

Keshub Mahindra

Vs

State of M.P.

Criminal Appeals No. 1672 of 1996 with Nos. 1673, 1675 and 1674 of 1996

(CJI a. M. Ahamadi, S. B. Majmudar JJ)

13.09.1996

JUDGMENT

S.B. MAJMUDAR, J. –

1. Leave granted in all these special leave petitions.

2. In these appeals the appellant-accused concerned have brought in challenge the order dated 8-4-1993 passed by the Court of 9th Additional Sessions Judge, Bhopal in Sessions Trial No. 257 of 1992 whereby the learned Sessions Judge framed charges against the appellants in appeals arising out of SLPs (Crl.) Nos. 3900, 3901 and 1953 of 1995 under Sections 304 Part II, 326, 324 and 429 read with Section 35 of the Indian Penal Code (for short 'IPC') and framed charges under Sections 304 Part II, 326, 324 and 309 against the appellants in appeal arising out of SLP (Crl.) No. 3932 of 1995. They had also challenged the orders of the High Court of Madhya Pradesh at Jabalpur in Criminal Revision Applications Nos. 237, 238, 312 and 311 of 1993 whereby these charges were sustained. Appeal arising out of SLP (Crl.) No. 3900 of 1995 is moved by Shri Keshub Mahindra who is Accused 2 before the Sessions Court. Appeal arising out of SLP (Crl.) No. 3901 of 1995 is moved by Shri V.P. Gokhale who is Accused 3 in the same case. Appeal arising out of SLP (Crl.) No. 3953 of 1995 is moved by Kishore Kamdar who is Accused 4 in the said case while the last appeal arising out of SLP (Crl.) No. 3932 of 1995 is moved by six accused being Shri J. Mukund Accused 5, Dr R.B. Roy Choudhary Accused 6, Shri S.P. Choudhary Accused 7, Shri K.V. Shetty Accused 8, Shri S.I. Qureshi Accused 9 and Union Carbide India Limited ('UCIL' for short) Accused 12 in the same case pending before the Sessions Court at Bhopal. The appellants concerned had moved the High Court of Madhya Pradesh at Jabalpur under Sections 397 and 482 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) for quashing the aforesaid charges.

3. With a view to highlighting the grievances of the appellants a few relevant facts deserve to be noted at the outset.

Introductory facts

4. A grim tragedy of unprecedented nature occurred at Bhopal on the night intervening 2-12-1984 and 3-12-1984 wherein between 0030 hours and 0045 hours a highly dangerous and toxic gas called MIC escaped from Tank No. E-610 from the Bhopal factory belonging to Accused 12 UCIL. As a result of this leakage 3828 human beings lost their lives while permanent injuries were caused to 18,922 human beings, temporary disablement was suffered by 7172 human beings, temporary

disablement caused by permanent injury was suffered by' 1313 persons while permanent partial disablement was suffered by 2680 persons. while 40 human beings suffered from permanent total disablement and the death toll of animals amounted to 2544. This ghastly tragedy has come to be known as "Bhopal Gas Tragedy" After the gas leakage Crime Case No. 1104 of 1984 was registered at the Police Station Hanumanganj, Bhopal on 3-12-1984 by the Station House Officer suo motu. This case was registered under Section 304-A IPC. In the said case 12 accused were indicted. Accused 1 was Shri Warren Anderson who was the Chairman of Union Carbide Corporation. The said concern was also indicted as Accused 10. Accused 2 Keshub Mahindra was the Chairman of UCIL which in its turn was shown as Accused 12. Accused 3 V.P. Gokhale was shown as an accused in his capacity as Managing Director of UCIL. Kishore Kamdar who was the Vice-President and Incharge of A.P. Division of UCIL was shown as Accused 4. Shri J. Mukund, the Works Manager of the Bhopal Plant was joined as Accused 5. Dr R.B. Roy Choudhary who was Assistant Works Manager, A.P. Division, UCIL at Bhopal was joined as Accused 6. Accused 7 was Shri S.P. Choudhary, Production Manager of the Bhopal Plant. Shri K.V. Shetty, Plant Superintendent of the said Bhopal plant was Accused 8. Shri S.I. Qureshi was shown as Accused 9. He was Production Assistant at the said Bhopal Plant. Out of the above-accused persons Accused 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 were stationed at Bhopal and were in charge of the Bhopal Plant itself.

5. On the registration of the aforesaid crime case the Station House Officer, Bhopal, arrested five employees of the factory, namely, Accused 5 to 9 and they were kept in police custody. Accused 1, 2 and 3 were arrested on 7-12-1984. Out of them Accused 1 Shri Warren Anderson was released on bail the same day. On 6-12-1984 the case was handed over to the CBI. On completion of investigation the charge-sheet was presented by the CBI in the Court of CJM, Bhopal on 1-12-1987.

6. In the present proceedings we are not concerned with the question of compensation payable to the gas disaster victims at Bhopal and the various steps taken by the Government of India in this connection. We, therefore, do not dilate on these aspects. Suffice it to state that by earlier orders of this Court dated 14-2-1989 and 15-2-1989 all criminal proceedings relating to and arising out of the Bhopal Gas Disaster were quashed by this Court. As a result the proceedings in the present case which were then pending in the committal court stood terminated. However the said order was reviewed by this Court on 3-10-1991 and the above criminal proceedings were restored. After their restoration the case was committed to the Court of Session. Commitment was made by order dated 30-4-1992. On the case being committed to the Court of Session it was registered as Sessions Trial Case No. 237 of 1992 as aforesaid. It appears that trial of the criminal case against Accused 1 Warren Anderson, Accused 10 UCC and Accused 11 Union Carbide (Eastern) Inc., Hong Kong had to be segregated and split up as the accused concerned were absconding. The trial proceeded against the remaining Accused 2 to 9 and 12. In the light of the supporting material produced by the prosecution before the Sessions Court along with the charge-sheet and its contents the Sessions Court was requested by the prosecution to frame appropriate charges against the accused concerned against whom the trial had to proceed. After hearing the prosecution as well as the learned counsel for the accused concerned the learned 9th Additional Sessions Judge, Bhopal passed order dated 8-4-1993 framing charges against the accused concerned. As these charges have been seriously brought into challenge it would be apposite to reproduce the charges as framed by the learned trial Judge against the accused concerned. So far as Accused 2 Keshub Mahindra is concerned four charges were framed against him as under :

"Firstly. - That on or about the night intervening 2nd and 3rd December, 1984 at Bhopal, the capital of M.P. co-accused persons S/Shri Kishore Kamdar/J. Mukund/R.B. Roy Choudhary/S.P. Choudhary/K.V. Shetty and S.I. Qureshi

committed culpable homicide not amounting to murder by causing death of 3828 or more human beings by allowing the highly toxic gas known by the name of MIC to escape from Tank No. 610 of A.P. Division Plant of UCIL knowing that it was likely to cause deaths and you sharing this common knowledge with them did not do anything to avoid the said escape of gas thus you thereby committed on each count an offence punishable under Section 304 (II) read with Section 35 of the IPC and within the cognizance of the Court of Session.

Secondly. - That on the above date and at the above place, above co-accused persons by allowing to escape from the above tank the corrosive substance known by the name of MIC gas, knowing that it was likely to cause grievous hurts, thus voluntarily (as defined under Section 39 IPC) caused grievous hurts to 21,694 or more human beings and you sharing this common knowledge with them did not do anything to avoid the said escape of gas thus you thereby committed on each count an offence punishable under Section 326 read with Section 35 IPC and within the cognizance of the Court of Session.

Thirdly. - That on the above date and at the above place, above co-accused persons by allowing to escape from the above tank the corrosive substance known by the name of MIC gas knowing that it was likely to cause hurts thus voluntarily (as defined under Section 39 IPC) caused hurts to 8485 or more human beings and you sharing this common knowledge with them did not do anything to avoid the said escape of gas, thus you thereby committed on each count an offence punishable under Section 324 read with Section 35 IPC and within the cognizance of the Court of Session.

Fourthly. - That on the above date and at the above place the above-accused persons by allowing MIC gas to escape from the above tank knowing that it was likely to cause death of animals, committed mischief by killing thereby 2544 or more animals of various descriptions each valuing more than Rs. 50 and you sharing this common knowledge with them did not do anything to avoid the said escape of gas, thus you thereby committed on each count an offence punishable under Section 429 read with Section 35 IPC and within the cognizance of the Court of Session."

7. Charges framed against Accused 3 V.P. Gokhale were identical with the charges framed against Accused 2.

8. Charges framed against Accused 4 Kishore Kamdar ran as under :

"Firstly. - That on or about the night intervening 2nd and 3rd December, 1984 at Bhopal, the capital of M.P. co-accused persons S/Shri Kishore Kamdar/J. Mukund/R.B. Roy choudhary/S.P. Choudhary/K.V. Shetty and S.I. Qureshi committed culpable homicide not amounting to murder by causing death of 3828 or more human beings by allowing the highly toxic gas known by the name of MIC to escape from Tank No. 610 of A.P. Division Plant of UCIL knowing that it was likely to cause deaths and you sharing this common knowledge with them did not do anything to avoid the said escape of gas, thus you thereby committed on each count an offence punishable under Section 304 (II) read with Section 35 of the IPC and within the cognizance of the Court of Session.

Secondly. - That on the above date and at the above place, above co-accused persons by allowing to escape from the above tank the corrosive substance known by the name of MIC gas, knowing that it was likely to cause grievous hurts, thus voluntarily (as defined under Section 39 IPC) caused grievous hurts to 21,694 or more human beings and you sharing this common knowledge with them did not do anything to avoid the said escape of gas, thus you thereby committed on each count an offence punishable under Section 326 read with Section 35 IPC and within the cognizance of the Court of Session.

