

BHOPAL GAS TRAGEDY NOT AN ACCIDENT BUT SABOTAGE, SAYS CONVICTED UCIL OFFICIAL

The 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy was not an accident but the result of a sabotage that claimed thousands of lives, a former official of the Union Carbide India Limited told the district and sessions court here on Wednesday.

SP Choudhary, the former UCIL production manager, was among eight Indian officials of the erstwhile company convicted of causing death by negligence in the case and sentenced to two-year rigorous imprisonment by the chief judicial magistrate (CJM) court in June 2010.

Warren Anderson, the chief executive of Union Carbide when the gas leak killed over 3,000 people, died in 2014 without giving into India's repeated attempts to make him face trial. Dow Chemical, which bought Union Carbide in 2001, has washed its hands of any responsibility.

While one of the eight Indian convicts died during the trial, all others challenged their conviction before the Bhopal sessions court. The CBI, which probed the case, too, challenged the CJM court order for enhancing the quantum of punishment in the case.

'CBI's premise that the tragedy was caused due to design defect was a farce'

While arguing for his client, Choudhary's counsel Anirban Roy told the court the CBI's premise that the tragedy was caused due to design defect and poor maintenance of the gas plant was a farce. "It was instead a result of sabotage at the plant by some people. Hence the tragedy was a manmade disaster," said Roy.

Choudhary had assisted the probe agency in the investigations into the case.

The theory of design defect, Roy said, was floated by the central government in its endeavour to do justice to the victims of the tragedy. Everyone else who was part of investigations into the case "just toed the line of the central government", he said.

'Govt and the CBI suppressed the truth and saved real perpetrators of the crime'

The government and the CBI suppressed the actual truth and saved the real perpetrators of the crime, the counsel told the court.

He further sought the entire CBI case diary of the 1984 disaster. "We have orally sought the case diary... On the next date of hearing on August 19, we will submit facts to support our argument and formally request the court for the CBI's case diary," Roy told the HT.

SOURCE: Hindustan Times, Updated July 21, 2016 1640: IST

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/bhopal/bhopal-gas-tragedy-not-an-accident-but-sabotage-says-convicted-ucil-official/story-Q87kJ40p7pKS9sJd5udlmI.html>