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FARM PRICE SYSTEM MAY BE CURTAILED, WASHINGTON SAYS

BLOCK GIVES BUDGET PLAN

Congress to Be Asked to End Supports Until Levels Go Sharply Below Average

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Regan Foresees Final Tax Plan Like Treasury's

Analysis by Department of Its Proposals Issued

By David E. Rosenblatt

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Residents of Bhopal, India, viewing the bottom of a lethal gas that seeped through the city.

GAS LEAK IN INDIA KILLS AT LEAST 410 IN CITY OF BHOPAL

12,000 REPORTED INJURED

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Help Only in Certain Cases

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Administration Defends Its Policy On South Africa As Protests Grow

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 1.—The Administration defended its policy of opposing the South African apartheid system...

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Republicans Urge Scrapping of 1979 Strategic Accord

By BERNARD GREENMAN

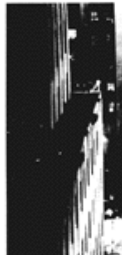
WASHINGTON, Dec. 1.—Two conservative Republicans pressed President Reagan today to scrap the 1979 strategic arms control agreement...

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A BLAZE OF TRAGEDY: The Kawachi Center protesters after the offshooting.



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On New York Border, 'Bar Haven' for Youths

By Peter E. Kilborn

NEW YORK, Dec. 1.—In a small town at the border of New York and New Jersey, a bar has become a haven for youths...

Off the Critical List

By Peter E. Kilborn

INDUSTRIAL, Dec. 1.—William J. Schneider was called out of the critical list today and said his artificial heart has already made a "historic" difference...

'Knew He Was Dying'

By LAWRENCE E. ALTMAN, M.D.

LOS ANGELES, Dec. 1.—When Dr. Lawrence E. Altman said he "knew" his patient was dying, he was referring to the patient's condition...

The Doctor's World

By LAWRENCE E. ALTMAN, M.D.

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NEW DELHI, Dec. 3 -- Toxic gas leaking from an American-owned insecticide plant in central India killed at least 410 people overnight, many as they slept, officials said today.

At least 12,000 were reported injured in the disaster in the city of Bhopal, 2,000 of whom were hospitalized.

The death toll in the city and its environs, 360 miles south of New Delhi, was expected to rise as more bodies were found and some of the critically injured died.

United News of India put the death toll at 500, but the news agency's figure could not be independently confirmed.

Underground Storage Tank

An Indian environmental official, T. N. Khushoo, called it the "worst such disaster in Indian history."

The Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh State, where Bhopal is situated, told reporters that the gas had escaped from one of three underground storage tanks at a Union Carbide Company plant in Bhopal.

Witnesses said thousands of people had been taken to hospitals gasping for breath, many frothing at the mouth, their eyes inflamed.

The streets were littered with the corpses of dogs, cats, water buffalo, cows and birds killed by the gas, methyl isocyanate, which is widely used in the preparation of insecticides.

Doctors Are Rushed to City

Doctors from neighboring towns and the Indian Army were rushed to the city of 900,000, where hospitals were said to be overflowing with the injured.

Most of the victims were children and old people who were overwhelmed by the gas and suffocated, Indian press reports said.

Even in small amounts, the gas produces heavy discharge from the eyes and is extremely irritating to the skin and internal organs. Exposure can apparently lead to enough fluid accumulation to cause drowning. (Page A8.)

(In Danbury, Conn., a spokesman for Union Carbide said it was temporarily closing part of a nearly identical plant in West Virginia while it investigated the Bhopal disaster. "We don't know what went wrong," the spokesman said. Page A8.)

Valve Malfunction Suspected

The managing director of Union Carbide in India, Y. P. Gokhale, was quoted as saying that the incident occurred when a tank valve apparently malfunctioned after an increase in pressure, allowing the gas to escape into the air in a 40-minute period early today. It was not clear why the pressure had risen or how the leak was stopped.

Mr. Kushoo, the environmental official, said it was still unclear whether it would be necessary to evacuate parts of Bhopal. The poison gas spread through about 25 square miles of Bhopal, an area said to be populated largely by poor families.

Gandhi Announces Relief Fund

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, calling the incident "horrifying," announced the creation of a \$400,000 Government relief fund. At the same time, the Central Bureau of Investigati

Mr. Gandhi, traveling in southern India for the general election campaign, said that "everything possible will be done to provide relief to the sufferers," and added, "Such mishaps must never be allowed to recur."

Rewnath Chaure, the Health Minister of Madhya Pradesh State, told a reporter in Bhopal that 302 people had died in one hospital alone.

The state's Chief Minister, Arjun Singh, reported that about 2,000 people overcome by the gas fumes were hospitalized. He said at least 10,000 others were treated for symptoms including vomiting, breathing problems and inflamed eyes.

Arrests Are Reported

Authorities said five factory officials had been arrested and charged with criminal negligence in the disaster. (In Danbury, Conn., the Union Carbide Company said the reports that the managers had been arrested were incorrect.)

The officials reportedly arrested were identified as J. Mukand, the works manager; S. B. Chowdhury, the production manager, and three other officials. It was not known if all were Indian nationals.

Most of the initial reports on the leak, which began at 1 A.M. Monday (2:30 P.M. Sunday, New York time) were provided by India's two independent news agencies, Press Trust of India and United News of India, which had reporters on the scene in the early hours of the disaster.

According to Press Trust of India, the gas spread over an area of about 200,000 people, many of whom awoke vomiting and complaining of dizziness, sore throats and burning eyes. Many could hardly talk, it reported, and some complained of brief spells of blindness.

United News of India said the factory siren did not sound to alert the neighborhood until two hours after the leak began, and it said the police and doctors did not come into the area until four hours after that.

Shutdown Is Announced

Mr. Singh, the Chief Minister, announced that he was ordering a shutdown of the Union Carbide plant and pledged not to allow it to resume production. He said the Government might demand that the company pay compensation to the victims.

Mr. Singh also ordered schools, colleges, offices and markets closed.

In a statewide radio broadcast later, Mr. Singh said the leak had been stopped and described the situation as "fully under control." He urged people not to spread rumors.

Reports from Bhopal said thousands fled the city's crowded districts as word of the leak spread.

Plant Opened in 1977

The Bhopal plant was opened in 1977 and produces about 2,500 tons of pesticides based on methyl isocyanate annually. In 1978, six people were reported killed when they were exposed to phosgene gas, another lethal mixture produced in the plant.

According to a Union Carbide spokesman, the underground tank in which the leak occurred today contained 45 tons of methyl isocyanate in its liquid form.

The chemical is colorless, burns easily and has a low evaporation level. The spokesman said enormous pressure had built up inside the tank, forcing a rupture of a valve and allowing the gas to pass into the air.

Safety Features Noted

According to a Union Carbide statement in Bombay, the storage tanks had special safety features. The main emergency devices, according to the statement, were vent scrubbers, which it said were "meant to neutralize and render the gas harmless prior to its release into the atmosphere."

"In the accident," the statement added, "the rapid pressure built up resulted in a spurt of gas running unneutralized which escaped into the atmosphere."

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