Thirdly. - That on the above date and at the above place, above co-accused persons by allowing to escape from the above tank the corrosive substance known by the name of MIC gas, knowing that it was likely to cause hurts, thus voluntarily (as defined under Section 39 IPC) caused hurts to 8485 or more human beings and you sharing this common knowledge with them did not do anything to avoid the said escape of gas, thus you thereby committed on each count an offence punishable under Section 324 read with Section 35 IPC and within the cognizance of the Court of Session.

Fourthly. - That on the above date and at the above place, the above co-accused persons by allowing MIC gas to escape from the above tank knowing that it was likely to cause death of animals, committed mischief by killing thereby 2544 or more animals of various descriptions each valuing more than Rs. 50 and you sharing this common knowledge with them did not do anything to avoid the said escape of gas, thus you thereby committed on each count an offence punishable under Section 429 read with Section 35 IPC and within the cognizance of the Court of Session."

9. Charges framed against Accused 5 J. Mukund were as under :

"Firstly. - That you on or about the night intervening 2nd and 3rd December, 1984 at Bhopal, the capital of M.P., committed culpable homicide not amounting to murder by causing death of 3828 or more human beings by allowing the highly toxic gas known by the name of MIC to escape from Tank No. 610 of A.P. Division Plant of UCIL, knowing that it was likely to cause deaths and you thereby committed on each count an offence punishable under Section 304 (II) IPC and within the cognizance of the Court of Session.

Secondly. - That you on the above date and at the above place by allowing to escape from Tank No. 610 of the A.P. Division Plant of UCIL, a corrosive substance known by the name of MIC gas, knowing that it was likely to cause grievous hurts, thus voluntarily (as defined under Section 39 IPC) caused grievous hurts to 21,694 or more human beings and, thereby committed on each count an offence punishable under Section 326 IPC and within the cognizance of the Court of Session.

Thirdly. - That on the above date and at the above place by allowing to escape from Tank No. 610 of A.P. Division Plant of UCIL, a corrosive substance known by the name of MIC gas, knowing that it was likely to cause hurts, thus voluntarily (as defined under Section 39 IPC) caused hurts to 8485 or more human beings and thereby committed on each count an offence punishable under Section 324 IPC and within the cognizance of the Court of Session.

Fourthly. - That on the above date and at the above place by allowing to escape from Tank No. 610 of the A.P. Division Plant of UCIL, knowing that it was likely to cause death of animals, committed mischief by killing thereby 2544 or more animals of various descriptions each valuing more than Rs. 50 and thereby committed on each count an offence punishable under Section 429 IPC and within the cognizance of the Court of Session."

10. Identical charges were framed against Accused 6 R.B. Roy Choudhary, Accused 7 S.P. Choudhary Accused 8 K.V. Shetty and Accused 9 S.I. Qureshi while UCIL, Calcutta Accused 12 had to face the following charges :

"Firstly. - That on or about the night intervening 2nd and 3rd December, 1984 at Bhopal, the capital of M.P., co-accused persons S/Shri Kishore Kamdar/J. Mukund/R.B. Roy Choudhary/S.P. Choudhary/K.V. Shetty and S.I. Qureshi committed culpable homicide not amounting to murder by causing death of 3828 or more human beings by allowing the highly toxic gas known by the name of MIC to escape from Tank No. 610 of A.P. Division Plant of UCIL knowing that it was likely to cause deaths and you sharing this common knowledge with them did not do anything to avoid the said escape of gas, thus you thereby committed on each count an offence punishable under Section 304 (II) read with Section 35 of the IPC and within the cognizance of the Court of Session.

Secondly. - That on the above date and at the above place, above co-accused persons by allowing to escape from the above tank the corrosive substance known by the name of MIC gas, knowing that it was likely to cause grievous hurts, thus voluntarily (as defined under Section 39 IPC) caused grievous hurts to 21,694 or more human beings and you sharing this common knowledge with them did not do anything to avoid the said escape of gas, thus you thereby committed on each count an offence punishable under Section 326 read with Section 35 IPC and within the cognizance of the Court of Session.

Thirdly. - That on the above date and at the above place, above co-accused persons by allowing to escape from the above tank the corrosive substance known by the name of MIC gas, knowing that it was likely to cause hurts, thus voluntarily (as defined under Section 39 IPC) caused hurts to 8485 or more human beings and you sharing this common knowledge with them did not do anything to avoid the said escape of gas, thus you thereby committed on each count an offence punishable under Section 324 read with Section 35 IPC and within the cognizance of the Court of Session.

Fourthly. - That on the above date and at the above place, the above co-accused persons by allowing MIC gas to escape from the above tank knowing that it was likely to cause death of animals, committed mischief by killing thereby 2544 or more animals of various descriptions each valuing more than Rs. 50 and you sharing this common knowledge with them did not do anything to avoid the said escape of gas, thus you thereby committed on each count an offence punishable under Section 429 read with Section 35 IPC and within the cognizance of the Court of Session."

11. All these accused being aggrieved by the aforesaid charges framed by the learned Sessions Judge

approached the High Court of Madhya Pradesh at Jabalpur in criminal revision applications moved under Sections 397 and 482 of the CrPC as noted earlier. The High Court of Madhya Pradesh by common judgment in three Criminal Revision Applications Nos. 237, 238 and 312 of 1993 moved by Accused 2, 3 and 4 respectively, was pleased to dismiss the same by upholding the charges framed against these accused. Similarly Criminal Revision Application No. 311 of 1993 moved by Accused S.J. Mukund Accused 6 R.B. Roy Choudhary, Accused 7 S.P. Choudhary, Accused 8 K.V. Shetty, Accused 9 S.I. Qureshi and Accused 12 UCIL was also dismissed by a separate order of even date. It is under these circumstances that the accused concerned are in appeal before us on special leave.

12. The learned Senior Counsel, Shri Ashok Desai, appearing for Accused 2, Keshub Mahindra, learned Senior Counsel, Shri Nariman, appearing for Accused 3 V.P. Gokhale and learned Senior Counsel, Shri Rajendra Singh, appearing for the remaining accused vehemently contended that taking the case of the prosecution at the highest as reflected by the contents of the charge-sheet and the supporting material it could not be even prima facie said that the accused concerned were guilty of offence of culpable homicide not amounting to murder as envisaged by Section 304 Part II IPC with which they are charged. That there was no question of the accused concerned having done any act on that fateful night at Bhopal which was done with the knowledge that they were likely by such act to cause death and consequently they could not have been charged on the material produced by the prosecution before the trial court at this stage of the trial for the offence of culpable homicide not amounting to murder. It was also submitted that on the same reasoning they could not have been charged for offence under Section 326 IPC for voluntarily causing grievous hurt or for that matter for the offence under Section 324 for voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous means. It was also contended that on the same parity of reasoning no case is made out against the accused concerned under Section 429 IPC for having committed mischief by killing, poisoning or maiming any animal. It was also submitted that so far as Accused 2, 3 and 4 were concerned they were stationed at Bombay and they were not concerned with the day-to-day working of the Plant at Bhopal. Consequently there was no question of framing any charge against them for the aforesaid offences read with Section 35 of IPC as there was no evidence whatsoever for even alleging against these accused that they had any criminal knowledge in connection with the mishap that occurred on that fateful night at Bhopal. It was also contended by the aforesaid learned Senior Counsel that even lesser charge under Section 304-A IPC also could not have been framed on this material as nothing was alleged by the prosecution at this stage about any proximate act of the negligence on the part of the accused concerned which had resulted into this accidental tragedy. That if at all it was an unfortunate accident which had taken heavy toll of human lives and cattle wealth, however, none of the accused could be held criminal liable for the said accident. It was, therefore, contended that the charges as framed against the accused concerned are required to be quashed and the High Court had erred in not exercising its jurisdiction in that behalf.

13. On the other hand learned Additional Solicitor General, Shri Altaf Ahmed, submitted that there was ample material produced by the prosecution in support of the charge-sheet which clearly indicated that all the accused concerned shared common criminal knowledge about the potential danger of escape of the lethal gas MIC both on account of defective Plant which was operated under their control and supervision at Bhopal and also on account of the operational shortcomings detected by the Expert Committee which had gone into the causes of this unfortunate accident, namely, Varadarajan Committee which was constituted by the Government of India for that purpose. That the report of the scientific and industrial research team had clearly indicated the causes of this tragedy and the defects found in the running of the Plant at the relevant time. That this material indicated that all the accused were properly charged for the offences alleged against them and that

the Court at this stage was not concerned with the truth or falsity of the allegations with which the prosecution has charged them. That at this stage only enquiry into the prima facie nature of the allegations supporting these charges has to be made and if there is any material to prima facie indicate that the accused concerned were liable to be prosecuted for the charges with which they are indicted the trial is required to be permitted to proceed further and should not be nipped in the bud as the appellants would like to have it. In support of the respective contentions the learned Senior Counsel for the appellants as well as the learned Additional Solicitor General relied upon various decisions of this Court to which we will make a reference at an appropriate stage in the latter part of this judgment.

14. Before we deal with the nature of the material produced by the prosecution before the trial court for framing the charges against the accused concerned in will be necessary to keep in view the limited nature of the jurisdiction available to the court for deciding whether the charges framed are legally sustainable on the basis of the material available at this stage. Section 227 of the CrPC lays down that :

"If, upon consideration of the record of the case and the documents submitted therewith, and after hearing the submissions of the accused and prosecution in this behalf, the Judge considers that there is not sufficient ground for proceeding against the accused, he shall discharge the accused and record his reasons for so doing."

