

At career fair, IU students ask peers to remember Bhopal tragedy

'I think who you work for says a lot about who you are,' says one member of group seeking to raise awareness of disaster

By Steve Hinnefeld

331-4374 | shinnefeld@heraldt.com

Remember Bhopal — even though the tragedy happened 22 years ago, it remains a significant example of corporate irresponsibility.

That was the message the IU chapter of the Association for India's Development had for students attending a life sciences career fair Thursday.

Members of the student group stood outside the Indiana University Auditorium, holding posters and handing out fliers about the Bhopal tragedy, a toxic gas leak that killed thousands in the Indian city.

"We're trying to get the attention of the people going inside," said Giri Krishnan, an IU graduate student and the president of the group. "Our main objective is to have people make an informed career choice."

Their target was Dow Chemical Co., one of 17 companies at the career fair.

The leak of methyl isocyanate gas took place Dec. 3, 1984, at a Union Carbide factory in Bhopal. It killed between 3,000 and 7,000 people outright and ultimately caused 15,000 to 20,000 deaths.

Dow acquired Union Carbide in 2001.

The students, many of them Indian or Indian-American, said Dow should complete the cleanup of Bhopal, provide compensation and medical treatment for victims and let the Indian courts resolve questions of responsibility.

Attempts to reach Dow media contacts Thursday

weren't successful.

The company's Web site says Bhopal was "a human tragedy that should never be forgotten," but legal issues were resolved in 1989, when Union Carbide agreed to pay \$470 million into a trust managed by the Indian government. The government also took charge of the cleanup, it says.

For Dow to take further action on Bhopal, it says, "would not be appropriate or consistent with our obligation to protect our shareholders' interests."

Association for India's Development students said land and water at Bhopal remain poisoned. Vidhi Sanghavi, a sophomore from Elkhart, said she was stunned to learn about the tragedy when she took a course in India this summer.

"My only goal is just to raise awareness," she said. "I think who you work for says a lot about who you are."