

By the Editor

India is a vast country with a huge population. As in many parts of the world, 'health' is synonymous with curative services. The majority of the working population belongs to the unorganized sector, which is not in the purview of current legislation in occupational health. Further, the working population being largely illiterate is unaware of the hazards associated with their occupation. The data is lacking even in the formal sector and there is no mechanism for collection and maintenance.

It is therefore critical that there are concerted efforts to

- Initiate a process of building a data base both within the Government systems and as a public repository,
- A massive awareness and health education programme should be carried out for the workers, supervisors and owners/management of the factories/mines engaged in hazardous process.
- Place possible economic benefits resulting from prevention programmes before the management, trade unions and policy makers.
- Advocate for legally binding provisions for preventive and curative support to informal workers including just compensation for the victims.
- Strengthen the network of groups working on these issues to bring about greater pressure on the decision makers and offer alternatives.



Planting trees is not doing your bit

On World Environment Day this year I was at a five-star hotel. It was among the older ones in Bengaluru. The hotel had organized a week-long initiative to green Bengaluru. The idea was hackneyed. Of course, we need as many trees as we can get to absorb the carbon we release in the atmosphere in huge volumes. But we need to do more than just planting trees. While listening to the experts at the meet, I looked at the ceiling. I realised the hotel used old energy-inefficient halogen bulbs. I took a walk to the washroom outside and found that the entire lighting was with incandescent halogen bulbs.

While waiting for my turn to get to the podium, I did some idle maths. I reckoned they were over 200 lights hanging from the ceiling of the conference room at the hotel. Some more calculations and I reckoned they were using up about 10 units every hour of the lighting. I extended the number to the entire hotel, and estimated the daily consumption of energy at 5,000 units only for lighting. Combining the centralized air-conditioning, the pumps and the array of cooking and other appliances that help a five-star hotel offer service to its customers could well mean 4.5 million units a year, I thought. About Rs 30 lakh a month, or Rs 3.6 crore a year.

I might be wrong in the estimates but my argument is: a simple initiative by the purchase department of any hotel could reduce energy used per day by a staggering 70 per cent for lighting alone, and 40-50 per cent on air-conditioning and other high-induction-based appliances.

I said to myself: "Now why will not someone want to save Rs 10-15 lakh every month by doing away with halogens and incandescent bulbs, and switching to the new-generation, energy-efficient CFLs and LEDs? Why would they not think of this as a green initiative? Instead, why would they waste time on ceremonial projects such as planting trees on an Environment Day?" It is quite possible managers resist change, especially a manager lower down the hierarchy. Who would want to incur the wrath of senior management at the corporate headquarters— which could be outside India as well— with a decision taken locally? A well-intentioned hotel, such as the one where I was, would do well to understand that saving of every unit of energy is equal to saving one kilogramme of carbon emission.

Climate experts say every 700 units of such energy saving is equivalent to protecting a full-grown tree. If 4.5 million units of energy are saved a year, the hotel could claim to have saved or protected 6,500 full-grown, 40-year-old trees every year. The hotel would also do well to understand that the

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saving of 4.5 million units of energy in a year means saving the hassle of investing in 4.5-5 MW of conventional power. That is a benefit any government will welcome, considering the capital cost of installing 1,000 MW plant of conventional generation is about Rs 5,000 crore.

To understand the ecological cost of power generation with hydel dams or thermal plants, think of the damage such dams cause to complex ecosystems in our hills and forests. Easier still, look at the bleak landscape in the vicinity of thermal power plants in the country, with mile upon mile of heaped fly ash, which results from the burning of coal in thermal plants. We can keep writing grim reports on climate change and global warming. We can continue to berate the government for its inability or incompetence. That is not going to help. But if we did our bit in our homes, hotels, offices and hospitals, and in energy-guzzling industry, we will be on the road to beating the energy crisis. And all it will take is steps that are easy, affordable and economic.

The writer, Chadrashakar Hariharan is CEO of Biodiversity Conservation [India] Limited, a green building company in Bengaluru

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/node/1887>

The mysterious case of fainting workers

Independent fact-finding team's report on the 23rd July mass fainting of workers in Foxconn India factory in Sriperumbadur, Kanchipuram District, Tamil Nadu

In March 2006, Tamil Nadu government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Foxconn India Pvt Ltd, a subsidiary of Taiwan's Hon Hai Precision, with investment worth Rs 485 crores and creating jobs for 10,000 people. It is a Special Economic Zone unit, with its main factory located inside Nokia Telecom SEZ in Sriperumbadur, Kancheepuram District. Another factory is located at Sunguvarchattiram near Sriperumbadur, which is where this incident occurred. Foxconn India mainly assembles mobile parts (metal and plastic covers, display boards) for Finnish mobile giant Nokia. Previously, it also used to assemble complete mobile sets for Sony Ericsson and Motorola.