On the other hand as enjoined by Section 228, if after such consideration and hearing as aforesaid the Judge is of opinion that there is ground for presuming that the accused has committed an offence, then subject to the procedure laid down by sub-sections (a) and (b) of the said section the charge shall be framed in writing against the accused. In the case of *Niranjan Singh. Kuram Singh Punjabi v. Jitendra Bhimraj Bijjaya* [(1990) 4 SCC 76 : 1991 SCC (Cri) 47 : AIR 1990 SC 1962] one of us A.M. Ahmadi, J. (as His Lordship then was) speaking for the Division Bench of this Court in this connection observed as under :

"It seems well settled that at the Sections 227-228 state i.e., stage of framing the charge, the court is required to evaluate the material and documents on record with a view to finding out if the facts emerging therefrom taken at their face value disclose the existence of all the ingredients constituting the alleged offence. The court may for this limited purpose sift the evidence as it cannot be expected even at that initial stage to accept all that the prosecution states as gospel truth even if it is opposed to common sense or the broad probabilities of the case."

It is also well settled that while exercising jurisdiction under Section 482 CrPC when the High Court is called upon to quash the charge pursuant to which proceedings at the stage of trial are pending, and even when the High Court is called upon to quash proceedings pursuant to complaint, only a prima facie appraisal of the allegations made in the complaint and the material in support thereof has to be done and the court has no jurisdiction to go into the merits of the allegations as that stage would come when the trial proceeds. In this connection we may usefully refer to a judgment rendered by a Bench of three learned Judges of this Court in the case of *State of U.P. v. O.P. Sharma*. [(1996) 7 SCC 705 : 1996 SCC (Cri) 497 : (1996) 2 Scale 356] Relying on earlier decisions of this Court the Bench in the aforesaid case made the following pertinent observations in paragraphs 11 and 12 of the Report : (SCC pp. 709-11, paras 11-12)

"The question then is : whether the High Court is right in its exercise of inherent

power under Section 482 CrPC ? This Court in State of H.P. v. Pirthi Chand [(1996) 2 SCC 37 : 1996 SCC (Cri) 210] held as under : (SCC pp. 44-45, paras 12-13)

'It is thus settled law that the exercise of inherent power of the High Court is an exceptional one. Great care should be taken by the High Court before embarking to scrutinise the FIR/charge-sheet/complaint. In deciding whether the case is rarest of rare cases to scuttle the prosecution in its inception, it first has to get into the grip of the matter whether the allegations constitute the offence. It must be remembered that FIR is only an initiation to move the machinery and to investigate into cognizable offence. After the investigation is conducted (sic concluded) and the charge-sheet is laid, the prosecution produces the statements of the witnesses recorded under Section 161 of the Code in support of the charge-sheet. At that state it is not the function of the court to weigh the pros and cons of the prosecution case or to consider necessity of strict compliance of the provisions which are considered mandatory and its effect of non-compliance. It would be done after the trial is concluded. The court has to prima facie consider from the averments in the charge-sheet and the statements of witnesses on the record in support thereof whether court could take cognizance of the offence on that evidence and proceed further with the trial. If it reaches a conclusion that no cognizable offence is made out, no further act could be done except to quash the charge-sheet. But only in exceptional cases, i.e., in rarest of rare cases of mala fide initiation of the proceedings to wreak private vengeance process of criminal is availed of in laying a complaint or FIR itself does not disclose at all any cognizable offence - the court may embark upon the consideration thereof and exercise the power.'

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In State of Bihar v. Rajendra Agrawalla [(1996) 8 SCC 164 : SCC (cri) 628] this Court observed as under : (SCC p. 166, para 5)

'It has been held by this Court in several cases that the inherent power of the court under Section 482 of the Code of Criminal Procedure should be very sparingly and cautiously used only when the court comes to the conclusion that there would be manifest injustice or there would be abuse of the process of the court, if such power is not exercised. So far as the order of cognizance by a Magistrate is concerned, the inherent power can be exercised when the allegations in the first information report or the complaint together with the other materials collected during investigation taken at their face value, do not constitute the offence alleged. At that stage it is not open for the court either to shift the evidence or appreciate the evidence and come to the conclusion that no prima facie case is made out.'

Keeping in view the aforesaid well-settled limited jurisdiction regarding the permissible scrutiny of the prosecution case as revealed from the charge-sheet and the material supporting the same for framing charges against the present accused we will now proceed to examine the available material on record of the case which has resulted into the framing of the impugned charges against the appellant-accused.

Material in support of the prosecution case

15. In the first place we may glance through the relevant recitals in the charge-sheet presented by the agency before the court which has resulted into the framing of the impugned charges. The said charge-sheet is found at page 1 of the compilation in appeal arising out of SLP (CrI.) No. 3900 of 1995. As noted earlier the charge-sheet indicts 12 accused out of which the present 9 appellants in these four appeals are Accused 2 to 9 and 12 respectively. In column 5 of the charge-sheet are found listed main findings of the investigating agency in connection with this unfortunate tragedy. The relevant recitals therein read as under :

"Union Carbide India Ltd., the majority shareholding in which is held by UCC, U.S.A., was running a factory at Bhopal for the manufacture of pesticides. The main chemical from which the pesticide Sevin was manufactured was Methyl Isocyanate ($\text{CII}_3\text{N}=\text{C}=\text{O}$) which was also being manufactured in the same factory and was being stored in underground tanks. The factory is presently not functioning.

2. On the night of 2-12-1984/3-12-1984 from about 00030 to 0045 hours (on 3-12-1984) onwards, MIC started to escape from Tank No. 610 in the factory in large quantities causing the death of thousands of human beings and animals ... and injuring also the health of many thousands of human beings and animals.

3. Crime No. 1104 of 1984 was registered at Police Station, Hanumanganj, Bhopal, on 3-12-1984, by the SHO, Shri Surinder Singh Thakur, Inspector who observed people dying around the factory of Union Carbide India Ltd., Bhopal (UCIL) due to escape of some gas from the factory. He registered the case suo motu under Section 304-A IPC. There was no information available at that stage from anyone in the factory. Based on enquiries made by him during the course of the day, five employees of the factory (A-5 of A-9) were arrested and kept in police custody. Accused 1 Shri Warren Anderson was arrested along with Accused 2 and 3 on 7-12-1984. Shri Warren Anderson was released on bail the same day by the 10. After completing the required legal formalities, CBI (DPSE) registered a case on 6-12-1984 as RC-3/84-CIU(I) under Section 304-A IPC and received the records of the case from the local police on 9-12-1984 along with A-2, A-3 and A-5 to A-9 in police custody from the Madhya Pradesh Police.

4. Investigation has revealed that the Union Carbide Corporation is a company with headquarters in U.S.A. having affiliate and subsidiary companies throughout the world. These subsidiaries were supervised by four regional offices which were controlled by UCC, U.S.A. UCIL is a subsidiary of UCC, U.S.A. Union Carbide Eastern Inc. with its office in Hong Kong is the regional office of UCC, U.S.A. which controlled UCIL, India besides others. UCC, U.S.A. got incorporated in India on 20-6-1934, a company known as the Everyday Company (India) Ltd. under the Indian Companies Act (Act VII) of 1913 with the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies, Bengal. The name of the Company was further changed w.e.f. 24-12-1959 into Union Carbide India Ltd. under the Indian Companies Act, 1956. The UCC was a majority shareholder (50.9%) in UCIL. UCC was nominating its own Directors to the Board of Directors of the UCIL and was exercising strict financial, administrative and technical control on the Union Carbide India Limited. Thus, all major decisions were taken under the orders of the Union Carbide Corporation of America. The evidence collected during the investigation proves that UCC was in total control of all the activities of UCIL.

5. The investigation of this case was dependent on highly scientific and technical evaluation of the events which led to the escape of MIC gas from the UCIL Plant at Bhopal. The Government of India therefore constituted, immediately after the incident, a team headed by Dr S. Varadarajan, then DG/CSIR to study all the scientific and technical aspects and submit their report. Dr M. Sriram, Chief Research and Development Manager, Hindustan Organic Chemicals, Rasavani, District Ralgad (Maharashtra), was a member as well as the coordinator of the Scientific Team. Dr Varadarajan submitted the report in December 1985. A further backup report was submitted by the CSIR in May 1987. These reports furnish, inter alia, the causes that led to the incident.

6. Investigation has revealed that UCIL started importing Sevin from the UCC, U.S.A. in December 1960. They were marketing this Sevin after adding dilutants etc. Subsequently, they decided to manufacture Sevin in their Plant at Bhopal itself and accordingly created necessary facilities for production of Sevin with MIC as the basic raw material. To start with, they were importing MIC in 200 litre-capacity stainless steel drums from the UCC Plant in West Virginia, U.S.A. Subsequently UCC and UCIL decided to manufacture MIC in their factory at Bhopal itself.

7. At that stage on 13-11-1973, UCC and UCIL entered into an agreement entitled Foreign Collaboration Agreement according to which the best manufacturing information then available from or to Union Carbide had to be provided for the factory in India. This necessitated UCC supplying the design, know-how and safety measures for the production, storage and use of MIC which ought to have been an improvement on the factory of UCC at West Virginia based on the experience gained there. Investigation has however disclosed that the factory at Bhopal was deficient in many safety aspects. The design, know-how and safety measures were provided by the Union Carbide Corporation, U.S.A. and the erection and commissioning of the Plant was done under the strict control of the experts of UCC. The Indians in this Plant were only working under their directions.

8. After an initial period of profit, the UCIL factory was running in loss. The loss for the first 10 months of 1984 amounted to Rs. 5,03,39,000. Due to this, UCE, Hong Kong directed UCIL vide their letter dated 26-10-1984 that the factory at Bhopal should be closed down and sold to any available buyer. As no buyer became available in India, UCE, Hong Kong directed UCIL to prepare an estimate for dismantling the factory and shipping it to Indonesia or Brazil where they probably had some buyers. These estimates were completed towards the end of November 1984.

