

Date: 10 June 2008

To: The organizers of the 2008 Golden Jubilee Conference: An Open Letter

Subject: Reject ties with Dow Chemical

This letter is in our capacities as concerned citizens of India, and does not represent an official position of IIT-Bombay.

Dear Sir/Madam:

We are faculty members of the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay. Recently, Dow Chemical has been attempting to forge links with IITs by offering to fund fellowships and research projects. It has also explored the possibility of recruiting IIT graduates through the IIT placement offices. We are writing to urge you to reject any offer of a relationship with Dow Chemical or any of its subsidiaries for reasons mentioned below. In particular, we strongly urge you to refuse sponsorship from Dow Chemical for the 2008 Golden Jubilee Conference, planned for 18-20 July 2008.

Legal liabilities: Union Carbide Corporation, USA, is a key accused in a criminal case related to the 1984 Bhopal disaster where the company is charged with “culpable homicide not amounting to murder”, among other charges. Since it failed to honour summons issued by the Bhopal court, it was declared an absconder in 1992. Dow Chemical has also failed to obey the law and is currently being prosecuted in the Bhopal Chief Judicial Magistrate court and the Madhya Pradesh High Court for sheltering a fugitive. To date, it has failed to make Union Carbide – its 100 percent subsidiary – appear in court to face trial. As recently as February 2008, the Union law ministry of India has underscored that Dow Chemical would have to face all the pending legal liabilities of Union Carbide.

Environmental liabilities: Aside from the gas disaster, Union Carbide’s routine operations in the Bhopal factory have resulted in a massive environmental contamination problem that has not been addressed to date. Several thousand tons of toxic waste, pesticides and contaminated material and machinery lie strewn in and around the factory site. Over the years, the waste has leached its poison into the groundwater. At least 10 governmental and non-governmental studies document and confirm the spread of toxic contamination. More than 20,000 people are still forced to consume this contaminated water in the absence of any viable alternative. Tests carried out at IIT Kanpur by a New Delhi based fact finding mission on Bhopal, showed the presence of toxic chemicals such as chloroform, chlorobenzenes, dichloromethane and heavy metals such as lead and mercury in the breast milk of mothers in these communities. The impact of the chemicals on birth defects, infant mortality, and infant health is also well-documented.

Union Carbide and Dow Chemical have refused to clean up the toxic waste lying inside and outside the abandoned factory. Dow also refuses to pay for medical damages to the 25,000 people who have been drinking contaminated water for last several years.

Poor track record: Dow Chemical’s track record in India and abroad is very poor on various counts:

- In 2007, the company was fined \$325,000 by the US Securities Exchange Commission for having paid \$200,000 in bribes to Agriculture Ministry officials for expediting the registration of three of its pesticides. One of the registered pesticides, Dursban (chlorpyrifos), is freely sold in India while it has been withdrawn from use in the US owing to its demonstrated deleterious effects on the mental development of children.
- In 2005, Indian Oil canceled a technology tie-up with Dow Global Technologies Inc., a subsidiary of Dow Chemical, because the company had attempted to sell a Union Carbide technology by passing it off as its own. Indian Public Sector Units follow a policy of not dealing with any Union Carbide technology.

Unpopularity in academic circles: Dow’s poor track record, particularly with respect to Bhopal, has made it very unpopular.

- In May 2005, more than 1300 IIT alumni intervened and forced the organizers of the Global IIT 2005 Conference to cancel the key note address by William Stavropoulos, then CEO of Dow Chemical.
- In March 2007, the University of California, Berkeley, returned a donation by Dow Chemical towards organizing the UC Berkeley Energy Symposium after students voted overwhelmingly against accepting funds from the tainted company.
- In October 2007, more than 1000 IIT alumni endorsed the petition urging IIT authorities to reject any association with Dow Chemical.
- In December 2007, organizers of the INCCOM-VI International Conference at IIT Kanpur, as well as organizers of the Eighth International Conference on GLS at IIT Delhi, returned funding from Dow Chemical, after a significant section of the respective campus communities voiced their concerns.

On 20th Feb 2008, a large section of us, IIT Bombay's faculty, voiced our concerns regarding Dow's liabilities vis-a-vis Bhopal, in a meeting held here. As is evident unequivocally from the minutes of the meeting (minutes attached), Dow's representatives do not have any satisfactory answers to counter observations / criticisms on the persistent rejection of their liabilities.

Dow Chemical is itself well aware of its unpopularity in academic circles. In the meeting mentioned above at IIT Bombay, Dow Chemical would not permit any student participation – or even any participation of student representatives. A further precondition to the meeting was a refusal to allow any audio or video recording of the meeting itself. Dow Chemical's clearly aims to acquire legitimacy and credibility by forging relations with the IITs. The reputation of the IITs will certainly be tarnished by any association with Dow Chemical.

We strongly believe that it would be against our national interests to accept or encourage any offers made by Dow Chemical. In particular, we also believe that the acceptance of the sponsorship from Dow Chemical for the 2008 Golden Jubilee Conference, planned for 18-20 July 2008 would set an incorrect precedent and would wrongly help legitimize Dow's ongoing attempts to set up alliances with various academic institutions and other national organizations.

Sincerely,

[43 IITB Faculty](#)

<http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/GJDowOpenLetter/signatures.html>