemical factories are not treating solid waste, but depositing the same inside the soil. As a result, he said 80 per cent of water is contaminated in and around Hyderabad.

Karnataka

The 25th year commemoration of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy in Bangalore was quite a success. In solidarity with the Bhopal campaign a candle light vigil, a poetry reading and a photo exhibition on Bhopal was organized by the members of Visthar, CHC, students of St. Josephs and Christ's college, Sangama, Samvaada, Maraa, ESG, HU members, AID Bangalore, Open Space, Other Media, ALF, Samvaada and Maraa. Over a hundred people turning up at Gandhi Statue on 2nd December and quite reasonable media coverage for the event. Besides this event, National Law School Bangalore had a series of awareness and remembrance actions through the week, targeting a collective audience of nearly 2000 visiting and local students from 60 colleges.



Die-In Action in Bhubaneswar, Orissa

Manipur

In Manipur youth members of the Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) join the Struggles for Justice in Bhopal and organized a mass Die-In, at Tahamzam (Senapati District Headquarter), Manipur.

Tamil Nadu

Students for Bhopal Chennai chapter also impressed with a full range of activities that's grounded in a well thought-out strategy aimed at promoting activism for Bhopal. They organized a "We all live in Bhopal Toxic Tour" of the blight spots in Chennai. More than 40 students participated in the tour. The tour concluded with a musical concert followed by a mass Die-In and a candle vigil by the members of the tour team.

In Cuddalore activists and students of IIT-Madras took out a rally and staged a demonstration to observe the 25th anniversary of the Bhopal gas tragedy. M. Nizamudeen, general secretary, Balki, consultant of the Consumer Federation-Tamil Nadu, T. Arulselvam, organiser of the SIPCOT Community Environment Monitor, representatives of fishermen and advocates participated.

Maharashtra

Students of TISS(Tata Institute of Social Sciences) performed a “die in” action along with which there was held, a photo exhibition, a film screening - 'The Bhopal Survivors' story' with a public lecture, which was delivered by Mr Adwait Pednekar of action committee against Jaitapur- Madban nuclear power plant. The speaker talked about the disastrous impacts of 'development' and the need for alternate model of development.



Die-In Action and Student Participants in Kathua, Jammu and Kashmir

Gujarat

To commemorate the 25th anniversary, Paryavaran Mitra and the local groups in Ahmedabad called for a press conference on 2nd December 2009 to highlight the major industrial disaster management issues the government still needs to deal with. Proper mechanisms to immediately deal with an industrial disaster are not yet in place. Journalists from noted news agencies such as Etv, TV9, Gujarat Samachar, DNA, The Times Of India, Divya Bhaskar, Sandesh and Gujarat Today were present. A lecture about the Gas Tragedy, its effects and legal implications was organized at the University School of Law, Gujarat

University on Dec 3rd morning. Around a hundred people including professors, activists, interested citizens and students participated in the event. On this occasion a memorandum was also sent to Mr. Narendra Modi, Chief Minister of Gujarat highlighting concerns and demanding that action be taken immediately.

Puducherry

In Puducherry a demonstration was held on 3rd December 2009 in front of the Head Post Office, Puducherry to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Bhopal Disaster by the Puducherry Unit of Indian Social Action Forum (INSAF). Mr. C. S. Roche Victor, State Convener of INSAF presided over the programme. Around 50 representatives from eminent Human Rights Activists, Rights Based Organizations and Environmental Organizations participated in the demonstration and shouted slogans that Central Government should take action to punish the culprits Dow and Union Carbide and bring them to book, adequate compensation should be provided to the survivors and the Factory and the surroundings should be cleaned.

Some of the speakers were Mr. R. Abimannan-People's Union for Civil Liberties, Mr. G. Sugumaran-People's Union for Democratic Rights, Mr. R. Azhagiri-Tamil Nationalist Movement, Mr. R. Mangayarselvan-Liberation Tigers of Fisherfolks, Ms. N. Chandra-Oulgaret-Municipality Consumer Protection Council, Mr. G. A.-Jegannathan-Puducherry Local Government Representatives Federation, etc. The speakers also warned the Puducherry Government to take action against the polluting Industries in Puducherry, and the Industries that exploit the ground water. Mr. P. Joseph Victor Raj, from HOPE, State Support Organisation for INSAF, Puducherry had organized the programme. Pamphlets on Bhopal Gas Tragedy, failure of justice, demands for justice in Bhopal and impending danger in Puducherry because of the industries here and in SIPCOT, Cuddalore were distributed to around 400 people.

West Bengal

Bhopal 25th anniversary saw highly mobilised solidarity actions in the state of West Bengal. Students of IICE (an Institute of management and customer care) of Jalpaiguri organized and participated in a rally with poster exhibition and street cornering in front of Ananda Chandra college of Commerce, Jalpaiguri. Senior Citizen and trade Union leader Sri.Chitta Dey attended the street cornering and leader of APDR, Jalpaiguri Sri. Jatiswar Bharati addressed the street cornering. Also present were Prof.Sujit Kr.Ghose, Prof.S.K.Barik and Sri.Ramesh Lahiri.

