# BHOPAL2011

# **REQUIEM & REVITALIZATION**

23 JAN - 04 FEB 2011
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' WORKSHOP & SYMPOSIUM

#### AN INITIATIVE OF

SCHOOL OF PLANNING & ARCHITECTURE, NEW DELHI

MODERN ASIAN ARCHITECTURE NETWORK, INDIA

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR CONSERVATION OF INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE. INDIA



# THE BHOPAL MEMORIAL WORKSHOP & SYMPOSIUM 2011

REGENERATION. REHABILITATION AND REMEMBRANCE AT THE SITE OF BHOPAL GAS TRAGEDY

The Bhopal Gas Tragedy is one of the most horrific industrial disasters in history. On the night between 2 and 3 December 1984, more than 50 tons of highly toxic Methyl Isocyanate (MIC) gas leaked from the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, India killing thousands and condemning thousands more to chronic illness. 25 years on almost all issues related to the Tragedy from its causes to its fallout and legacy remain contentious. The site of the tragedy itself, the former Union Carbide site is still standing and the factory structure is fast disintegrating, faced with neglect and imminent destruction. The destruction of the factory finds support amongst those who perceive the factory precinct as a grim reminder of an unfortunate tragedy that Bhopal is best rid off. Despite these pressures the site remains a repository of history that remain undocumented and stories that are yet to be told.

This dilemma is the point of departure for the Bhopal Memorial Symposium & Workshop 2011.

A strategy for the factory's protection & revitalization needs to address the conflicting views on the factory's position in the cityscape and mindscape of Bhopal. Over the course of two weeks in Jan-Feb 2011, students and experts from multiple disciplines and backgrounds will converge in Bhopal and work together with local citizens in an attempt to understand the tragedy and its site in its conflicting interpretations. Through exploring the possible transformation of the site into a place of remembrance and a resource for empowering the local community the participants will also address the broader issue of how heritage sites with a troubled and troubling legacy can contribute to a better understanding of our times.



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### WHAT IS BHOPAL?

"Phosgene gas that was used by Hitler in his gas chambers, and that is used for the production of methyl isocyanate, is stored in a tank in this factory and if that leaks or explodes it will take one to one and half hour for the death of the entire population of the city," Rajkumar Keswani, Rapat Weekly, 1982

In its timing and in the composition of the principal actors, Bhopal is a curtain raiser to the sordid drama of Globalisation. Bhopal is a window to what lies at the end of Globalisation.

Satinath Sarangi, Bhopal Activist, Sambhavna Clinic Trust, 2001

The enormity of that (Bhopal) tragedy of neglect still gnaws at our collective conscience.

Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India, 2008

Bhopal isn't only about charred lungs, poisoned kidneys, and deformed foetuses. It's also about corporate crime, multinational skullduggery, injustice, dirty deals, medical malpractice, corruption, callousness and contempt for the poor.

Outlook Magazine, 2002

"...but the machine as symbol, as meaning has not been understood. As a result we always end up looking at what happened in Bhopal or what we can do in Bhopal but not at what Bhopal is saying about our society. What Bhopal threatened is the validity of state expertise in science, medicine and law and the superiority of modern over local knowledge. "

Arun Bhide, Indian Adminstrative Service, Bhide Committee Report on Bhopal, 1990s

Since December 1984, I have personally witnessed how broken widows with no future, or children who were forced to become heads of their orphaned families at the age of 9, and day-labourers who lost their 'ability to work', all turned into strong human beings, great activists, tireless campaigners and capable organisers. This self-empowerment through collective struggle is the single greatest achievement of the people of Bhopal and their transformation from victims to victors.

Praful Bidwai, Journalist, July 2004

Memory is the diary that chronicles things that never happened or couldn't possibly have happened.

We cannot afford to forget that a Bhopal is never far away.

Oscar Wilde

Sanjoy Hazarika, New York Times, Bhopal Blinded Us All, 1985



# BHOPAL: THE EVENT & THE METAPHOR

The significance of the Union Carbide disaster extends well beyond Bhopal.