FoxConn Electronics caught global attention due to a spate of workers suicides in its factory located inside Shenzhen SEZ in China since January 2010. Sixteen workers had committed suicide till June 2010 in the Shenzhen plant by jumping from the factory roof owing to difficult work conditions and poor wages. As a company which supplies globally renowned brands like Apple, Hewlett-Packard, Dell, Intel and Sony, the company's massive labour rights violations at its iPod assembling unit in Shenzhen has attracted global attention. A recent article in the British newspaper Mail on Sunday states that these violations include - below-legal minimum wages (with workers reportedly earning \$50 a month); 15 hour routine work shifts; poor and unsafe working conditions; inadequate dormitories etc. (Mail Online - 18th Aug, 2006)

The Incident

On 23rd-24th July 2010, after experiencing 'mysterious poisonous gas leak' in the assembling unit of Foxconn India Private Limited, over 200 workers fell unconscious with some vomiting blood and complained of giddiness, breathlessness, coughing, pain in the chest.

Read the fact finding report here

<http://www.downtoearth.org.in/node/1887>

Pesticides persist in Indian atmosphere

While residues of banned pesticides in the atmosphere are declining around the world India continues to have exceptionally high levels, a new study shows.

Portable samplers using chemically treated resin and deployed at several sites on seven continents from 2005 to 2008 showed that 'organochlorine' or chlorine-containing pesticides such as DDT (Dichloro-Diphenyl-Trichloroethane), chlordanes and endosulphans (that also contains sulphur) are declining in most regions, suggesting the effect of worldwide bans.

But levels of organochlorine pesticides in India remain "exceptionally high", researchers from the University of Toronto at Scarborough, Canada, reported in this month's (September 2010) issue of Journal of Environmental Monitoring, published by the Royal Society of Chemistry.

For example, while the concentration of the pesticide 'gamma HFC' (hexachlorocyclohexane) is 0.3 nanograms (a nanogram is one-billionth of a gram) at Cape Grim in Australia, it is 800 nanograms in Delhi in India.

The findings suggest that though several harmful pesticides that persist in the air have been banned in the western world, there is still significant use in developing countries. An estimated 11 billion tonnes of pesticides are used each year worldwide.

Debi Sharma, senior scientist at the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, Bangalore, told SciDev.Net that "it is common knowledge that in India the use of DDT is banned in agriculture but not for public health purposes." Other pesticides such as aldrin, used against termites, conform to a ban imposed six years ago, he said. Studies by scientists at the National Institute of Occupational Health, Ahmedabad, published in the Bulletin of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology in 2004, showed that pesticides released into the environment entered living organisms, causing health problems. For example, endosulfan exposure delayed sexual maturity in boys and interfered with the production of male hormones. energy crisis.

<http://www.environmental-expert.com/resultEachPressRelease.aspx?cid=33596&codi=195798>

We must protect workplace safety laws

Author - Paul Howes, Published in- The Sunday Telegraph - October 24, 2010 12:00AM

LIFE is cheap in China. It's cut price in India. And in Saudi Arabia, it's practically given away in the name of higher profits.

But in NSW, we place a very high premium on worker's lives. And it's a premium we - rightly - pay dearly for.

The reason for this is simple. We have world standard, best practice Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) laws.

The amazing rescue of 33 Chilean miners, trapped for 68 days more than 700m underground shone a light on the importance of strong workplace safety standards.

But even though we have one of the world's best OHS systems, it may come as a surprise to learn that on average 12 to 14 Australian miners die every year at work. For union officials, workplace deaths and injuries are an all too common occurrence. Not a week goes by without a report coming across my desk of a major safety breach occurring at an Australian Workers' Union (AWU) worksite. Sadly and unacceptably, many of those breaches will result in injury or death. Most of these incidents are never reported in the media. Most families whose loved ones don't come home from work mourn in private. Dealing with their grief in their own way.

For 125 years the AWU, and the union movement, have fought to ensure that workers are protected by the best workplace safety laws in the world.

And in NSW, we are fortunate to have the strongest occupational health and safety laws in the nation.