9. The investigation conducted by the CBI, the report of the scientific team established by the Government of India and in particular the literature and manuals etc. regarding MIC of Union Carbide Corporation itself prove that MIC is reactive, toxic, volatile and flammable. It is a highly hazardous and lethal material by all means of contact and is a poison. Skin contact with MIC can cause severe burns. MIC can also seriously injure the eyes even in its concentration. Exposure to MIC is extremely irritating and would cause chest pain, coughing, choking and even pulmonary oedema. On thermal composition, MIC would produce hydrogen cyanide, nitrogen oxide, carbon monoxide and/or carbon dioxide.

10. MIC has to be stored and handled in stainless steel of types 304 or 316, namely, good quality stainless steel. Using any other material could be dangerous. In particular, iron or steel, aluminium, zinc or galvanized iron, copper or tin or their alloys could not be used for purposes of storage, transfer/transmission of MIC. This would mean that even the pipes and valves carrying MIC had also got to be of the prescribed stainless steel. In other words, at no stage should MIC be allowed to come into contact with any of the metals mentioned above.

11. The tanks storing MIC, have to be, for reasons of safety, twice the volume of the MIC to be stored. It was also advised by UCC itself that an empty tank should also be kept available at all times for transferring MIC from its storage tank to the stand-by tank on occasions of emergency. MIC has to be stored in the tanks under pressure by using nitrogen which does not react with MIC. The temperature of the tank with MIC has to be maintained below 15 degrees Celsius and preferably at about 0 degree Celsius. The storage system and the transfer lines have to be free of any contaminants as even trace quantities of contaminants are sufficient to initiate reaction which could become a runaway reaction. On reaction setting in, there could be dangerous and rapid trimerization. The induction period could vary from several hours to several days. The heat generated could cause reaction of explosive violence. In particular, water reacts exothermically to produce heat and carbon dioxide. Consequently, the pressure in the tank will rise rapidly if MIC is contaminated with water. The reaction may begin slowly, especially if there is no agitation, but it will become violent. UCC itself states that with bulk systems contamination is more likely than with tightly sealed drums. All these properties of MIC show that despite all the safety precautions that could be taken, storage of large quantities of MIC in big tanks was fraught with considerable risk.

12. Investigation has disclosed that at the time when the incident took place there were three partially buried tanks in the factory at Bhopal. These were numbered E-610, E-611 and E-619. MIC was being stored generally in tanks E-610 and E-611 E-619 was supposed to be the stand-by tank. In the normal running of the factory, MIC from E-610 and E-611 was being transferred to the Sevin Plant through stainless steel pipelines. MIC is kept under pressure by nitrogen which is supplied by a carbon steel header common to all the storage tanks. There is a strainer in the nitrogen line. Subsequent to the strainer the pipe is of carbon steel and leads to make up control valve (DMV) which also has a body of carbon steel. These carbon steel parts could get exposed to MIC vapours and get corroded, providing a source of contaminant which could enter the MIC storage tank and cause dangerous reactions in the MIC. During the normal working of the factory, MIC fumes and other gases that escape pass first through a pipeline called Process Vent Header (PVH) of 2" diameter. The escaping gases were carried by the PVH line to a Vent Gas Scrubber (VGS) containing alkali solution which would neutralize the escaping gases and release them into the atmosphere. Another escape line of such gases that was provided from the tanks was the Relief Valve Vent Header (RVVH) of 4" diameter. Normal pressure of the MIC tank is shown by a pressure indicator. When the pressure in the tank exceeded 40 psig, a rupture disc (RD) leading to a Safety Relief Valve (SRV) had to break and the said SRV in the RVVH line open automatically to allow the escaping gas to travel through the RVVH line to the VGS for neutralization.

13. Investigation has shown that the PVH and RVVH pipelines as well as the valves therein were of carbon steel. Besides, on account of design defect these lines also allowed back flow of the alkali solution from the VGS to travel up to the MIC tanks.

14. A very essential requirement was that the MIC tanks in the factory had to be kept under pressure of the order of 1 kg/cm²g by using nitrogen, a gas that does not react with MIC. However, MIC in Tank No. 610 was stored under nearly atmospheric pressure from 22-10-1984 and attempts to pressurise it on 30th November and 1-12-1984 failed. The design of the plant ought not to have allowed such a contingency to happen at all. The tank being under nearly atmospheric pressure, free passage was available for the entry of back flow of the solution from the VGS into the tank. According to the report of Dr Varadarajan Committee, about 500 kgs water with contaminants could enter Tank No. 610 through RVVH/PVH lines. The water that entered RWH at the time of water flushing alone with backed up alkali solution from the VGS already present could find its way into Tank No. 610 through the RVVH/PVH lines via the blow down DMV or through the SRV and RD.

15. The first indication of any reaction in the tanks comes through the pressure and temperature indicators. The thermowell and temperature transmitting lines were out of order throughout and no temperature was being recorded for quite some time. Pressure was also being recorded at the end of each shift of 8 hours' duration instead of every 2 hours as was being done earlier.

#16. * * * *##

17. On 2-12-1984 before 10.45 p.m. no deviation was noticed in the pressure of Tank No. 610. Soon thereafter, in the night shift, some operators noticed leakage of water and gases from the MIC structure and they informed the control room. The control room operator saw that the pressure had suddenly gone up in Tank No. 610. Some staff in the IIIrd shift including S/Shri R.K. Kamparia, C.N. Sen and Saumen Dey checked the pressure indicators on Tank E-610 and found that the pressure had gone out of range. The factory staff tried to control the situation but they failed. Even Tank E-619 which had to be kept empty for emergency transfers was found to contain MIC and therefore when the reaction started, transfer thereto from Tank No. 610 was not possible. The staff on duty immediately informed senior officials of UCIL at Bhopal about the escape of MIC. During all these developments and even thereafter the Union Carbide officials at Bhopal did not give any information to the residents or any local authority about the serious dangers to which the people were exposed and regarding which the said officials had full knowledge. On the other hand, what was initially mentioned was that ammonia gas had escaped."

Thereafter are listed the findings of the scientific team made by Dr Varadarajan indicating the causes that had resulted in the toxic gas leakage causing its heavy toll. In para 20 of the charge-sheet the following findings of the investigation conducted by the CBI have been noted :

"20. The investigation conducted by the CBI has proved the following aspects :

(i) MIC is a highly dangerous and toxic poison.

(ii) Storing huge quantity of MIC in large tanks was undesirable and dangerous as the capacity and actual production in the Sevin Plant did not require such a huge quantity to be stored. Only adequate quantity of MIC should have been stored, that too in small separate stainless steel drums.

(iii) The VGS that had been provided in the design was capable of neutralising only 13 tonnes of MIC per hour and proved to be totally inadequate to neutralise the large quantities of MIC that escaped from Tank No. E-610. When the two tanks (610 and 611) themselves had been designed for storing a total of about 90 tonnes of MIC, proportionately large-capacity VGS should have been furnished in the design and erected rather than VGS that was actually provided.

(iv) Due to the design defect, there was back flow of alkali solution from the VGS to the tanks which had been drained in the past by the staff of UCIL. In fact, even after the incident, such draining was done from the PVH and RVVH lines.

(v) Whereas the MIC tanks had to be constantly kept under pressure using nitrogen, the design permitted the MIC tanks not being under pressure in certain contingencies.

(vi) The refrigeration system that had been provided was inadequate and inefficient. No alternate stand-by system was provided.

(vii) Neither the UCC nor the UCIL took any steps to apprise the local administration authorities or the local public about the consequences of exposure of MIC or the gases produced by its reaction and the medical steps to be taken immediately.

21. Apart from these design defects, the further lapses that were committed were :

(a) Invariably storing MIC in the tanks which was much more than the 50% capacity of the tanks which had been prescribed.

(b) Not taking any adequate remedial action to prevent back flow of solution from VGS into the RVVH and PVH lines. This alkali solution/water, therefore, used to be drained.

(c) Not maintaining the temperature of the MIC tanks at the preferred temperature of 0 degree Celsius but at ambient temperatures which were much higher.

(d) Putting a slip blind in the PVH line and connecting the PVH line with a jumper line to the RVVH line.

(e) Not taking any immediate remedial action when Tank No. E-610 did not maintain pressure from 22-10-1984 onwards.

(f) When the gas escaped in such large quantities, not setting out an immediate alarm to warn the public and publicise the medical treatment that had to be given immediately."

It was also recited that if these lapses had not occurred, still the incident would have taken place due to the basic defects in the design supplied by the UCC whose experts supervised the erection and commissioning of the Plant itself. The lapses only helped to aggravate the consequences of the incident. Thereafter referring to the indications obtainable from the evidence collected during the investigation regarding the knowledge of the accused about the defective functioning of the Plant the following pertinent recitals are found in paragraphs 23 and 24 of the charge-sheet :

"23. The evidence collected during the investigation proves that the accused persons had the knowledge that by the various acts of commission and omission in the design and running of the MIC-based Plant, death and injury of various degrees could be caused to a large number of human beings and animals. All the accused persons joined in such acts of omission and commission with such common knowledge. This resulted in the incident on the night of 2-12-1984/3-12-1984 which caused the death immediately and till date of about 2850 human beings and about 3000 animals. The number of affected persons is more than 5,00,000. The ailments developed by the affected persons include damaged respiratory tract function, gastro-intestinal functions, muscular weakness, forgetfulness etc.