The conflict that 'Bhopal' embodies presents an opportunity to generate templates and approaches with which the various conflicts and challenges of the site can be negotiated. This can contribute to our greater understanding of issues relating to sites with marginalised and conflicting historic narratives. Conflicts in the contemporary past play an active role promoting a problem-oriented critique of practices in play when utilising revitalisation, re-adaptation and remembering makes critical and inclusive perspectives possible, where memory processes and social structuring processes are also given the possibility to participate in creative collaboration. In exploring key issues linked to the emergence of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy Site as a cultural heritage site, Bhopal2011 sets the ground for this collaborative effort around the Bhopal Gas where disciplines of cultural heritage, architecture, urban design and applied arts form alliances with diverse disciplines of culture sociology, global studies, culture geography and development studies.

The symposium and workshop will focus on differences and alternative interpretations and the role of cultural heritage as a democratic force.

## INTENT OF BHOPAL 2011

The 1984 Bhopal disaster and its aftermath are of global importance. The abandoned Union Carbide factory in Bhopal is a repository of history and stories that need to be told. Its relevance concerns questions of power, justice and sustainability social and ecological. Bhopal2011 will raise & address these questions. It will focus on the possible transformation of the site into a place of remembrance and a resource for empowering the local community. Within a collaborative framework the conference and the workshop will explore three main themes.

### THEME1

Challenges in Recognizing Contemporary Sites with a Conflicting Past as Heritage

The 2007 publication *World Heritage: Challenges for the Millennium* notes improving the balance of the World Heritage List as one of the key challenges for the convention. Sites with conflicts and painful associations find resistance in getting acknowledged as heritage not just internationally but especially in their local contexts. They are poorly understood, and neglected by research, since they contain memories that societies and humans tend to forget or suppress since they are painful remainders of individual and collective traumas. Understanding the heritage value of these sites may require a departure from viewing heritage conventions as apolitical treatises to an acknowledgement of the latent power play and politics that are inherent in heritage management frameworks in order to develop strategies to counteract these. The Bhopal disaster has a unique international potential as a case study for archaeology of the recent past. It is possible to study both material and immaterial remains and questions concerning ethics, socio-politics, neo-colonialism and gender are put to the fore in the construct of the Tragedy and its perceptions in society. This exploration can is also a potential democratic asset if people participate in the creation of their own history. Whether or not Bhopal can find a place in our common understanding of 'heritage' will be critical in giving us a tool & precedent for identifying and appropriating similar sites of contemporary and conflicting heritage.



Photo : M Joshi

### THEME 2

Challenges in Interpreting and Rehabilitating Sites with Contemporary and Conflicting Heritage

The process of interpretation encompasses the acknowledgement of multiple narratives that claim conflicting ownership of heritage sites. The legacy of Bhopal is a battleground for various conflicting perspectives. It is a challenge for those entrusted with interpreting the site to give visual and spatial form and content to this complex narrative. There is also a need to address the conflicts that arise between universalistic interpretation of heritage and their local understanding. For example, traditionally, industrial heritage is still investigated from a western European viewpoint mostly, creating a framework that contains specific regional traits at a much smaller extent. However, local issues not only capture the individual features of a community or a region but can also provide an additional key to the understanding of global characteristics. The symposium and workshop will focus on differences and alternative interpretations and the role of cultural heritage as a democratic force.

### THEME 3

Challenges in Harnessing Sites with Contemporary and Conflicting Heritage for Society Building

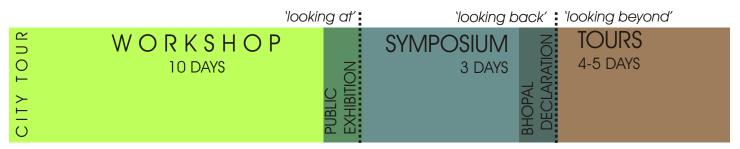
We believe that it is critically important to preserve and communicate the memory of the Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal for realizing the possibility of a world free of disasters such as Bhopal. The structures of the Union Carbide plant are; in the likeness of the remains at World heritage sites as Hiroshima Peace Memorial or Auschwitz Birkenau of tremendous educative value for future generations across the world. Heritage in this context has strategic significance in its potential to serve as a 'powerful catalyst for negotiation and reconciliation through assisting the public in drawing connections between the history of the site and its contemporary implications. But how is this made manifest in a site like the former Union Carbide factory in Bhopal? Credit to source directly as it is part of the survivors letter.

Bhopal's tragedy has bequeathed it a legacy that is of enormous significance to the global discourse on balancing development with equity and ecology. The world over, but especially in Western Europe and North America regeneration through conservation has become a means of revitalizing local economies and maintaining the social fabric of communities hard hit by globalisation. Bhopal2011 looks at the possible protection, decontamination and rehabilitation of Union Carbide Factory as potential to revitalise the precinct and the community around the tragedy site exploring the possible approaches and mechanisms to do so.