In Jadhavpur University students carried out a pledge campaign appealing students to make pledge to not to work for Dow. Hundreds of students from the university signed the pledge banner. A photo exhibition depicting the stories of Bhopal disaster and struggle for justice was also displayed and in the evening a sit-in dharna was organized in solidarity with the victims of Bhopal Gas Tragedy.



School Rally in Jalpaiguri, West Bengal

Protest Demonstration in Bangalore, Karnataka



Die-In Action in Imphal, Manipur

Press Conference in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh

Jammu and Kashmir

In Srinagar the supporters launched an online Bhopal awareness campaign and sent mails to the local civil society groups and students. College students in the Kathua district of Jammu region participated in Die-In action and joined a mass meeting on Bhopal, while school children in Rajouri expressed their solidarity with the Bhopal victims by performing visually stunning aerial formation of "NO MORE BHOPAL". The events in the state were widely covered by the local news agencies.

Uttar Pradesh

In Almora, Uttar Pradesh, supporters organized a solidarity march in collaboration with a local college. Hundred of students of Hashmi Girls PG College joined the rally for justice in Bhopal. The action was widely covered by hindi and urdu print media. Sahayog and Humsafar in Lucknow mobilized local groups for a candle vigil and protest march to mark the occasion.

Punjab

The Chandigarh chapter of Voluntary Health Association of India commemorated the 25th anniversary by organizing a candle vigil and stand-in protest. A photo exhibition on Bhopal was held for students in Ashina Public School. The students were briefed about the tragedy and the struggle in a special Bhopal lecture session.

Haryana

To mark the 25th anniversary of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, a film screening, photo exhibition and talk was organized in Jindal Global Law School, Sonapat. Dr. Suroopa Mukherjee, a long time volunteer of ICJB made a presentation on Bhopal disaster and 25 years of struggle. Dr. Mukherjee also presented an insight on the legal doublespeak of the Indian state and issues related to quantification and disbursement of compensation. The day also witnessed the launch of Students-for-Bhopal chapter at the law school.

Kerela

The Bhopal day was remembered in a very special way at the School of Social Work Rajagiri College of Social Sciences under the leadership of Prof. Rajagiri P.O in Kalamassery, Kerela.

- 1) On Dec. 4th, a representative group joined the cycle rally by Periyar Malinikarana Viruddha Samiti - saying 'NO MORE BHOPALS'. They rode to the PCB and made a pledge there.
- 2) On Dec. 8th - during the annual national conference DYUTI - on Right to Life, the second day, 8th was dedicated to Bhopal.
- 3) There was a cylinder depicting the posters and banner in the college quadrangle.
- 4) A signature campaign was carried out in support of ICJB'S actions, mentioning ICJB's initiatives.

The response from other states was also very encouraging. The day of action was successfully organized in Bhubneshwar, Orissa; Panaji, Goa; Samastipur, Bihar; and Almora, Uttarakhand et al. The supporters carried out a wide range of activities, including Die-In actions and online actions which involved large numbers of local groups and the general public, public demonstrations, government lobbying and media work.

Output and Outcome

This section offers a glimpse into some of the achievements of the campaign in relation to the activism on the 25th anniversary of the Bhopal disaster.

Outputs: Immediate products of our work

An array of **high profile, participatory and awareness raising events** feature heavily in the campaign's success stories: from direct actions, Bhopal film festivals, Bhopal photo-exhibition, street marches, rallies, seminars, concerts, public lectures and debates, exhibitions, letter-writing, candle vigils and Die-In actions.

Innovative and wide-reaching communications materials were also deployed. States specific campaign tool were developed which includes documents on how to organise the actions effectively, how to handle media, factsheets, schools packs for teachers to use in the classroom; posters, leaflets, action cards and petitions were all utilised.

In some states campaigners translated the campaign publicity materials into local languages to generate **participation from a wide range of audiences**. As well as campaigners, supporters and activists featuring heavily in the list of participants, there was also a significant involvement and support from other NGOs; from educational institutions; from writers and from journalists

Outcomes: The benefit and changes in the targeted population that are in evidence or anticipated as a result of the achievement of the objectives.

New partnerships and strengthening relationships with youth/civil society groups and educational institutions

Relationship built with the media group that have strong effectiveness to direct public opinion.

Engagement with new audiences and young people. In some places Students for Bhopal chapters were established after the subsequent activity in December. Students showed interest in establishing Bhopal groups in the school. A contact point was able to be identified. Further involvement, discussion and collaboration with teachers/students-in-charge was established

In sum the best thing this project achieved was:

Raising awareness and taking the stories of Bhopal to where it is forgotten; Growth in supporters and Good media coverage, Good visibility and Good participation by activists.



Die-In Action, Chennai, Tamil Nadu



"We Won't Work for Dow" pledge campaign