24. The investigation has established that S/Shri Warren Anderson, then Chairman, Union Carbide Corporation, U.S.A.; Keshub Mahindra, then Chairman, UCIL, Bombay; Vijay Gokhale, then Managing Director and presently Chairman-cum-Managing Director, UCIL, Bombay; Kishore Kamdar, then Vice-President Incharge, A.P. Division, UCIL, Bombay; J. Mukund, then Works Manager, A.P. Division,

UCIL, Bhopal; Dr R.B. Roy Choudhary, then Assistant Works Manager, A.P. Division, UCIL, Bhopal; S.P. Choudhary, then Production Manager, A.P. Division, UCIL, Bhopal; K.V. Shetty, Plant Superintendent, A.P. Division, Bhopal; S.I. Qureshi, Production Assistant, A.P. Division, UCIL, Bhopal; the Union Carbide Corporation, U.S.A.; Union Carbide Eastern Inc. Hong Kong and Union Carbide India Limited, Calcutta have committed offences punishable under Sections 304, 326, 324, 429 IPC read with Section 35 IPC."

Along with this charge-sheet a detailed abstract was filed supported by documentary evidence to show how the conclusions reached by the investigating agency were supported by this documentary evidence. In this abstract it was recited that in that Plant there were no facilities for collecting MIC produced separately in each shift and the material is directly laid into the storage tanks without batchwise analysis. It was also found that there are no on-line analysers. Similarly, nitrogen from a neighbouring factory is fed directly into the storage tanks, without full intermediate storage and quality determination. Carbon steel sections are used in the connectors to the storage tanks. Copper tubes are used in connectors to the level instruments of the tank. The system of instruments for alarm to indicate sudden increase in temperature are not suited to the conditions of operation. Only a single refrigeration system for cooling of MIC in two tanks was installed and it had not been operated for some considerable time. MIC has the combination of properties of very high reactivity with minimum contaminants, ready volatility to become gas and very high inhalation toxicity. The installed facilities provided for disposal of unstable liquid MIC in alkali or for the neutralisation of gaseous emissions from violent reaction, on examination are found to be not capable of meeting the objectives of such disposal in a very short time of two hours. The abstract also recited that the ingress of about 500 kg of water alone, was not the sole cause of the escape of a huge quantity of toxic gas. In this connection the following averments found in the abstract were relied upon by the prosecution :

"The ingress of about 500 kg of water alone, without metallic contaminants, would have led to a reaction with three to four tonnes of MIC and gradual rise in temperature to 70 degrees Celsius, below the boiling point of MIC at the safety valve pressure. The very rapid explosive rise in temperature and pressure in Tank No. 610 implies conditions for a runaway trimerization reaction already existed. Ingress of water and reaction with MIC would generate carbon dioxide evolution and cause mixing. The storage tank conditions would then equal those in a well-mixed reactor, supplied with heat. Once initiated the trimerization reaction had features of auto-catalytic and auto-thermal reactions and temperatures increased rapidly to 250 degrees Celsius. The relief valve design could not permit free flow of large quantities of gases at the level at which they were generated and therefore further reactions continued.

The presence of sodium at levels of 50 to 90 ppm in the samples from residues of Tank No. 610 indicates ingress of some alkali, possibly derived from the Vent Gas Scrubber Accumulator. It is known that Tank No. 610 could not be pressured with nitrogen at any time after 22-10-1984. The contents of Tank No. 610 were virtually at atmospheric pressure from that date providing opportunities for entry of metal contaminants. From a perusal of the reports of the events of the night of 2-12-1984/3-

12-1984, it appears during the cleaning of choked filters with water in the Relief Valve Vent Header, such water perhaps mixed with alkali from vent Gas Scrubber Accumulator, could have entered the non-pressurised tank and may have carried some metallic contaminants from the carbon steel portions of header pipelines. The rapid rise in temperature necessitates onset of metal catalysed polymerisation and could not result from water alone. The presence of chloroform has no influence whatsoever in initiating or accelerating the runaway reactions. The quantum of leakage is related not to the quantum of water but to the amount of MIC stored in a single container. If 42 tonnes of MIC had been stored in 210 stainless steel drums instead of a single tank, leakage by reactions or spillage would be no more than one-fifth of a tonne."

16. Reliance was also placed on the brochure for showing that for manufacture of Sevin, a very volatile and dangerous raw material, MIC had to be stored in large quantities and that raw material was not properly kept under cooling conditions and if coming in contact with water or any other pollutant had a tendency to create extremely toxic gas which once it escapes would necessarily create disaster for the human beings and even cattle which come in its contact. It has to be stated in fairness to the learned Senior Counsel for the appellants that they also did not challenge the fact that MIC was a very highly volatile and dangerous material which had to be properly kept so that it may not spell disaster once it gets converted into poisonous gas and if such gas escapes from the factory. However their only contention was whether there was any prima facie evidence to show that the appellants or any one of them was in any way responsible for this unfortunate accident, which in their view was an act of God for which no human being was responsible.

17. The learned Additional Solicitor General, Shri Altaf Ahmed has also invited our attention to document D-159 a brochure of UCC, U.S.A. which stated that if MIC is contaminated with water it may become violent. He also invited our attention to D-195 which is a circular giving company information about definitions of "subsidiary and associate companies". This was relied upon to show that UCIL was a subsidiary company of UCC, U.S.A. Additional D-9 was relied upon which was a copy of the application for grant of industrial licence for manufacture of MIC-based pesticides with foreign collaboration of UCC, U.S.A., to show that UCL authorities were well aware regarding the hazardous nature of MIC which they were handling in collaboration with UCC, U.S.A. and the safety measures which were required to be undertaken. Letter D-191 dated 26-10-1984 written by R. Nagarajan of UCEI to Shri K.S. Kamdar was relied upon to show that Shri Kamdar was requested to give feasibility report for dismantling of the MIC Plant, Bhopal and the shipment thereof abroad and the cost estimate involved in such an undertaking. Reply of Shri Kamdar at D-19 dated 29-11-1984 was also relied upon to show the cost estimate prepared for dismantling and shipping of the Sevin/MIC Unit from Bhopal. These documents were relied upon to indicate that by the closing months of 1984 this Plant had become useless and had to be scrapped and shifted and that showed lack of interest of the management and those operating the Plant in the safe working of the Plant which was no longer profit-making and was almost a dead burden to them and this had resulted, according to the prosecution, in illegal omission on their part in taking necessary safety measures for containing the hazardous MIC within the confines of factory premises. D-216 was a statement showing loss to MIC Unit from 1981 to 1984 which showed huge financial loss suffered by the company in running the said Plant. Thereafter the learned Additional Solicitor General placed strong reliance on document D-205 which was Operational Safety Survey Report conducted by a team of experts of UCC. This document showed that a number of deficiencies in the maintenance of MIC Unit were pointed out by experts as early as in 1982. The said report is styled as Operational Safety Survey CO, MIC and Sevin Units Union Carbide India Limited, Bhopal Plant. It is dated 28-

7-1982. The covering letter addressed to Shri J. Mukund Accused 5, the then Works Manager of the Bhopal Plant recites that the team was very impressed with the quality of operating and work procedures developed over the past few years. However it sought to bring to the attention of the addressee in connection with the equipment and mechanical deficiencies described in the report and suggested that continued efforts in the area of procedures, training and enforcement were necessary for contributing substantially to the ongoing safety efforts at the Bhopal Plant. It was indicated that there were potentials for release of toxic materials in the phosgene/MIC Unit and storage areas, either due to equipment failure, operating problems or maintenance problems. There were potentials for contaminations, overpressure, or overfilling of the Sevin MIC feed tank. At M.2.1 were noted several conditions for operation of the unit that presented serious potential for sizeable releases of toxic materials. They were listed as under :

- "(a) Leakage of phosgene and chloroform from the PSS feed and quench feed filter head assemblies.
- (b) Breakage of small lines or connections, either because of inadequate line strength, installation of long unsupported nipples, or corrosion. Examples cited included quench pump drain and vent connections, HCl scrubber pump drains and MRS and pyrolyzer tails pump drains and vents. (It should be noted that several of these lines were originally Schedule 10 nickel piping, and have been replaced, for the most part.)
- (c) Possible failure of the pyrolyzer calandria vapour line due to erosion/corrosion.
- (d) Mechanical pump seal failures, caused by improper seal design (on the glut pumps, for instance) or inadequate control of replacement materials.
- (e) Release of material at unexpected places due to improper evacuation jet operation or open evacuation drops."

Regarding the operation of MIC feed tank at Sevin which was the basic source of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy the Expert Committee Report indicated the dismal situation then existing even in 1982 in paragraph M.4.2 of the Report as under :

- "(a) It appears that it would be possible to contaminate the tank with material from the vent gas scrubber. Although the arrangement of lines connecting the tank and vent scrubber appears to be adequate to prevent back flow of liquid, it appears possible to back reactive quantities of water vapours and other gases from the scrubber to the feed tank when it is depressurized.
- (b) Location of the tank inside a room and lack of water spray protection facilities create a situation where a toxic and flammable vapour cloud could be formed and confined without provision for knockdown or dispersal. There is mechanical ventilation in the room, but the same circumstances that could result in a leak or overfill (power failure, for instance) could result in the ventilation being inoperative. Also, it appears that a sizeable spill would not be readily dispersed by the system.
- (c) There is some question about the adequacy of the tank relief valve to relieve a runaway reaction or fire exposure, particularly since the tank has been enlarged.

(d) Manual control of filling of the tank, with no instrumentation backup, creates a possibility of accidental overfilling."

Even that apart after the Bhopal Gas Tragedy as stated earlier a scientific team of experts headed by Dr Varadarajan inspected the Plant on spot and tried to find out the reasons for this tragedy. At page 81 of the Report after listing various defects in the working of the Plant especially with reference to storage tank and the instrumentation and control system the Committee in paragraph 4.3 of the Report which is D-164 on the record of the trial court observed as under :

"MIC is kept under a pressure of nitrogen which is supplied by a carbon steel header common to all the storage tanks. There is a strainer in the nitrogen line. Subsequent to the strainer the pipe is of carbon steel and leads to make-up DMV which also has a body of carbon steel. Similarly, the blow down DMV is also of carbon steel body. These carbon steel parts may be exposed to MIC vapours and get corroded, providing a source of contaminant which can enter the MIC storage tank."