Photo: M Josh

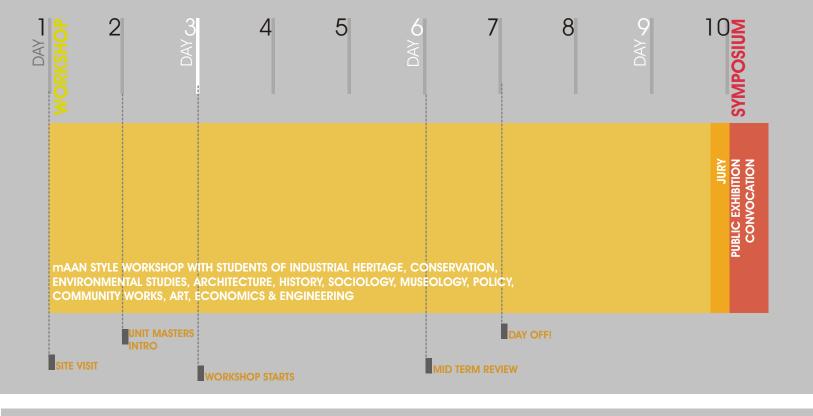
### STRUCTURE OF THE EVENT

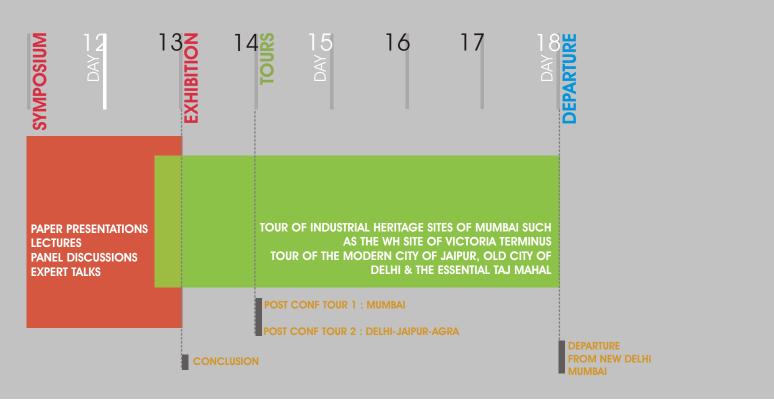


There are three main parts to the event: the workshop, the symposium & exhibition and post conference tours. While the three parts together are structured as a continuous narrative that captures ways of exmaining and engaging with Bhopal though 'looking at', 'looking back' and 'looking beyond', it is flexible to allow participation in one of the three capsules and still take back the essence of the debate. In fact the possibility that various people from diverse backgrounds can participate and contribute to the discourse and move on to make space for fresher minds and newer perspectives during the course of this fortnight long event, makes us look forward to an enriching experience.

The Workshop is the first part of the event. In addressing the social and economic fallout of the Bhopal disaster, the workshop engages in approaches to challenges that face India as it strives to balance globalisation with local perspectives and environmental responsibility. It will be spread over ten days and is structured along the lines of past workshops by mAAN, in Shanghai(2004), Padang(2009) & Singapore (2010). The workshop seeks to explore approaches that can be used to meet the practical and theoretical challenges of the rehabilitation of the Bhopal Tragedy Site. Experts and students in related disciplines as well as stakeholders involved with the Tragedy will engage in non hierarchical dialogue to produce schematic proposals addressing the overall site or key concerns related to the site. By setting the stage for intensive dialogue and interaction between various institutions & disciplines, the workshop will serve as a catalyst to establish long term, quality joint research that can contribute to a better theoretical understanding of the underlying issues in Bhopal and contribute technological innovation and expertise towards its regeneration. The output of the workshop will be put up for a public jury & exhibition at Bharat Bhavan, one of Bhopal's finest cultural venues designed by Charles Correa. While showcasing the work done through the course of the workshop, the exhibition will also serve as a stepping-stone for the symposium, providing the stimulus for debate & solution finding.

