

INDIA WEST

• North America's Most Honored Weekly Indian Newspaper • Periodicals Postage paid at San Leandro, CA, and at additional mailing offices.

VOL. XL NO. 3 • December 5, 2014

USA/CANADA

www.indiawest.com • 50 CENTS



Providing
Limousine Services
in Southern California.
TOWN CAR, SUV
STRECH LIMO, PARTY BUS
Call:
626-859-0695
Email: info@upperclasslimousine.com
Website: www.upperclasslimousine.com

India



Bhopal Groups Urge Modi to Act Against Dow

A30

Business



Tech Mahindra to Acquire Va.-Based Firm for \$240M

B1

Entertainment



Ajay Devgn: Past Easygoing, Present Great, and Future Hopes

C1

Bhopal: Thirty Years Later No Relief Still for Gas Plant Disaster Victims

■ Protests and commemorations held

By **SUNITA SOHRABJI**
India-West Staff Reporter

THIRTY years after an estimated 4,000 people were killed in Bhopal, India, in the world's most horrific industrial disaster, residents of the area are still suffering, said community activists who commemorated the tragedy throughout the week beginning Dec. 1.

"The issue still persists," said Jayshree Chander, an Indian American San Francisco, Calif., physician who has spent time volunteering at a clinic for survivors of the incident, which occurred on the night of Dec. 3, 1984 as methyl isocyanate gas leaked out from the chemical factory owned by the Union Carbide Corporation. (See other Bhopal stories inside.)

Chander told **India-West** that
[Cont. on page A14]



Bhopal Gas disaster victim Barkat Ali (center) holds a photograph of his daughter who was killed in the disaster during a commemoration rally in Bhopal on Dec. 1, 2014. The protest commemorated the 30th anniversary of the world's worst industrial disaster when gas leaked from a pesticides plant owned by the U.S. multinational Union Carbide, and killed about 4,000 people on the night of Dec. 3, 1984. The death toll over the next few years rose to 15,000, according to government estimates. Union Carbide is now owned by Dow Chemicals. (Indranil Mukherjee/AFP/Getty Images)

Smooth Hearing for Envoy Nominee Richard Verma

By **RICHARD SPRINGER**
India-West Staff Reporter

RICHARD Rahul Verma, President Barack Obama's nominee as the next ambassador to India, sailed smoothly through his confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Dec. 2, as senators emphasized the critical importance of the diplomatic post in the 21st Century and praised the Indian American nominee's background and qualifications.

Foreign Relations Committee outgoing chairman Robert Menendez, D-N.J., said Verma's appointment, if approved by the full Senate, would come "at a criti-
[Cont. on page A28]



File photo of Richard Verma (right) in conversation with the late Richard Holbrooke, U.S. special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on Capitol Hill, in Washington, D.C., on July 14, 2010. (Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

Here for all your home financing needs!

Sonia Walia, MBA

Sr. Mortgage Loan Originator
NMLS# 544579
Stearns Lending, LLC

415.933.7472

swalia@stearns.com

- Jumbo and Conventional loans
- FHA*, VA and USDA products
- Local Fulfillment



*Stearns Lending, LLC is an FHA Approved Lending Institution, and is not acting on behalf of or at the direction of HUD/FHA or the Federal government.

This is not a commitment to lend. Program restrictions apply. Stearns Lending, LLC offers many loan products. Stearns Lending, LLC is a California Limited Liability Company headquartered at 4 Hutton Centre Drive, 10th Floor, Santa Ana, California 92707. (800) 350-LEND (5363) Company NMLS# 1854. Licensed by the Department of Business Oversight under the California Residential Mortgage Lending Act RMLA# 4130495; This information is accurate as of July 15, 2014. © 2014 Stearns Lending, LLC All Rights Reserved. SHL392.

No Relief Still for Bhopal Gas Plant Disaster Victims

[Cont. from page A1]

Union Carbide abandoned the factory soon after the deadly leak and did nothing to clean up its mess, allowing toxic chemicals to seep into the city's groundwater supply. No concerted efforts have been made to clean up toxic waste from the factory, which has poisoned groundwater in a 3.5 kilometer radius around the now-shuttered plant. Union Carbide became a subsidiary of Dow Chemicals in 2001.