At paragraph 4.4 dealing with "Instrumentation and Control System" it was observed in the Report of the Varadarajan Committee as under :

"4.4 Instrumentation and Control System. - The pressure in the MIC tank increases rapidly if MIC is contaminated with water. There is no high-pressure alarm to alert the operator about the build-up of pressure.

There is a graphite rupture disc between the tank and the safety valve. This graphite rupture disc may break because of pressure surges even under normal conditions. There is no provision for an alarm to bring such a breakage of rupture disc to the attention of the operator.

For the storage of a lethal chemical such as MIC, two instruments in parallel (one for control/indication and another for alarm) are normally provided. No such provision is made. For example, quite often the level readings have not been recorded, reportedly because the level system used to be out of order very often due to choking problems. In fact, after the event, since the only level monitoring system provided for Tank No. 611 was not functioning, it was not possible to ascertain the exact quantity of MIC in that tank. An additional level measuring system would have helped in such a situation.

Ingress of contaminants or water can start a reaction with MIC which will begin slowly and produce a rise in temperature of the tank contents. However, the range of the temperature transmitter provided was only - 25 degrees Celsius to +25 degrees Celsius, with a high alarm setting at +11 degrees Celsius. The contents of the tank were being stored at ambient temperature, which varies approximately from +15 degrees Celsius to +40 degrees Celsius at Bhopal. The temperature of MIC in the storage tanks for most part of the year was higher than the high temperature alarm setting, i.e. +11 degrees Celsius. Indeed the temperature of material in the tank was higher than the maximum of the range of the temperature transmitter, i.e. +25 degrees Celsius. In such circumstances the actual temperature was not known and the transmitter was of no value. Further, provision of 'rate of rise in temperature' alarm would have invited the operator's attention to the start of such a reaction. No such

provision was made."

In connection with refrigeration the Committee observed in paragraph 4.5 of the Report as under :

"4.5 Refrigeration. - There is only one common compressor and chiller system for all the three MIC storage tanks. For such a hazardous material as MIC, where maintaining it at a low temperature is considered very important, a spare compressor and chiller system would have ensured proper chilling even when the main compressor and chiller system is under repairs or maintenance. This provision of spare compressor and chiller has not been made."

At paragraph 5 of the Report is found an analysis of the events which led to the disaster out of the gas escape on that fateful night and the summary of the conclusion is found in the last sub-paragraph of paragraph 5. It reads as under :

"In retrospect, it appears the factors that led to the toxic gas leakage and its heavy toll existed in the unique properties of very high reactivity, volatility and inhalation toxicity of MIC. The needless storage of large quantities of the material in very large-size containers for inordinately long periods as well as insufficient caution in design, in choice of materials of construction and in provision of measuring and alarm instruments, together with the inadequate controls on systems of storage and on quality of stored materials as well as lack of necessary facilities for quick effective disposal of material exhibiting instability, led to the accident. These factors contributed to guidelines and practices in operation and maintenance. Thus the combination of conditions for the accident were inherent and extant. A small input of integrated scientific analysis of the chemistry, design and controls relevant to the manufacture would have had an enormously beneficial influence in altering this combination of conditions, and in avoiding or lessening considerably the extent of damage of December 1984 at Bhopal."

In addition to the aforesaid documentary evidence the learned Additional Solicitor General also relied upon D-157 being Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association of M/s Everyday Company (India) Private Limited subsequently changed to M/s Union Carbide India Limited showing Accused 2 Keshub Mahindra as the Chairman. Various annual reports were pressed in service to show how Accused 2 Keshub Mahindra presided over the meetings and how Accused 3, V.P. Gokhale worked as whole time Director. This was relied upon to show that these accused even though stationed at Bombay shared the criminal knowledge at the other personnel of the company who were actually handling the Bhopal Plant being Accused 5 to 9. It was submitted relying on aforesaid material and also the statements of Arjun Singh, Mohan Singh and Ram Lal and other statements of persons working in the Plant which were recorded during investigation that all the accused had criminal knowledge regarding the defective working of the Plant at Bhopal and as the Plant was to be dismantled and shifted out of India the powers that monitored the Plant were no longer interested in its safe keeping and by their illegal omissions to take appropriate steps for safe working of the Plant and for the safe keeping of such dangerous material like MIC which they were handling at Bhopal, they were rightly charged for the offences concerned by the learned trial Judge and that the High Court was right in refusing to interfere with the framing of these charges. In this connection it was pointed that as the material showed no transfer of MIC from the storage tanks to the production line could take place since 22-11-1984 due to the defective system. Still no remedial measures were taken. That the report of Varadarajan Committee showed that a relief valve vent

header and process valve header were joined together by putting a 'U' type flexible hose jumber line. Therefore, according to him, this resulted in back flow of alkaline solution from the VGS to the storage tanks leading to a chain of reactions.

18. It was next submitted that despite the recommendations in the report of the Operational Safety Survey conducted at Bhopal Plant by experts from United States during May 1982 and despite various deficiencies of serious and minor nature being pointed out no remedial steps were taken. Even during the Safety Survey leakages from MIC Plant area has been noticed. Deficiency in safety valve and absence of fixed water sprayers in the MIC Plant area had been particularly pointed out. Thus the gas had leaked from the storage tank due to a chain chemical reaction. That the material led before the trial court at the stage of framing of charges clearly indicated that there was possibility of ingress of water and other contaminants from the RVVH or during cleaning of the valve due to rupturing of the disc valve which had resulted into this grim tragedy. It was next contended that the material led by the prosecution at this stage at least prima facie showed that all the accused were fully responsible for the conduct of the Plant and they shared the criminal knowledge about the acts of commission and omission on the part of those of the accused who were actually handling the Plant and supervising its working on that fateful night at Bhopal. That accused R. Choudhary, J. Mukund, S.P. Choudhary, K.V. Shetty and S.I. Qureshi who were actively associated with the working of the Plant at Bhopal were directly concerned with the incident as they were in full knowledge of the deficiencies in the Plant. Similarly accused Keshub Mahindra, V.P. Gokhale and Kishore Kamdar too had full knowledge of the defects in the Plant at Bhopal and, therefore, they also shared the criminal liability based on criminal knowledge about the acts of commission and omission in connection with the operation of the said Plant at Bhopal. That all the accused had full knowledge of the hazardous nature of the MIC manufactured as an intermediate product in Bhopal Plant, defects in the design of the Plant and lack of safety measures, but still they had taken no precautionary steps to avoid this unfortunate accident.

19. The learned Senior Counsel for the appellant-accused on the other hand submitted that even if taking the material available on record at this stage on its face value the short question is whether any charge could have been framed against the accused under Section 304 Part II IPC with or without the aid of Section 35 IPC and even for that matter any charges could have been framed under Sections 326, 324 or 429 with or without the aid of Section 35 of IPC. We may at once state that both the learned Sessions Judge as well as the High Court have taken the view on the aforesaid material that a prima facie case has been made out by the prosecution requiring the accused to face the aforesaid charges and the trial of the accused on these charges cannot be cut short or nipped in the bud in the light of the aforesaid material which has to be accepted as prima facie true and reliable at this preliminary stage of framing of charges.

20. It, therefore, becomes necessary for us now to address ourselves on this moot question. As noted earlier the main charge framed against all these accused is under Section 304 Part II IPC. So far as Accused 2, 3, 4 and 12 are concerned they are also charged with offences under Sections 326, 324, IPC and 429 IPC read with Section 35 IPC while Accused 5 to 9 are charged substantially with these offences also. We shall first deal with the charges framed against the accused concerned under the main provisions of Section 304 Part II IPC. A look at Section 304 Part II shows that the accused concerned can be charged under that provision for an offence of culpable homicide not amounting to murder and when being so charged if it is alleged that the act of the accused concerned is done with the knowledge that it is likely to cause death but without any intention to cause death or to cause such bodily injury as is likely to cause death the charged offences would fall under Section 304 Part II. However before any charge under Section 304 Part II can be framed, the material on

record must at least prima facie show that the accused is guilty of culpable homicide and the act allegedly committed by him must amount to culpable homicide. However, if the material relied upon for framing such a charge against the accused concerned falls short of even prima facie indicating that the accused appeared to be guilty of an offence of culpable homicide Section 304 Part I or Part II would get out of the picture. In this connection we have to keep in view Section 299 of the Indian Penal Code which defines culpable homicide. It lays down that :

"Whoever causes death by doing an act with the intention of causing death, or with the intention of causing such bodily injury as is likely to cause death, or with the knowledge that he is likely by such act to cause death, commits the offence of culpable homicide."

