

## Closure facilitates Carbide's plans

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Things are moving according to the wishes of Union Carbide. Though the closure of the factory, which took place on July 11, is being considered victory by the common man, it fits unwell with Union Carbide's plans. A report prepared in November 1984, reveals that Carbide was planning to shift four of the five plants of this factory to other countries. All the aspects of transfer were being discussed and planned. Today, after putting the entire blame for the closure on the government, Carbide faces no obstacle in its shifting plans.

Heavy losses for four consecutive years in the Bhopal plant had given sleepless nights to Carbide top brass, right from Bombay to Danbury. A multinational giant with the utmost concern for profits, it could not accept the situation. As the first step to curbing losses, the then works manager, Mr D.N.Chakravarty, was transferred and Mr Mukund started "cost cutting" at every step which hampered safety procedures. Even this "economic emergency" failed to earn profits for Union Carbide. The situation finally led the multinational to plan shifting of the plant to some other country.

A week before the Carbide disaster at Bhopal, a report was prepared for shifting the carbon monoxide, phosgene and MIC plants to Mexico and the sevin plant to Indonesia. The report contains details of dismantling, packing and shipping of the plants.

After a thorough investigation of documents, it was found that Carbide was under pressure from its Indonesian unit, which wanted the sevin carbamylation plant. A detailed report was also submitted to the Union Carbide Corporation, Danbury, by the chief executive of the Indonesian plant, Mr G.M. Pillai, who had previously worked at Carbide's Bhopal plant.

Carbide's Mexico unit wanted to have the MIC plant there. UCC okayed the proposals and with the green signal Union Carbide (eastern) and UCIL swung into action.

This plan was beneficial to Carbide. It saved the corporation from heavy losses at Bhopal and got it financial backing from new installations. UCIL was, of course, planning to continue its pesticide formulation plant at Bhopal. The raw material required to run this plant, sevin technical, was proposed to be imported from USA.

According to plans, Mr Natrajan of Union Carbide (Eastern), Hong Kong sent a telex message, based on information provided by Mr Pillai, to UCIL, Bombay. The telex was sent in the name of Mr Kishore Kamdar, UCIL vice-president of the agricultural products division. He was requested to submit a report about the estimates of the proposed shifting.

This operation was a top secret. Only three executives of company—Mr K.Kamdar, Mr J.Mukund and Mr Umesh Nanda—knew about it. The safety engineer, Mr Umesh Nanda, was holidaying in Bombay. He was specially sent to Bhopal to prepare this report. The report was submitted to Mr Kamdar in Bombay in November 28, 1984. It was immediately forwarded over telex to Mr Natrajan at Hong Kong for further action.

According to this report, the estimated cost of dismantling, packing, forwarding and shipping from Bombay worked out to around Rs 1.8 crore.

There had been talk among workers and officials at Bhopal of closure of the unit but nobody knew the exact details. All these apprehensions were based on mounting losses and the voluntary retirement scheme the company had offered to get rid of "surplus" workers.

After the December gas leak, questions about the rumoured closure were being constantly asked

by journalists which the government persistently denied. Technically, the government denial is valid because carbide did not apply for permission to shut down the plant. But at the same time it is also true that this document was seized by CBI by the morning of December 4.

In the same manner, Carbide also tried to hush up the matter by floating another theory. In a press conference held on December 26, Mr B.P. Shrivastava, chief scientist of the Union Carbide's controversial R and D centre claimed that by next year this plant would have earned profits. The stage was set to introduce a new product in the market, which would have wiped out Union Carbide's previous losses, he said. The statement of Mr B.P. Shrivastava and the shifting report are contradictory. If Mr Shrivastava is to be believed, then the situation compels one to think that even the top brass in Union Carbide do not know the games being played behind scenes in the multinational killer.

There were certain obstacles against implementation of this plan compensation to workers, permission for closure, shifting the four major plants from the unit and possible resistance by workers. The December gas leak has shaken Union Carbide completely, but by design or coincidence the scales are tilted in its favour.

The blame for the closure of the factory has been transferred to the government, which has refused to grant it a licence to run the factory. They are allowed to close the factory under section 25(O) of the Industrial Disputes Act, which gives workers virtually no compensation. At the time the Carbide management is playing dirty by asking the government to allow it to run a 'safe' formulation plant and asking workers union to pressurise the government to allow the plant to be set up so that their jobs are safe. The government is not willing to accept any of these offers.

A few month age team of UCC experts which visited Bhopal to find out the causes of the "accident", and the UCC chairman Mr Warren Anderson, made public their fears of "sabotage". They have also raised a finger at workers. A few agencies are trying to put the blame on Sikh terrorists. Now the question arises that who to be benefited by this sabotage? The workers, Sikh terrorists or Union Carbide ?