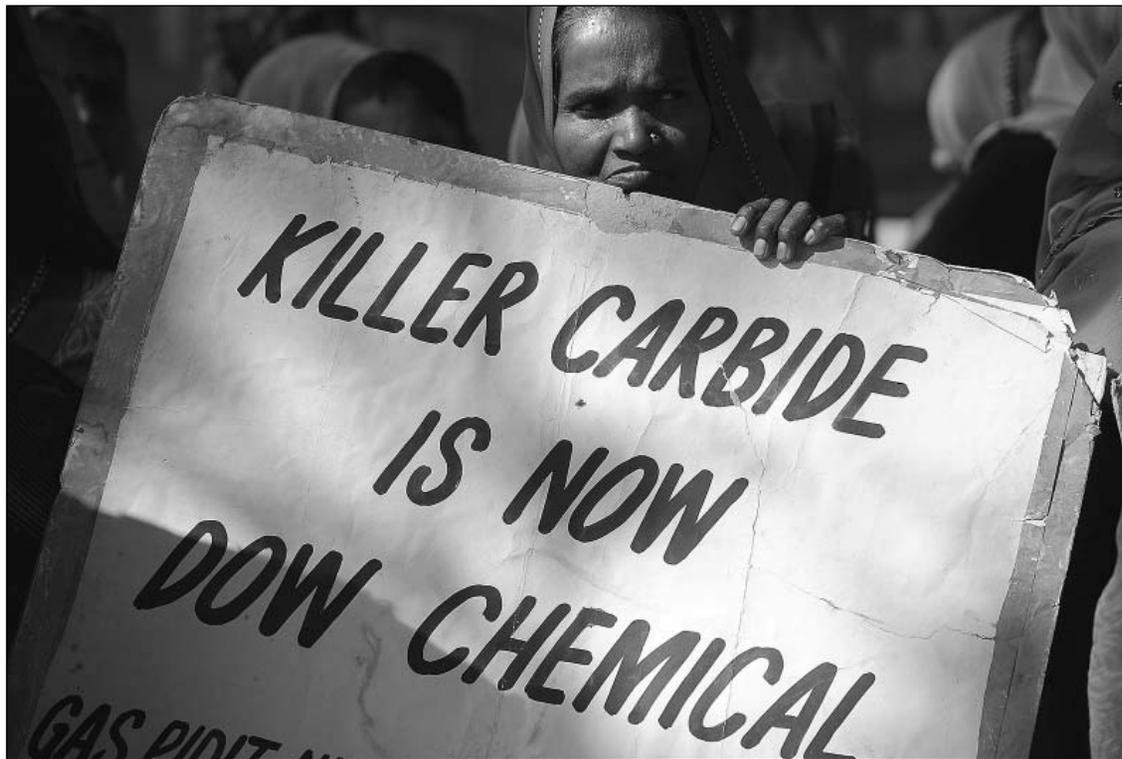
"The global community has not held corporations accountable for their actions," stated Chander, adding that a 1989 out-of-court settlement of \$470 million allotted only \$500 to families of those killed by the disaster and \$200 to the injured.

"Adequate compensation was not delivered," she asserted.

A new Narendra Modi-led government will prioritize bringing in foreign investors, perhaps over and above the health and safety of India's residents, speculated Chander.

The Indian government estimates that 558,000 people have been victimized by the incident. In 2012, the government pledged \$4.5 million to a German company to remove 350 metric tons of toxic waste from the site; the work has not yet begun.

A second-generation of children born near the facility have



A Bhopal Gas disaster survivor holds a placard during a protest rally in Bhopal on Dec. 2. (Getty Images)

a higher incidence of congenital birth defects, according to Chander. "We don't know how many generations will be affected," she told **India-West**.

Chander, the founder of Beyond Holistic, is heading up week-long efforts throughout the San Francisco Bay Area to commemorate the tragic disaster. In connection with the global movement, "We All Live in Bhopal," Berkeley's

reputed Chaat Café is hosting a visual arts display of works inspired by the disaster and its victims. The works will be on display through Dec. 8.

