

# Disposal of waste from Bhopal tragedy site begins

## HTEXCLUSIVE

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**BHOPAL/NEW DELHI:** More than three decades after the Bhopal gas tragedy, about 10 tonnes of toxic waste was secretly shifted from the Union Carbide factory in the Madhya Pradesh capital to a private incineration facility in Dhar district, which began burning it on Thursday.

The process follows a 2012 order by the Supreme Court, which told the government to conduct a trial run to dispose of the hazardous waste at a facility in Dhar district's Pithampur town.

But environmentalists and residents of the town had opposed the move to burn the waste from one of the world's biggest industrial disasters that killed thousands of people and maimed generations.

The transfer of the dangerous cargo from Bhopal started secretly a fortnight ago fearing renewed opposition from locals and environmental groups in Pithampur, government sources said.

Sources in Bhopal said about 10 tonnes of toxic waste was packed within a day in four trucks and transported to the facility run by Ramky Enviro Engineers Limited in Dhar district, 225km from the state capital, under heavy security.

Officials of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) supervised the operation as the

## TWISTS AND TURNS

After 3 decades, the toxic waste is finally being disposed off

**December 2, 1984:** A gas leak from the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal kills thousands

**2004:** Alok Pratap Singh of Zahreeli Gas Kand Sangharsh Morcha files PIL in Madhya Pradesh HC demanding disposal of toxic waste from the plant site alleging it was responsible for air and water pollution. HC orders waste to be disposed in Ankleshwar in Gujarat. Gujarat government opposes move

**2011:** HC orders waste to be disposed of in DRDO facility near Nagpur. NGOs oppose move. A firm from Germany offers to incinerate the waste only to back out due to local protests

**2012:** SC asks state and Union governments to jointly dispose of the waste in 6 months

**2015:** 10 tonnes of waste moved from Union Carbide plant in Bhopal to Pithampur. Incineration begins at Ramky facility on Thursday.

trucks were loaded in a single day instead of the three days scheduled.

"The trial run of the disposal of toxic waste began on Thursday and is expected to be completed in five days," said an official in Pithampur, the district headquarters for Dhar.

AB Akolkar, member secretary of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), confirmed to Hindustan Times that the shifting of toxic waste was done in accordance with the Supreme Court's order and the disposal would be done in a "scientific" manner.

If the experiment succeeded, CPCB officials said, the remaining 340 tonnes would be transported to Pithampur. This will clear the decks for a gas tragedy memorial at the factory site.

Earlier, the government was considering burning the waste at a DRDO site in Nagpur and a facility in Germany following opposition from Pithampur residents.

According to official records, the gas leaked from the Union Carbide factory on the night of December 2, 1984, and killed 3,787 people. Civil society groups put the figure at more than 10,000.

The waste disposal was done following public outcry as well as a Bhopal-based NGO's public interest litigation in the Madhya Pradesh high court in 2004, alleging that the toxic material was affecting the air and water of the area around the plant.

The first study conducted by Union Carbide which owned the factory in 1989 proved contamination and 16 studies thereafter confirmed it.