The Symposium will be spread over three days and it looks critically at the Bhopal Gas Tragedy and its impact from multidisciplinary perspectives. Issues related to the social, urban and ecological consequences of the Tragedy and the nature of its legacy will be discussed. Representatives of the community hit by the tragedy, social workers, policy analysts, heritage experts, environmentalists and bureaucrats will present a critique of Bhopal after 25 years of the disaster. The post conference tours will form the last leg of the event. The tours will go to Mumbai and to Agra-Jaipur-Delhi -The "Golden triangle"- with special focus on sites of industrial, modern and politically and environmentally conflicted sites.

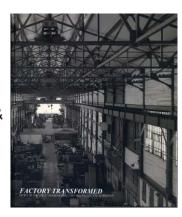






### **EXPECTED (SHORT TERM) OUTCOMES**

- Expression of a creative response to the Factory site in various mixed media such as architectural designs. installation art, critical writing, audio-visual production etc
- Documentation of the workshop's intent, its unique methodology & the creative end products into multilingual book and a film
- Infusion of creative ideas into the master plan for the revitalization of the site of the tragedy & a possibility of continued collaboration between some student teams & the team working on the Bhopal memorial proposal.
- Drawing public and state interest in the potential nomination of the factory site into the tentative list for World Heritage



### SPECIFICS: WORKSHOP

The workshop looks at the practical challenges in rehabilitation of the Tragedy site specifically from the design, urban regeneration and heritage management perspectives. At the same time it addresses the larger social implications of architectural design and heritage conservation. As a starting point and to common reference for different units (student groups) the workshop uses Bhopal Gas Tragedy Memorial proposal that was selected by the Madhya Pradesh State government in 2005 after a nation wide design competition. Using this master plan as a point of departure, five units will focus on different thematic components related to rehabilitation of the site as a cultural heritage site and as a memorial space for the tragedy.

The following five themes will be explored by different units\*:

- 1. Authenticity of Heritage and Interpretation
- 2. Public Art as Commemoration
- 3. Space as a Container for Memory
- 4. Public Participation and the Rehabilitation Process
- 5. Heritage Sites as Urban Resource

### Methodology:

50 students will work over 10 days in five different units of 10 each. Each group will be guided by two unit masters with experience and expertise in the relevant theme. Students will primarily be from architecture, urban design, applied arts, conservation and heritage management backgrounds. The workshop will have guest lectures by experts and a mid-term review. At the end of the workshop units are to present their proposals in media of their choice. Infrastructure in terms of studio space, fixed amount of basic stationery, internet and printing facilities will be provided for the students. The main challenges for the workshop participants would be:

Complexity: Absorbing the complex aspects of the history of the Tragedy site and exploring interventions over a very short period of time.

Communication: between cultures, languages and disciplines *Adapting:* To different cultures and different modes of working

\* Unit Masters & studio venue yet to be finalised

Cement Pagang Factory Revitalization Workshop in Indonesia. 2009

Photo · M Joshi



Photo: Jan af Geijerstam

### **EXPECTED (SHORT TERM) OUTCOMES**

- Exhibition of works produced during the Symposium + Workshop at a public venue in Bhopal.
- Photo exhibition by Sakiko Nomura, renowned photographer based in Tokyo, of photographs of Bhopal during the 25th anniversary of the disaster in 2009 in Bhopal & Hiroshima
- Publication of papers & lectures presented during the symposium in a binder.
- Recognition of areas of common interest and forging academic partnerships between various participating institutions.
- Forging a working partnership between mAAN with interest & expertise in post-colonial, modern heritage of Asia and TICCIH with its mandate in Industrial Heritage with increasing interest in Asia.



## SPECIFICS: SYMPOSIUM

The symposium will introduce investigate central issues as previously outlined under the heading "Intent of Bhopal2011". It will encompass presentations by invited speakers, panel discussions and plenary sessions. The broad structure of the symposium over three days will be:

### Day 1

The Bhopal Gas Tragedy as Event and Metaphor

This session looks the intersection of various factors - social, political, ecological, and economic - leading up to Tragedy and in its aftermath. It explores the underlying themes of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy and its significance for the global discourse on sustainable development.

### Day 2

The Bhopal Gas Tragedy Site as Heritage

This session looks at understanding the tangible heritage value of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy Site. It explores various challenges and resistance to its acceptance as cultural heritage in some quarters. Relevance of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy Site to the challenges associated with the understanding of industrial heritage sites; sites with conflicted heritage, sites invested with the heritage of marginalised communities will be investigated especially in the Indian and Asian context.