The Bay Area commemoration week kicked off Dec. 2 with a screening of "Bhopali" — a documentary focusing on survivors of the deathly gas leak — at the UC Berkeley campus. The evening featured a question and answer

session with "Bhopali" director Max Carlson.

On Dec. 4, Boston Commons Asset Management was scheduled to host a noon luncheon in San Francisco on corporate responsibility and socially responsible investing. Additional film screenings and panel discussions were to be held on campus on Dec. 6 and 7. Rahul Verma's play, "Bhopal," is being staged through Dec. 14, in

conjunction with the event.

In Texas, a group of Aid-India volunteer students were scheduled to stage their annual "die-in" Dec. 3 on the University of Texas, Austin campus. Participants at the "die-in" — which has been held since 2001 — shrouded their bodies in white shawls in remembrance of the dead bodies found in the aftermath of the disaster. As the event was staged, other AID-India volunteers talked to students about the disaster, asking them to sign a petition which exhorts UT president William Powers to write a letter to Dow Chemicals, asking them to claim corporate responsibility in the Bhopal disaster. A similar petition was sent to Powers in 2007. Parvathy Prem, one of the organizers of the die-in, told **India-West** that the president ignored the petition, and added that UT receives a large amount of grant funding from Dow to support its chemical engineering program.

After the die-in, the film "Assist Bhopal," produced and directed by Megan Dogra, a 10th grader in Wisconsin, was screened on campus.

"The people of Bhopal are incredibly inspiring," said Prem. "There are women who come from incredibly conservative families and may have never stepped outside their home, who

[Cont. on page A17]



MAAZDA TRAVEL

CST# 1019180-10



MOST COMPETITIVE FARES TO EUROPE / INDIA

★ PAKISTAN ★ SRI LANKA ★ FAR EAST ★ MIDDLE EAST ★ AFRICA











































ENCINO

818-789-0543

SAN FRANCISCO

650-259-7677

DALLAS

214-637-2990

Maazda Travel

No Relief Still for Bhopal Gas Plant Disaster Victims

[Cont. from page A14]

lost members of their family and are now out on the streets, fighting for their rights.”

Both Chander and Prem noted the theme of the international

commemoration – “We All Live in Bhopal” – adding that chemical plants in the U.S. are equally ripe for Bhopal-like disasters. Last year, an ammonium nitrate explosion at the West Storage

Fertilizer Facility in the town of West, Texas, killed 15 people and injured 160.

Prem – an aerospace engineering Ph.D. student at UT– told **India-West** that the facility was storing 1,300 times the amount of ammonium nitrate it had been licensed to hold, which should have triggered an investigation. The last inspection of the facility was in 1985; inspectors found five violations, but fined the company only \$30.

Last January, 300,000 residents in West Virginia were left without potable water for five days after a chemical spill from the Freedom Industries factory dumped 7,500 gallons of methylcyclohexane-methanol into the nearby Elk River. More than 1,900 people called poison control centers in the area, complaining of headaches, dizziness, vomiting and

gastrointestinal distress from drinking the polluted water. Lab rats died after being exposed to high concentrations of the chemical. The company was not fined, nor was it mandated to clean up its mess.

One out of every three U.S. residents lives within a mile of a high-risk chemical factory, stated Chander, noting there are inadequate protocols for preventing industrial disasters in the U.S.

Renu Pariyadath, a North American spokeswoman for the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal, told **India-West** that many events are being held to acknowledge the Bhopal gas plant disaster. Most notably, 30 people began a fast Dec. 3 for 30 hours to raise awareness of the issue.

Pariyadath became involved with ICJB while in India in 2012, doing research for her thesis

on diaspora activism. “I had no idea there was such a concerted movement,” she said, adding that the structure of the organization allows both countries to work together.

Pariyadath, now a professor at the University of Iowa, said she shares the hopes of the Bhopalis, who expect a complete clean-up of the area around the plant and that Dow Chemical shows up in court for a trial.

“If there is justice in this case, it will set a precedent for similar campaigns around the world, and establish a greater value for human life outside the U.S.”

“This is an example of what happens when companies move into unregulated markets,” said Pariyadath, adding: “The campaign is trying to change the corporate mindset of profits over people.”