That's why I was pleased to see Premier Kristina Keneally say last week that she will defend those laws tooth and nail, to ensure that NSW workers are not left worse off in the move to a harmonised national health and safety framework.

Unions support moving to a national health and safety system but have always believed that workplace safety laws should be strengthened not weakened.

Kristina Keneally agrees with that.

Many employers seeking to weaken health and safety standards have protested the Premier's position, even going so far as to take out newspaper advertisements and have claimed that they support health and safety standards but don't want to see the best practice laws that exist in NSW extended to the rest of the country.

It's an odd position. Employers who treat their workers fairly and ensure safe workplaces have nothing to fear from the NSW law, which protects strong safety standards, but employers who cut corners and put the lives of their employees at risk should be penalised.

The NSW Opposition Leader Barry O'Farrell, who rarely

stands for anything, has backed big business's call to weaken safety standards in this State. He wants to remove the right of unions to prosecute in the courts employers who breach workplace safety standards. In effect he wants to protect dodgy bosses who are more interested in saving money than saving lives.

Mark Lennon, the Secretary of Unions NSW, was right when he said last week that union-initiated prosecutions have been used sparingly. But where they have been pursued, as in the banking industry or against James Hardie, they have led to decisions that have forced employers to make significant improvements. Likewise, the reverse onus of proof has focused employers on their responsibility to provide safe workplaces. The law has worked to put the interests of worker safety first."

This is a position that all decent people seeking to protect the health and safety of employees at work should agree with.

NSW should be proud of the stance Premier Keneally has taken. She has stood up to the big end of town and to her own party and made it clear that her Government will not stand by and wind back laws protecting the lives of working people.

And of course, alarmist calls by employer organisations about the sky falling in when new safety laws are introduced is nothing new. It's their standard operating procedure.

Back in 1926, when the Labor Government introduced Workers Compensation, businesses at the time claimed that the economy would collapse and that no one would be employed.

The same outrageous claims have been made every time safety laws have been strengthened, and every time the Liberal Party has sided with their big-end-of-town mates to try and water down safety provisions.

The people of NSW shouldn't be fooled. Kristina Keneally is standing up for the laws that already exist in this State. They are laws which have saved lives and made workplaces safer and haven't had any negative effect on the economy.

And while we should have the same standards across the country, if we as an advanced nation in the 21st century, believe that people should be able to go to work each day without the fear of losing their lives or their limbs, then we should aspire to the best possible OHS laws.

Because while life might be cheap to some foreign Governments, it's priceless in Australia, and nowhere more so than in NSW

Paul Howes is National Secretary of the The Australian Workers' Union

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/opinion/we-must-protect-workplace-safety-laws/story-e6frezz0-1225942660423>

Karnataka SME's to get eco-friendly recognition

Rheinland, DEG Germany and ECC International fund first of its kind Public-Private Partnership (PPP) program for Sustainable industrial ecology among SMEs in the state

BANGALORE, INDIA: TUV Rheinland, a provider of technical, safety and certification services today announced the completion of the initial phase of Karnataka's Public-Private Partnership (PPP) initiative for 'Enhanced Productivity and Sustainable Industrial Ecology among SMEs in the state.

10 select SMEs would be audited and rated on social, environmental and occupational health and safety as per international standards like Environment Management System (ISO 14001), Occupational Health and Safety (OHSAS 18001) and Social Accountability (SA 8000) on completion of the 14 month program, enabling them gain global acceptance and recognition.

The initiative 'SHINE' (Systematic and Holistic program for a balanced Industrial Ecology) is jointly funded by DEG of Germany, Europe's developmental finance institution and Knowledge firm ECC International along with TUV Rheinland India to create awareness, involve and implement environmental and occupational health and safety standards amongst the SME Segment in Karnataka.

M.Bhaskar, director, TUV Rheinland said, "Karnataka's rapid and unsustainable economic growth is posing a serious challenge to the ecological balance of the region and the environment in general,"

He added that studies confirm that 51 per cent of the state's highly polluting industries are concentrated in the four districts of Bangalore Urban, Belgaum, Bellary and Mysore. These cities account for a huge concentration of small and medium industries, which are losing their competitive edge and are ill equipped to meet increasingly stringent national/international rules and regulations and as a result are in danger of being thrown out of business.

"Our project seeks to achieve increased levels of awareness and adoption of environmental health standards by addressing issues at three key levels- awareness, involvement and implementation. We will organize mass mobilization programmes, create multi stakeholder expert pools to train and build capacity in groups to switch to sustainable industrial production', said Bhaskar.