### Day 3

The Bhopal Gas Tragedy Site as Memorial

Using the Bhopal Gas Tragedy as a backdrop this session looks at the challenges of interpreting and communicating sites with complex narratives for the larger public. This session critiques the roles disciplines such as architecture, journalism, art & literature, heritage management traditionally play in the construct of public memory. It looks at the tangible output of the process of 'keeping Memory alive' and how it is arrived at.

The list of invited speakers and venue are yet to be finalised. 300 word abstracts are invited from interested speakers along with a brief CV of the author. Detailed guidelines for paper submission are available at <a href="https://www.bhopal2011.in">www.bhopal2011.in</a> and <a href="https://www.bhopal2011.i

Enquiries can be directed to 2011bhopal@gmail.com or info@bhopal2011.in

# SPECIFICS: POST CONFERENCE TOURS

Two post-conference tours are planned, each encompassing three or four full days. Both tours will focus issues of Bhopal2011. The guides will have specialised competence in these fields.

### TOUR 1

BHOPAL - MUMBAI (4 Days 3 Nights)

One tour will go to Mumbai with a special focus on the rapid transformation of this megacity. The former textile mill lands will be covered as well as the remake of the port of Mumbai. The tour will end in Mumbai, from where international flights are available.

Some of the highlights of this tour are Victoria Terminus Station, Dharavi - Mumbai's Shadow City, National Textile Corporation Mills, Crawford Market, Colonial urban precincts in south Mumbai, Gateway of India, Banganga Settlement



### TOUR 2

BHOPAL- AGRA - JAIPUR - DELHI(4 Days 3 Nights)

One tour will go to the modern cities of Agra, Jaipur and New Delhi, commonly know as the Golden triangle. This tour will also encompass visits to some of the "musts", like Taj Mahal. The tour will end at Delhi, from where international flights are available..

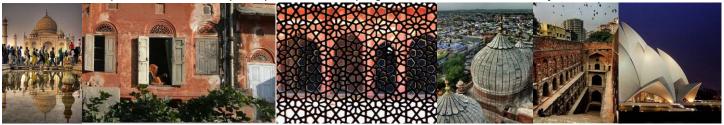
Some of the highlights of this tour are

Agra - Fatehpur Sikri, Sikandara, Taj Mahal, Colonial industrial sites along the Yamuna riverfront

Jaipur - Walled city of Jaipur, Anokhi Museum of Textile, Nahargarh Fort, Jantar Mantar

Delhi - Walled city of Shahjahanabad, Jama Masjid, modern architecture tour of Delhi, Qutub Minar

Each tour will accept a maximum of 25 participants. Detailed program and cost of each tour is yet to be finalised.





WHEN

January 23 - February 4, 2011

# **WHERE**

Bhopal, INDIA

The city of Bhopal is steeped in history. Its monuments, its unique culture and cuisine are a legacy of the times when this lakeside city was the capital of princely states. As part of the modern Indian republic. Bhopal became the capital of one of the most prosperous states the country - Madhya Pradesh, with increasing prominence in the country's political and economic affairs. Yet, most people across the globe have probably heard of this city because of a tragedy that unfolded here 25 years ago. On the night of 3 December 1984, 67 tons of carcinogenic Methyl Isocyanide leaked from the Union Carbide factory, killing over 8000 people in the first three days alone. At last count the toll was closer to 20,000 and generations have been left scarred and deformed by the slow poisoning.



MIC Plant at the Union Carbide Factory Site, 2002

Photo: Maude Dorr

# THE SITE

In spite of its semiotic cultural value as the physical site of the tragedy, the factory precinct today, already in a serious state of disrepair, is under constant threat of being demolished. A recent high court order for the cleanup of the site has increased the odds of this happening as the implementing agencies see the demolition of the factory as a prerequisite for decontamination of the site. This view finds support amongst those who perceive the factory precinct as a grim reminder of an unfortunate tragedy that Bhopal is best rid off. Therefore the case for its protection has to first address these conflicting views on the factory's place in the cityscape and mindscape of Bhopal. This dilemma can be placed in context of the potentially contentious role of heritage conservation in any modern urban setting where industrialisation has left behind a somewhat dubious and antipathetic legacy.





