



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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Court allows disposal of remaining Union Carbide toxic waste at Pithampur

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Context

The Madhya Pradesh High Court on Thursday gave its nod to the State government following an assurance from the latter that it could incinerate the remaining 40-year-old toxic waste of Bhopal's defunct Union Carbide factory within 72 days at a private facility in Pithampur

Bhopal gas disaster

- The Bhopal Gas Disaster, one of the world's worst industrial accidents, occurred on the night of **December 2-3, 1984, in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.**
- A highly toxic gas, **methyl isocyanate (MIC)**, leaked from a **pesticide plant owned by Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL).**
- The leak exposed over 500,000 residents to the gas, leading to immediate fatalities and long-term health complications.

Reasons for the Disaster

- **Poor Maintenance:** Safety systems, like gas scrubbers and cooling systems, were either non functional or inadequate.
- **Negligence:** Lack of proper training for workers and failure to follow safety protocols.
- **Cost-Cutting Measures:** Union Carbide had reduced staff and safety standards to lower operational costs.
- **Design Flaws:** Faulty plant design increased the risk of gas leaks.
- **Storage Issues:** Excessive quantities of MIC were stored at the plant, contrary to safety guidelines.

Methyl Isocyanate (CH₃NCO)

- **Volatile, colorless liquid** that is extremely **flammable**, and **potentially explosive** when mixed with air.
- Reacts with water, giving off heat and producing methylamine and carbon dioxide.
- Liquid and vapor are toxic when inhaled, ingested, or exposed to the **eyes or skin.**

Initiatives taken to tackle Chemical accidents

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- **NDMA guidelines on Chemical Disaster Management:** Inspection System by Regulatory Bodies, Establish Information networking system with states and districts on priority basis etc.
- **Explosives Act, 1884:** To control manufacture, possession, use, transportation and importation of Explosives.
- **Chemical Accidents (Emergency Planning, Preparedness, and Response) Rules 1996.**