Bhopal Gas disaster survivor Chironjee Bai Thakur holds a photograph of her late husband Maharja Singh during a protest rally in Bhopal on Dec. 2. Protests and commemorations were held around the world to observe the 30th anniversary of the Bhopal tragedy. (Getty Images)

EarthRights Files Appeal in U.S. Bhopal Relief Case

By **SUNITA SOHRABJI**
India-West Staff Reporter

EarthRights International, a U.S. organization representing thousands of victims of the 1984 Bhopal gas plant disaster filed an appeal Nov. 20 with the Second Circuit Appellate Court in New York to overturn a July ruling which absolves the Union Carbide Corporation of any wrongdoing in the world's worst industrial accident.

In July, U.S. District Court Judge John Keenan, who has ruled in favor of Union Carbide in three previous cases related to the Bhopal tragedy, summated that the plant was built and owned and operated by an Indian subsidiary, UCIL; therefore Union Carbide could not be sued to clean up the mess. Keenan also ruled that the government of Madhya Pradesh and Union Carbide are not responsible for stemming the ongoing contamination of groundwater.

Critically, Keenan ruled that Lucas John Couvaras, believed to be the onsite Union Carbide project manager at the time of the accident, could not be deposed.

Couvaras, now retired and living in Houston, has told EarthRights International that he was employed by the Union Carbide Corporation, not UCIL.

If Couvaras is found to be a Union Carbide employee, everything he did at the time would hold Union Carbide as responsible for the gas plant disaster. Keenan has three times previously ruled against Bhopal plaintiffs.

Rick Herz, a spokesman for EarthRights International, told **India-West** he was optimistic that an appellate court judge would overturn Keenan's July ruling. “The role of the court at this stage is not to weigh the evidence,” he said, adding that Keenan's role was simply to determine whether the case could go to trial.

If the Appellate Court rules in favor of the plaintiffs, the case will go back to a lower court for trial, possibly by a jury.

People as far as three kilometers away are still using contaminated water, noted Herz, adding that no substantive attempt to clean up the aquifers has been made in the 30 years since the disaster.



The Company You Keep®

SATISH PATEL

AGENT, NEW YORK LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

CA Ins. Lic# OA95351



Life Time Member

Registered Representative, NYLIFE Securities LLC (Member FINRA/SIPC)

6300 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 2200 • Los Angeles, CA 90048

(323) 782-3000 • satishpatel@ft.newyorklife.com

- Life Insurance
- Retirement Planning
- Buy/Sell Agreement
- Pension, Keogh, IRA, 401(K)
- College/Education Funding
- Mortgage Protection
- Mutual Funds*
- Estate Planning

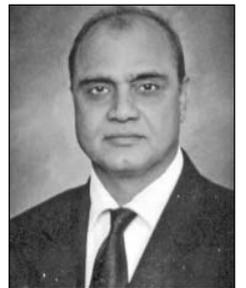
Bus: 800-787-3047

Res: 310-417-3551

Cell: 213-445-4358

Fax: 310-417-3631

*Offered by NYLIFE Securities LLC
(member of FINRA/SIPC)
A Licensed Insurance Agency



Become A Doctor



Admission in INDIA, Europe (UK etc),
Caribbean, Australia & Asia.

Starts at ~\$45,000 for ALL 5 Years
High School to Medical School

Become a DOCTOR in America -- Join now -- Life time opportunity

In English. Our doctors are practising in U.S. Some were at Harvard University.



No MCAT!

No BS!

Please do not waste your time in AS or BS

Eligible for US (MLE)
Canada & UK

WHO listed Top Merit Medical Colleges/ Universities

US- MLE ---> RESIDENCY

1 yr as Junior doctor. Terms vary with schools

Our sister universities are in USA, Canada, UK, Australia etc.
GOOD HOUSING, PAYMENT PLANS & SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

www.EasyMedSchool.com
Email: EasyMedSchool@yahoo.com

Admissions OPEN. Apply NOW!

Compare: Some US/ Euro/ Carib schools- ~\$700,000 - need BS + MCAT -> 8 to 10 years
Our Schools: start from ~\$45,000 - We need only 12th grade --> 5 years-> Intern Doctor

Easy Med School, LLC

209-830-8266 • 248-419-0284

Call Now! Join Now!!