Consequently the material relied upon by the prosecution for framing a charge under Section 304 Part II must at least prima facie indicate that the accused had done an act which had caused death with at least such a knowledge that he was by such act likely to cause death. The entire material which the prosecution relied upon before the trial court for framing the charge and to which we have made a detailed reference earlier, in our view, cannot support such a charge unless it indicates prima facie that on that fateful night when the Plant was run at Bhopal it was run by the accused concerned with the knowledge that such running of the Plant was likely to cause deaths of human beings. It cannot be disputed that mere act of running a Plant as per the permission granted by the authorities would not be a criminal act. Even assuming that it was a defective Plant and it was dealing with a very toxic and hazardous substance like MIC the mere act of storing such a material by the accused in Tank No. 610 could not even prima facie suggest that the accused concerned thereby had knowledge that they were likely to cause death of human beings. In fairness to the prosecution it was not suggested and could not be suggested that the accused had an intention to kill any human being while operating the Plant. Similarly on the aforesaid material placed on record it could not be even prima facie suggested by the prosecution that any of the accused had a knowledge that by operating the Plant on that fateful night whereat such dangerous and highly volatile substance like MIC was stored they had the knowledge that by this very act itself they were likely to cause death of any human being. Consequently in our view taking the entire material as aforesaid on its face value and assuming it to represent the correct factual position in connection with the operation of the Plant at Bhopal on that fateful night it could not be said that the said material even prima facie called for framing of a charge against the accused concerned under Section 304 Part II IPC on the specious plea that the said act of the accused amounted to culpable homicide only because the operation of the Plant on that night ultimately resulted in deaths of a number of human beings and cattle. It is also pertinent to note that when the complaint was originally filed suo motu by the police authorities at Bhopal and the criminal case was registered at the Police Station Hanumanganj, Bhopal as Case No. 1104 of 1984 it was registered under Section 304-A of the IPC. We will come to that provision a little later. Suffice it to say at this stage that on the entire material produced by the prosecution in support of the charge it could not be said even prima facie that it made the accused liable to face the charge under Section 304 Part II. In this connection we may refer to a decision of the Calcutta High Court to which our attention was drawn by the learned Senior Counsel, Shri Rajendra Singh for the appellants. In the case of Adam Ali Taluqdar v. King-Emperor [AIR 1927 Cal 324 : 31 CWN 314 : 28 Cri LJ 334] a Division Bench of the Calcutta High Court made the following pertinent observations while interpreting Section 304 Part II read with Section 34 IPC :

"Although to constitute an offence under Section 304, Part 2, there must be no intention of causing death or such injury as the offender knew was likely to cause

death, there must still be a common intention to do an act with the knowledge that it is likely to cause death though without the intention of causing death. Each of the assailants may know that the act, they are jointly doing, is one that is likely to cause death but have no intention of causing death, yet they may certainly have the common intention to do that act and therefore Section 34 can apply to a case under Section 304, Part 2."

Once we reach the conclusion that the material produced by the prosecution before the trial court at the stage of framing of charges did not even prima facie connect the accused with any act done with the knowledge that by that act itself deaths of human beings would be caused the accused could not be even charged for culpable homicide and consequently there would be no question of attracting Section 304 Part II against the accused concerned on such material. When on the material produced by the prosecution no charge could be framed against any of the accused under Section 304 Part II there would remain no occasion to press in service the applicability of Section 35 IPC in support of such a charge for those accused who were not actually concerned with the running of the Plant at Bhopal, namely, Accused 2, 3, 4 and 12.

21. We may now turn to the charges framed against the accused-appellants concerned under Sections 324 and 326 of the IPC. Section 324 deals with "voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous weapons or means" while Section 326 deals with "voluntarily causing grievous hurt by dangerous weapons or means". Both these sections for their application require material against the accused on the basis of which it could be said that the accused had voluntarily caused such hurt or grievous hurt, as the case may be. Section 321 defines "voluntarily causing hurt" and provides that :

"Whoever does any act with the intention of thereby causing hurt to any person, or with the knowledge that he is likely thereby to cause hurt to any person, and does thereby cause hurt to any person, is said 'voluntarily to cause hurt'."

Similarly Section 322 deals with "voluntarily causing grievous hurt" and lays down that :

"Whoever voluntarily causes hurt, if the hurt which he intends to cause or knows himself to be likely to cause is grievous hurt, and if the hurt which he causes is grievous hurt, is said 'voluntarily to cause grievous hurt'."

For applicability of these sections the material relied upon by the prosecution in support of such charges must show that the accused concerned had committed the act complained of at least with the knowledge that by such act he was likely to cause hurt or grievous hurt to the victim. We have already indicated hereinabove that the material pressed in service by the prosecution for framing such charges against the accused falls short of indicating that the act of running the Plant on that fateful night at Bhopal which in its turn involved storing and utilising highly dangerous and volatile substance like MIC in their storage Tank No. 610 could not even prima facie be said to have been done with the knowledge that by such act itself simple hurt or grievous hurt was likely to be caused to anyone. Consequently on such material even charge under Sections 324 and 326 IPC could not have been framed against the accused concerned. Once this conclusion is reached there would also remain no occasion to press in service against the absentee Accused 2, 3, 4 as well as 12 Section 35 IPC which the prosecution sought to press in service along with substantive Sections 324 and 326 IPC. In fact on the material as placed by the prosecution in support of these charges if a charge under Section 304 Part II cannot be framed then on the parity of reasoning no charge under Sections 324 and 326 could also be framed. That takes us to Section 429 IPC which deals with "mischief by

killing or maiming cattle, etc., of any value or any animal of the value of fifty rupees". For application of this section the material must indicate that the accused concerned had committed mischief in the first place. The term 'mischief' is defined by Section 425 IPC. It lays down that :

"Whoever, with intent to cause, or knowing that he is likely to cause, wrongful loss or damage to the public or to any person, causes the destruction of any property, or any such change in any property or in the situation thereof as destroys or diminishes its value or utility, or affects it injuriously, commits 'mischief'."

Before the said section is pressed in service the material relied upon by the prosecution must indicate even prima facie that the accused concerned by running the Plant at Bhopal on that fateful night had knowledge that by running such Plant they were likely to cause wrongful loss or damage to the public or to any person. It is difficult to appreciate how the said provision can be pressed in service on the basis of the material referred to hereinabove which does not whisper or even prima facie indicate how by running such a Plant wherein highly dangerous and volatile substance like MIC was stored in Tank No. 610 the accused had the knowledge that by that act alone they were likely to destroy anybody's property or cause wrongful loss or damage to any person. Once the applicability of Section 425 IPC dealing with 'mischief' is ruled out on such material there would remain no occasion to invoke Section 429 which for its applicability requires the prosecution to show in the first instance any material against the accused concerned indicating the commission of mischief by the accused. In our view, therefore, on the material pressed in service by the prosecution for framing charges against the accused no charge could have been framed against the accused concerned either under Section 304 Part II or under Section 324, 326 or 429 IPC with or without the aid of Section 35 IPC. On these findings of ours the appeals will be required to be allowed and all these charges will have to be quashed.

22. However this is not the end of the matter. There still remains the question as to whether any other charge can be framed against the accused concerned for any of the offences under the Indian Penal Code on the basis of the very same material relied upon by the prosecution for framing appropriate charges against the accused. It is true that though originally the criminal case was registered for an offence under Section 304-A of the IPC the Central Bureau of Investigation which took up the investigation thought it proper to press in service Section 304 Part II and Sections 324, 326 and 429 of the IPC. Charges under these sections have been found by us to be unsustainable on the material produced by the prosecution on record in support of these charges. However that does not mean that on the material as it stands on record the accused cannot even prima facie be alleged to have committed any criminal offence for which they can be called upon to face the trial and that they should get a clean chit and clear walk-over. In our view the prosecution on the material as aforesaid had made out a prima facie case against the accused for being tried under Section 304-A of the IPC which reads as under

"304-A. Causing death by negligence. - Whoever causes the death or any person by doing any rash or negligent act not amounting to culpable homicide shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both."

On our finding that the material pressed in service by the prosecution does not indicate even prima facie that the accused were guilty of an offence of culpable homicide and, therefore, Section 304 Part II was out of picture, Section 304-A on this very finding can straight-away get attracted at least prima facie. It cannot be disputed that because of the operation of the defective Plant at Bhopal on

that fateful night a highly dangerous and volatile substance like MIC got converted into poisonous gas which snuffed out the lives of thousands of human beings and maimed other thousands and killed a number of animals and that all happened, as seen at least prima facie the material led by the prosecution on record, because of rash and negligent act on the part of the accused who were in charge of the Plant at Bhopal. Even though, therefore, these accused cannot be charged for offences under Section 304 Part II the material led against them by the prosecution at least prima facie showed that the accused were guilty of rash or negligent acts not amounting to culpable homicide and by that act caused death of a large number of persons. We may mention that on the question whether on this material Section 304-A could be invoked or not, the learned Senior Counsel for the appellants as well as the learned Additional Solicitor General for the respondent-State did address us and, therefore, we can and should, with a view to avoid multiplicity of proceedings, exercise our powers under Article 142 of the Constitution and decide whether the material led by the prosecution can prima facie support charges under Section 304-A against the accused concerned. In the case of *State of Gujarat v. Haidarali Kalubhai* [(1976) 1 SCC 889 : 1976 SCC (Cri) 211] it was laid down by this Court as under : (SCC p. 892, para 10)

"Section 304-A by its own definition totally excludes the ingredients of Section 299 or Section 300 IPC. Doing an act with the intent to kill a person or knowledge that doing of an act was likely to cause a person's death are ingredients of the offence of culpable homicide. When intent or knowledge as described above is the direct motivating force of the act complained of, Section 304-A has to make room for the graver and more serious charge of culpable homicide."

On the facts found in that case it was held that the prosecution evidence did not make out a case of any wilful or deliberate act on the part of the accused in order to cause the death of the deceased by driving the truck in the way he did. Whether the prosecution brings home the charge under Section 304-A or not will, of course, have to be decided in the light of the evidence that may be led in the trial against the accused who is required to face the charge under Section 304-A. But for framing such a charge the material on record must at this stage be assumed to be representing a true version of the event. For repelling the applicability of Section 304-A, the learned Senior Counsel for the appellants pressed in service decision in the case of *Ambalal D. Bhatt v. State of Gujarat* [(1972) 3 SCC 525 : 1972 SCC (Cri) 618]. The following observations in the aforesaid judgment were pressed in service :

"(i) In a prosecution for an offence under Section 304-A of IPC, the court has to examine whether the alleged act of the accused is the direct result of a rash and negligent act and that act was the proximate and efficient cause of the death without intervention of other's negligence. The mere fact that an accused contravenes certain rules or regulations in doing of an act does not establish an offence under Section 304-A, IPC.