Sreenivasan, managing director, ECCI further elaborated that sustainable industrial production is a systematic and integrated approach towards optimizing the economic, environmental and social impacts of a company's products, services and processes towards a more sustainable means of production. As a part of the programme, we have also created a comprehensive e-learning kit on international standards and best practices governing industrial production that will be distributed to over 200 enterprises in the state."

<http://www.ciol.com/Enterprise/Enterprise/News->

[Reports/Karnataka-SMEs-to-get-eco-friendly-recognition/141979/0/](http://www.ciol.com/Enterprise/Enterprise/News-Reports/Karnataka-SMEs-to-get-eco-friendly-recognition/141979/0/)

Exporting death: Another popular Harper foreign policy

Author - Gerald Caplan, Special to The Globe and Mail

Published Friday, Oct. 15, 2010 4:55PM EDT

What do you call a country that deliberately sells products abroad that will kill many people? You call it Canada. What do you call it when a state action kills a large numbers of defenseless people? You call it a crime against humanity. So how can exporting death by Canadian asbestos not be a crime against humanity and how can a state that does so not be guilty of committing such a crime?

Why does the International Criminal Court not issue warrants for those Canadian and Quebec government officials who are promoting the sale of deadly asbestos to poor countries where the death of many people is guaranteed? The reputation of the young court has been sorely undermined by its focus solely on Africans accused of terrible crimes. Canada's promotion of asbestos offers an opportunity to redress the balance.

It's also nothing less than criminal that we need yet another column on this issue. Every lethal aspect of the asbestos trade has been comprehensively exposed. It's received prominent coverage by the mainstream media throughout the country, including Quebec, where the only asbestos mine is now located. In this newspaper, devastating articles setting out the unanswerable case against asbestos have appeared by Jeffrey Simpson and André Picard. Kathleen Ruff, an expert on the issue, has been mobilizing indefatigably to stop all asbestos exports to countries like India, Bangladesh and Indonesia.

The case needs no further documentation. Except for some corporate interests and the paid hacks who shamelessly support them, no one doubts that asbestos, of whatever variety, is a cancer-causing killer. Here's the bottom line: Asbestos can never again be used in Canada and 52 countries have banned it outright.

Every health organization you've ever heard of has condemned both the Canadian and the Quebec governments for actively promoting asbestos exports. According to the World Health Organization, more than 100,000 people worldwide die of occupational exposure to asbestos each year. As one of the top five asbestos exporters in the world, Canada is a major contributor to the carnage. Yet it continues, with the active support of Stephen Harper and Jean Charest.

And that's really the only question still outstanding: Why in the world do both governments continue to promote the sale of asbestos in the face of all the evidence? Both know perfectly well the consequences of their actions. It makes no

sense at all.

Can it really be about winning or losing a seat or possibly two in Quebec? Must countless poor Indians die for this unworthy end? Even I don't attribute such immoral cynicism to Mr. Harper or Mr. Charest. But then, why their utter intransigence?

Nationally, Mr. Harper was not always alone in his perverse and lethal stubbornness. But in the past couple of years, thank heavens, the NDP and the federal Liberals and Canadian unions outside Quebec have all come to their senses and now demand that mining and exporting Quebec asbestos must end. This year NDP deputy leader Thomas Mulcair became the first Quebec MP ever to speak out against asbestos mining. The Bloc's Gilles Duceppe finally acknowledges that Quebec's asbestos is hazardous and should only be used for very restricted purposes.

Yet even now the Quebec government is actively considering a subsidy of \$58-million to re-open and massively expand the Jeffrey Mine in Asbestos, Quebec, with the explicit purpose of significantly increasing asbestos exports to Asia, South America and Africa. When will we ever stop exploiting poor Africa for our own enrichment?

As for Ottawa, asbestos remains yet another case where science and evidence mean nothing to Stephen Harper. Despite everything, the Prime Minister remains a fan of asbestos and his Minister of Health refuses to meet with the leading health experts, deferring instead to the junk science and discredited propaganda of the asbestos lobby.

In fact despite his vaunted hostility to lobbyists, the Prime Minister – like Mr. Charest – actually funds the industry's registered lobby group, the Chrysotile Institute, to the tune of \$250,000 a year. Indeed, he quietly boasts to them that his government will continue at the Rotterdam Convention on hazardous substances to refuse to have asbestos placed on an international list of such substances.

