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CSE to start Union Carbide site clean-up

Chetan Chauhan, Hindustan Times Bhopal, August 01, 2013

Even after three decades, the crumbling structure of the Union Carbide Factory awaits remediation. In a sheer case of apathy, the Supreme Court has failed to issue directions to both the Centre and state government regarding remediation of the site.

Taking cue from this, the Centre for Science and Environment on Thursday presented the environmental remediation for the site, which can remove the hazardous chemicals from above and below the ground in five years.

“The government needs to discuss the action plan proposed by experts who have conducted studies on Bhopal gas tragedy,” said CSE’s director general Chandra Bhushan.

The factory site reeks of chemicals and ground water around the factory is contaminated with heavy metals said to be carcinogenic. The solar evaporation ponds developed on leased private land — now given back to locals — has houses coming up. The open contaminated grasslands are grazing grounds for goats of thousands of people living around the depilated boundary walls of the factory.

Abdul Jabbar, who had been fighting for Bhopal victims since 1984, describes the difficult lives of locals and blamed the government for failing to act. Many blame activists like them for delay as they want Dow Chemicals, now owner of Union Carbide to pay for remediation. The issue is being debated in the Supreme Court as the department of chemicals has sought Rs. 310 crore for the same.

Although the official estimate of the waste at the site is 350 tonnes, many put the number at close to 20,000 tonnes.