The act causing deaths must be the *causa causans*; it is not enough that it may have been the *causa sine qua non*. The court has to determine whether the act of the accused is the *causa causans* or has there been a cause intervening which has broken the chain of causation so as to make the act of the accused, though a negligent one, not the immediate cause or whether it amounts to an act of gross negligence or recklessly negligent conduct. The fact that twelve lives have been lost, however shocking and regrettable it may be, ought not to allow the mind boggle while appreciating the evidence."

It was submitted that the material must prima facie show that the alleged act of the accused was the direct result of rash and negligent act. In this connection we must observe that the material led by the prosecution to which we have made a detailed reference earlier prima facie shows that there were not only structural defects but even operational defects in the working of the Plant on that fateful night which resulted into this grim tragedy. Consequently a prima facie case is made out for framing charges under Section 304-A against the accused concerned. If ultimately on the evidence led by the prosecution and even by the defence if at all they choose to lead evidence in rebuttal, it is found that the act complained of was not the proximate and efficient cause of death and intervention of other's negligence had taken place the accused may get acquittal after facing the full-fledged trial. But that stage has yet not come. It would, therefore, be premature at this stage to say as to what would be the ultimate result of the trial once the accused are made to face such a trial. But it cannot be said that on the material led by the prosecution at this stage even the case of culpable negligence or rashness is also not made out at least prima facie against the accused concerned and the trial should be nipped in the bud even for such a charge. Our attention was also invited by the learned Senior Counsel for the appellants in support of their contention that the material on record does not prima facie make out a case for framing a charge under Section 304-A IPC. The following observations of Hegde, J. speaking for a Bench of three learned Judges in the case of Suleman Rehiman Mulani v. State of Maharashtra [(1968) 2 SCR 515 : AIR 1968 SC 829] were pressed in service :

"The requirements of Section 304-A IPC are that the death of any person must have been caused by the accused by doing any rash or negligent act. In other words, there must be proof that the rash or negligent act of the accused was the proximate cause of the death. There must be direct nexus between the death of a person and the rash or negligent act of the accused. There is no presumption in law that a person who possesses only a learner's licence or possesses no licence at all does not know driving. For various reasons, not excluding sheer indifference, he might not have taken a regular licence. The prosecution evidence that first appellant had driven the jeep to various places on the day previous to the occurrence was a proof of the fact that he knew driving."

Even that decision cannot be of any avail to the appellants for the simple reason that question of proof of rashness and negligence will arise at the stage of trial after full evidence is led by the prosecution and even by the accused side if at all they choose to do so and in the light of that evidence the question would arise whether the charge as framed is made out by the prosecution against the accused concerned. At present we are concerned with the short question as to whether on the material led by the prosecution at this stage a case is made out for framing charge under Section 304-A IPC or not ? It cannot be gainsaid that the voluminous evidence led by the prosecution in this connection at least prima facie shows that the accused concerned who operated the Plant on that fateful night at Bhopal could be alleged to be at least guilty of rash and negligent act in the way this highly volatile substance MIC was handled by them and which ultimately escaped in vaporous form and extinguished the lives of thousands of human beings and animals apart from causing serious bodily injuries to thousands of others. Our attention in this connection was also invited by the learned Senior Counsel for the appellants to the case of Kurban Hussein Mohammedali Rangwalla v. State of Maharashtra [(1965) 2 SCR 622 : AIR 1965 SC 1616]. It was submitted relying on the said decision that for punishing an accused under Sections 304-A and 285 of the IPC it was required to be shown that because of the alleged rash and negligent act death must result and death must be the direct and proximate result. In that case on evidence led at the full-fledged trial the question arose whether the charge was made out. All these judgments on which the learned Senior Counsel

for the appellants placed reliance, therefore, could have applicability for judging the culpability of the accused concerned after they face the trial and entire evidence is led in the case against them. However for framing charge under Section 304-A on the aforesaid material it cannot be said that the said material even prima facie did not point out the culpability of the accused concerned in running a defective Plant having a number of operational defects and in being prima facie guilty of illegal omissions to take safety measures in running such a limping Plant on that fateful night which resulted into this colossal tragedy. The aforesaid conclusion of ours, therefore, would make out a prima facie case against Accused 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 who were in actual charge of running of the Bhopal Plant and would require them to face the trial for charge under Section 304-A of the IPC.

23. So far as the remaining Accused 2, 3, 4 and 12 are concerned the material produced on record clearly indicates at least prima facie that they being at the helm of affairs have to face this charge for the alleged negligence and rashness of their subordinates who actually operated the Plant on that fateful night at Bhopal and for that purpose Section 35 of the IPC would also prima facie get attracted against them. A mere look at that section shows that if the act alleged against these accused becomes criminal on account of their sharing common knowledge about the defective running of Plant at Bhopal by the remaining accused who represented them on the spot and who had to carry out their directions from them and who were otherwise required to supervise their activity, Section 35 of the IPC could at least prima facie be invoked against Accused 2, 3, 4 and 12 to be read with Section 304-A IPC. Consequently we find that on the material led by the prosecution against the accused at this stage a prima facie case was made out by the prosecution for framing charges against Accused 2, 3, 4 and 12 under Section 304-A read with Section 35 IPC while substantive charges under Section 304-A could be framed against Accused 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. In this connection Shri Desai, the learned Senior Counsel for the appellants, vehemently submitted that the High Court was in error in invoking Section 35 against the accused concerned. Placing reliance on *Esso Standard Inc. v. Udhararn Bhagwandas Japanwalla* [(1975) 45 Comp Cas 16 (Bom)] he submitted that, that was a case in which for the individual acts of the directors of the Company the Company was sought to be made liable by invoking the principle of corporate liability based on the doctrine of directing mind and will. Shri Desai submitted that this was a converse case where for the act of the Company which is a corporate body being Accused 12 the individual directors are sought to be roped in. The aforesaid contention of Shri Desai cannot be of any avail at this stage for the simple reason that whether on facts such converse case is made out or not in the light of the aforesaid decision will depend upon the evidence that may be led at the stage of trial. But this would not rule out framing of appropriate charge against the appellants if there is prima facie material against them which in our view has been made available by the prosecution before the trial court for framing such a charge against the accused concerned.

24. Shri Ashok Desai, learned Senior Counsel then submitted that the material led by the prosecution does not even remotely indicate that Accused 2 who was at Bombay could have shared any knowledge with persons at Bhopal who were actually operating the Plant. When from the documentary evidence produced by the prosecution it is prima facie indicated that the accused at the helm of affairs was in the apex position enabling him to know the shortcomings of the working of the Plant at Bhopal, whether he actually shared knowledge or not will be a question of evidence and proof to be resolved at the stage of trial. However from the material available on record it cannot be said that the prosecution had not prima facie made out a case for attracting Section 35 IPC so far as the present accused are concerned. However we must add a caution. We must note that whatever we have observed at this stage in connection with the material produced by the prosecution for framing charges against the accused is strictly confined to this limited question. Whether the accused are found actually guilty of the charges framed against them or not will strictly depend upon the

evidence that may be led at the stage of trial and the Court will have to decide the culpability of the accused concerned, if any, strictly confined to the evidence that may be led at the stage of trial. Our present observations, therefore, should not be treated to have even remotely suggested that in fact the accused are guilty of the offences with which they are liable to be charged pursuant to our present order. Consequently on the material as produced by the prosecution on record charges under Section 304-A read with Section 35 IPC can be framed against Accused 2, 3, 4 and 12. We direct the appropriate trial court to frame charges as aforesaid against the accused concerned.

25. However in our view from the material which is produced on record there is a possibility of considering a further question whether charges under Sections 336, 337 and 338 of the IPC with or without the aid of Section 35 can be framed against the accused concerned. They read as under :

"336. Act endangering life or personal safety of others. - Whoever does any act so rashly or negligently as to endanger human life or the personal safety of others, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three months, or with fine which may extend to two hundred and fifty rupees, or with both.

337. Causing hurt by act endangering life or personal safety of others. - Whoever causes hurt to any person by doing any act so rashly or negligently as to endanger human life, or the personal safety of others, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine which may extend to five hundred rupees, or with both.

338. Causing grievous hurt by act endangering life or personal safety of others. - Whoever causes grievous hurt to any person by doing any act so rashly or negligently as to endanger human life, or the personal safety of others, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or with both."

26. As none of the parties have addressed us on these aspects we leave this question for consideration of the learned trial Judge who may after hearing the parties decide whether on the material as led by the prosecution on record at this stage charges, if any, can also be framed under Sections 336, 337 and 338 of the IPC with or without the aid of Section 35 of the IPC. We express no opinion on this aspect and leave it open to the trial court to address itself on this question.

27. As a result of the aforesaid discussion it is held that on the material led by the prosecution appropriate charges which are required to be framed against the accused concerned are under Section 304-A IPC so far as Accused 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 are concerned while so far as Accused 2, 3, 4 and 12 are concerned charges under Section 304-A read with Section 35 IPC will have to be framed. As these offences are triable by the Court of Judicial Magistrate, 1st Class, Bhopal the sessions case shall be transferred to the Court of the Chief Judicial Magistrate, 1st Class, Bhopal who will proceed with the trial in accordance with law and frame appropriate charges under Section 304-A with or without the aid of Section 35, as the case may be, against the accused concerned as indicated hereinabove.

28. In the result the appeals filed by the accused concerned partially succeed to the aforesaid extent. Charges framed against them under Sections 304 Part II, 324, 326 and 429 IPC with or without the aid of Section 35, as the case may be, are quashed and set aside. Instead it is directed that the

appropriate trial court shall frame charges against these accused as indicated in the judgment. The appropriate trial court to which the case will stand transferred is also directed to consider the further question whether charges should be framed under Sections 336, 337 and 338 of the IPC with or without taking the aid of Section 35 IPC after hearing the parties concerned. On that aspect we express no opinion. Orders accordingly.