

IITians decline Dow Chemicals jobs on moral grounds

Young engineers of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are refusing lucrative jobs at Dow Chemicals (which owns Union Carbide) on moral grounds, as the company has been held responsible for the 1984 [Bhopal](#) gas tragedy that killed over 5,000 people and left thousands permanently disabled.

'IIT students are refusing jobs offered by Dow Chemicals for its wrongdoing. They are writing to their IITs to remove its name from the recruiters' list,' said Mira Shiva of All India Drug Action Network, an NGO.

'IIT Madras and IIT Bombay had cancelled their prospective engagements with Dow. Now students from IIT Kanpur have written to their institute for the same,' Shiva told IANS here on the 23rd anniversary of Bhopal gas disaster.

The disaster took place in the wee hours of Dec 3, 1984 in Bhopal after Union Carbide's pesticide plant released 40 tonnes of methyl isocyanate gas, killing between 2,500 and 5,000 people.

Dow Chemicals acquired Union Carbide Corp in 2001.

Kamal Mitra Chenoy, a Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) professor who has been associated with issue for many years, said: 'We need to question and regulate the kind of companies that enter the academic institutes else, before we realise, our students would be manipulated into becoming official spokespersons of these companies to suit their public gimmick.'

'By refusing Dow entry into the campuses, IITians have not only prevented the company to use them to gain legitimacy in the country but also proved that justice comes before business,' Chenoy said.

Eminent people in the capital also condemned the government's reported move to bail Dow out of its legal liabilities.

'The government should not allow Dow for making foreign direct investment in the country at the cost of Indian lives. It seems that government is planning to write off Dow's liabilities in return for investments in India,' said Kuldip Nayar, a noted journalist and columnist.

'For years, the criminal trail has not been able to progress because Union Carbide is absconding and the government has refused to act strongly to enforce its appearance. It is high time that government represents its own people and companies like Dow. It must make Dow honour Indian law and lives,' Nayar added.

Reports of Dow making an investment of \$100 million (about Rs.4 billion) in a global R and amp;D centre in India are doing the rounds. Media reports say that it has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Maharashtra government.

Shalini Sharma, an activist, who has returned from Bhopal, said: 'Health of those who survived in the tragedy is vulnerable. And even after 23 years, the state government has completely failed in their rehabilitation.'

'People are forced to drink water despite being aware of the fact that it is severely contaminated with hazardous chemicals and would make their health worse. They are still waiting for clean water,' she said.

Sharma added: 'Till now, over 20,000 have been gassed to death and 150,000 continue to be chronically ill in the area. A new generation of children are being born with severe birth defects.'

The Central Bureau of Investigation has recently raided Dow's offices across the country for allegedly bribing officials to the tune of millions in order to get licenses to sell their products here.

The US Securities Exchange Commission has also fined Dow for financial irregularities.

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