Once again the Harper government embraces truthiness and repudiates truth. It allows the Chrysotile Institute to set our country's health policy on asbestos. According to the well-connected Bernard Coulombe, a director of the CI and owner of the bankrupt Jeffrey Mine, chrysotile asbestos does not cause mesothelioma, which is much like asserting filter-tipped cigarettes are harmless. When over a hundred prestigious scientists from 28 countries wrote to Mr. Charest detailing why Quebec's export of asbestos is indefensible, the CI issued a press release calling these scientists "loufoque," a slang insult meaning wacko or nutty. Recall that this "institute" uses public funds to issue such statements.

Cynically yet shrewdly, the asbestos lobby has gotten away with painting any criticism of asbestos as being anti-Quebec. Let me note with profound personal disappointment that the fight to ban asbestos exports is complicated by the support given by Quebec trade unions to the discredited asbestos lobby and its denialist "science." Inexcusably too,

apparently not a single international development or human rights group in Quebec has taken a stand on the issue. I have to admit that I can't begin to fathom what political calculations might account for this betrayal of poor workers abroad.

Many Quebecers react with anger when other Canadians condemn the province's support for asbestos. Canadian unions, who have been outspoken recently against asbestos, are curtly told by their brothers and sisters in Quebec to butt out.

Many Quebecers were deeply offended recently when Maclean's magazine described the province as the most corrupt in Canada. I fear – no, I fervently hope – that they will have cause to become even angrier. The asbestos business deeply dishonors Quebec, Canada and all who either support it or remain silent bystanders.

I hope countless thousands of Canadians write their MPs about this scandal and that unions and civil society groups outside Quebec continue to make their voices heard loud and clear on this issue.

The Harper government (not Canada) was humiliated this week when its bid for a Security Council seat was rebuffed. A legion of retrograde foreign policies were responsible for this powerful rebuke, but for those who knew, the government's support for asbestos exports was reason enough to vote against it. Has Stephen Harper learned a single lesson from this major disgrace? Have not enough of its foreign policy chickens now come home to roost? Only a tiny handful of self-interested people would object if he did the right thing about exporting deadly asbestos. Tens of thousands would applaud. What an opportunity for this government. TUV Rheinland, a provider of technical, safety and certification services today announced the completion of the initial phase of

UN rapporteur raps living conditions in Alang

The UN Rapporteur of Human Rights Council has criticised the poor housing and medical facilities for workers at Alang - Asia's largest shipbreaking yard. Prof Okechukwu Ibeanu had visited India in January to study the adverse effects of the movement and dumping of toxic wastes at the Alang and Mumbai shipyards.

He said in his report that the existing housing facilities lack basic requirements like drinking water, sewage, education and healthcare amenities and that he was "shocked by the extremely poor conditions in which most workers live in Alang and Mumbai".

He said though India has made considerable progress in improving health and safety conditions in the shipyards, but a number of serious concerns still remain to be properly addressed.

As such, the local governments should provide plots and other basic facilities to the workers, he said in his report uploaded on the UN website.

"I call on the government authorities to provide appropriate plots and facilitate the construction of adequate housing facilities for those who work in the yards. Adequate sanitation and drinking water facilities should also be put in place. I urge the owners of the yards to comply with the existing labour and social security legislation and the government to monitor its effective implementation," he said.

He also called for improvement in the training opportunities and provision of the personal protective equipment (PPE) and their use by all workers in the yards.

Medical facilities do not possess sufficient human, technical and financial resources to provide any treatment other than first aid for minor injuries, and there are no schools or formal education facilities for the children of those employed in the yards, 20 per cent of whom are accompanied by their families, he said.

"But for ascertaining the environmental impact of the shipbreaking industry, an independent study should be carried out to assess the actual and potential adverse effects that may be caused by the discharge of hazardous material into the natural environment, as well as the level of risk," Prof Ibeanu said.

Gopal Krishna of the Indian Platform for Shipbreaking (IPSB) said some 20,000 workers reside in makeshift huts at Alang with no drinking water or drainage facility. "Even the nearest hospital is 50 km away in Bhavnagar," he said.

Krishna added that on October 17, a 28-year-old worker, Janardan Chaudhary, was severely wounded at plot number 174 and died before he could be hospitalised.

