

# Lawyer regrets accepting Bhopal gas leak case

Rights tribunal's ire is justifiable, Nariman says

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New Delhi: Fali S. Nariman, lead lawyer of Union Carbide in the Bhopal gas leak case, has said on hindsight, he "certainly would not have accepted the civil liability case".

"If I had to live my life all over again, as a lawyer, and the brief came to me and I had foreknowledge of everything that later came in, I would not have accepted the case," Nariman told journalist Karan Thapar in the Devil's Advocate programme on CNN-IBN channel which was broadcast yesterday.

Nariman, who represented Union Carbide in 1985, said he thought that the Bhopal case was one more case which would add a feather to his cap.

## Tragedy

"I mean one is always ambitious at that age. But, I found later, but then it's too late... One can't walk out of the case one has already taken up... That this involved, it was not a case; it was a tragedy. And in a tragedy, who is right, who is wrong etc... all becomes marred in great deal of justifiable emotion."

Describing himself as a "fallen angel", Nariman said he found merit in the criticism by the human rights tribunal that by accepting the brief, he had allowed Union Carbide to cash in on his human rights credentials and that wasn't just an unwarranted advantage for Union Carbide but, people argued, that it also meant that great harm was done to the protection and promotion of human rights. "I think I was described along with others as a fallen angel. I am no angel, of course, but nor am I a devil. But fallen angel would perhaps sum up what others thought of this whole episode."

Asked whether he thought that the court should have made a greater inquiry and taken greater scrutiny of the figures before assuming these figures were factually correct, he said he thought so. "You see, I think, the court had this problem before it. This was only an interim order."