### Photos (L-R): Five past Midnight in Bhopal by Dominique Lapierre & Javier Moro, Space Matters, Jan af Geijerstam

# THE FACTORY

In operation since 1973 with subsequent modifications to the original design, this factory plant was magnificent structure - "largest alpha-naphthol plant of this design anywhere in the world" surpassing the imagination & expectation of the audience. The factory plant produced agricultural pesticide with a promise of a 'greener and better India' and used hazardous chemicals like phosgene, chlorine and methyl isocyanate that lay stocked in abundance at the site. Today, apart from some angry graffiti that one might find scribbled on its walls, there seems to be no visible link between this dilapidated structure and admittedly, the worst industrial disaster in history. For many people, the factory site is a grim reminder of the tragedy and for the State a constant reminder of its burden. The two decades of debate on Bhopal has failed to raise some real issues - which is the sign of our society that Bhopal represents and our approach to acknowledge these bad memories through conservation as an act of social catharsis.

Today the 67 acre industrial site lies abandoned, closed to public and under litigation for serious environmental contamination.

# **ORGANISERS & PARTNERS**

### **Organisers**

School of Planning & Architecture, New Delhi modern Asian Architecture Network, India The International Committee for Conservation of Industrial Heritage, India Support
Space Matters, New Delhi
School of Planning & Architecture New Delhi
Muramatsu Lab, University of Tokyo

#### **Partners**

University of Tokyo
University of Gothenburg, Sweden
Norwegian University of Science & Technology, Trondheim

### In collaboration with

The Energy Resources Institute, New Delhi mAAN, Indonesia
Norra Orienten, Sweden
National University of Singapore
International Coalition of Sites of Conscience

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### **Editorial Team**

Jagan Shah, Historian & Urban Planner, New Delhi Yasushi Zenno, Architectural Historian, Tokyo Zeynep Kuban, Architectural Historian, Istanbul

# PRACTICAL MATTERS

### **POPULATION**

According to the 2001 census the total Bhopal population was about 1,5 million, today it is approximately 2.1 million.

### AREA 285 sq km

### CLIMATE

Bhopal has a humid subtropical climate, with a hot summer and a humid monsoon season. Winters in Bhopal are mild, sunny and dry, with average temperatures around 18 °C and little or no rain. November-December normally sees temperatures between 11 and 29°C.

### **TRAVEL**

Bhopal is the capital of the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh and the administrative headquarter of Bhopal District Bhopal is located in central India, 600 km south of New Delhi. 650 km northeast of Mumbai.



Rail: Bhopal is on Northern and North Eastern Railway route and directly connected with main cities of the country. Road: City of Bhopal is well connected through road with major cities of the country. Frequent bus service is available from Bhopal to prominent cities of the state.

Local Transport: City buses, auto rickshaw, taxis etc. are easily available

### **COSTS**

Participants will have to cover the cost of travel to and fro from Bhopal. In addition to that, the participation fee for each of the three events (Symposium, Workshop & Post Conference Tours) will have to be covered by the participant. These costs will be available after 01September 2010.



# SUGGESTED READING

#### Websites

Wikipedia, The Bhopal Disaster

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhopal\_disaster

The Bhopal Post

www.thebhopalpost.in

International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal

http://www.bhopal.net/

Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief & Rehabilitation Department (Official Website of Government of Madhya Pradesh)

http://www.mp.gov.in/bgtrrdmp/

Bhopal: 25 years on BBC News' website on the Bhopal disaster

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in\_depth/business/2009/bhopal/default.stm

Students for Bhopal

http://www.studentsforbhopal.org/

### Selection of Books

Bridget Hanna, Ward Morehouse and Satinath Sarangi eds. (2005). The Bhopal Reader. Remembering Twenty Years of the World's Worst Industrial Disaster

Eckerman, Ingrid (2005). The Bhopal Saga: Causes and Consequences of the World's Largest Industrial Disaster

T. R. Chouhan, Claude Alvares, Indira Jaising and Nityanand Jayaraman (2004). Bhopal: The Inside Story

Amnesty International (2004) Clouds of Injustice. Bhopal Disaster 20 Years On

Jack Doyle (2004). Trespass Against Us. Dow Chemical & The Toxic Century

Dominique Lapierre (2004). Five past midnight in Bhopal

David Dembo, Lucinda Wykle and Ward Morehous (1990). Abuse of Power. Social Performance of Multinational

Corporations: The Case of Union Carbide

Davied Weir (1988). The Bhopal Syndrome. Pesticides, Environment, and Health

M. Arun Subramaniam and Ward Morehouse (1986). The Bhopal Tragedy. What Really Happened and What it Means for American Workers and Communities at Risk