China Expands Asbestos Ban

Author – Laurie Kazan-Allan

News received on November 3, 2010, confirmed rumors that a new industry standard had been adopted in China which prohibits the use of asbestos in siding and wall materials for construction. The prohibition is part of a Chinese national standard (GB50574-2010)¹ which will be implemented as of June 1, 2011. There can be no doubt that the new guidelines will impact on the profitability of China's asbestos-cement industry. One observer speculated that the new standard would depress sales of asbestos-cement flat sheet products, generally used in permanent constructions, but have less impact on sales of asbestos-cement corrugated sheeting which is, on the whole, used for basic and/or temporary constructions.

In China, different standards can and do co-exist. The one which will further increase Chinese restrictions on asbestos use has been adopted by the academy overseeing construction design and approved by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. In China, architects are allotted the role of choosing the raw materials to be used in a building. As this standard is issued by an industry body concerned with building design, the ban on asbestos is bound to impact on

materials selected for construction projects. Whereas formerly asbestos-cement flat sheets might have been chosen, in light of these developments, safer alternatives will be specified. As well as curtailing demand for this segment of China's asbestos market, the new standard could constitute an omen for vested interests in the world's most lucrative national asbestos market.

This is not the first time that official bodies in China have acted decisively on asbestos. In 2003, China banned the use of asbestos in automotive friction materials; in 2005, the import and export of amphibole asbestos, including amosite and crocidolite, was banned.² In light of the restrictions, increasing numbers of producers are turning to asbestos-free technology with some trade bodies in China lobbying their members to phase out asbestos use. In high-profile building projects, like the construction of the Beijing Olympics (2008) and the Asian Games (2010) the use of asbestos was forbidden. A spokesperson for a building supplier based in Guangzhou confirmed that his company had sold in excess of 1.5 million square meters of asbestos-free fibre cement products for use in the infrastructure of the Asian Games. As restrictions grow ever tighter on the use of asbestos in China, it is no longer impossible to think that one day China will join the ranks of nations which have banned the use of all asbestos products. TUV Rheinland, a provider of technical, safety and certification services today announced the completion of the initial phase of

Read More -

http://ibasecretariat.org/lka_china_expand_asb_ban.php

Watch Asbestos videos from Iran

http://ibasecretariat.org/asb_reality_video_nov2010.php

Silicosis Update - Rajasthan

In a major victory for the families of Silicosis victims, the Chief Minister of Rajasthan announced payment of an interim relief of Rs 1 Lakh to be paid to the widows of victims of silicosis. Cheques for the amount were handed over last month and struggle is still continuing to get justice and suitable compensation for all victims.

Kin of silicosis victims to get Rs 1 lakh each

Author – Anindo Dey | TNN

Jaipur: It is a victory of sorts at the end of a long battle for the kin of the silicosis victims in Jodhpur. In a rare gesture, chief minister Ashok Gehlot has decided to give Rs 1 lakh each to the kin of the 21 victims as relief.

In a letter to the district collector, the CMO has assured to give Rs 1 lakh to the kin of each victim.

While giving the sum ,please convey the heartfelt sorrow of the chief minister for the deceased, the letter says .It is signed by the CMs deputy secretary B L Jatawat. A copy of the letter has been marked each to the principal secretary, mines, senior assistant to the chief secretary and the OSD to

chief minister.

It is indeed heartening to know that the state has woken up to the fact that there are silicosis cases in Rajasthan. One must thank the chief minister for this extraordinary show of sympathy towards these poor workers. The sum is not a compensation to the kin of the victims but just a relief that has been granted and the letter also makes a point that this relief measure should not set a precedence, said Rana Sengupta of the Mine Labour Peoples Campaign (MLPC).

Though the hunger strike by the 21 widows of those who have succumbed to silicosis in Jodhpur have been called off, the fight for compensation will go on. The matter of compensation is pending with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and that will also have to be addressed by the state in its due course of time, he added.

MLPC has been taking up the cause of the mine workers who have been afflicted with silicosis for a long time. The activists of the organisation moved NHRC following which a delegation from the NHRC came down to Jodhpur. The team had asked the state to pay compensation to the kin.

However, their effort too has failed to break much ice, forcing the widows of the victims to go on a hunger strike. Gehlot has met these women on Sunday and the order for the relief measure came hours later. Recently, the NHRC has sent a reminder to the state and had asked the chief secretary to appear in person if no action is taken in this regard by November.

<http://lite.epaper.timesofindia.com/getpage.aspx?publabel=TOI&city=Jaipur>



Recent Photographs Inside the Visaka Cement Factory, Hyderabad





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