

Occupational Safety and Health

Rights

Issue Number: 38 • Leading Workers Rights Movement in Asia • May – August 2016



At SHARPS' sit-in site, each pair of white rubber slippers represents a cluster victim.
Credit: Lee Ki-hwa



Issue Number 38
May – August 2016

EDITOR AND LAYOUT
Mohit Gupta

Occupational safety and Health (OSH) Rights is a quarterly newsletter on occupational and safety issues in Asia. It is prepared by the ANROEV Secretariat. The newsletter contains information and news about the campaigns of the network in Asia – Mining, Victims Organising, Lung Diseases, Electronics

Articles and information in OSH Rights may be reproduced in non-profit publications with clear citations, credit to author/s and OSH Rights.

Opinions and suggestions to the editor are encouraged. Please send enquiries to

The Editor
Secretariat – ANROEV
c/o Environics Trust
Khasra Number 177, Neb Sarai
New Delhi – 110068
Ph – (91-11)2953-3957
Fax – (91-11)2953-1814
Email – anroev@gmail.com
URL - www.anroev.org

Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/Anroev>

All readers are welcome to share reactions and suggestions to articles of OSH Rights. In the coming issues, we will offer space for reader feedback.

For any questions about Occupational Health and Safety in Asia, send an email to anroev@gmail.com. Our panel of experts will attempt to reply to all questions.

Sub-Regional Strategy Meetings on OSH in South Asia and South-East Asia	3
Global Statement for Urgent Action Needed - Accident at Tampako Foils Ltd	6
Updates from Partners	7
Campaigns and Support	15
Upcoming Events	16
Tributes	16
Articles of Interest: <i>Improving Workers' Health across the Globe: Advancing the Global Plan of Action for Workers' Health</i>	16
<i>Wiping Out Asbestos by 2024?</i>	16
<i>Import, sale of asbestos products to be banned in Moldova</i>	17
<i>World rings asbestos alarm, India ignorant about cancer-causing agent</i>	17
<i>EterNOT not Eternit!</i>	18
<i>Repaying the Human Cost of Our Gadgets</i>	18
<i>Award for GoodElectronics and ICRT</i>	19
<i>Revealed: the toxic trail of e-waste that leads from the US to Hong Kong</i>	19
<i>Another Milestone: S. Korean Workers Comp Agency Deems Two Samsung Chip Workers' Lung Cancer Occupationally Caused</i>	20
<i>Test your lung function over a call</i>	20
<i>S. Africa court allows huge class action over miners' silicosis</i>	21
<i>India: The Burning City</i>	21
<i>Mining kills 4 times More Workers than any other Job in Brazil</i>	22
<i>Chinese miners are nearly unrecognizable at the end of a long day of work</i>	22
<i>How India's Sixteen Occupational Safety Laws Couldn't Prevent Two Deaths</i>	22
<i>Contamination: Kadena Air Base's dirty secret</i>	23
<i>When Uber drivers are hurt at work, who pays?</i>	24
<i>Remembering the Legionnaires' Outbreak</i>	24
<i>Windows Of susceptibility</i>	25
<i>Landmark compensation arrangement reached on 4th anniversary of deadly Pakistan factory fire</i>	25
<i>Kids more vulnerable to toxic chemicals in household dust</i>	26
<i>App for NIOSH Pocket Guide Now Available</i>	26
<i>Dangerous chemicals hiding in everyday products</i>	27
<i>Report on night work and atypical working times highlights risks to workers</i>	27
Regional News	28

Feature

South Asia Sub-Regional Strategy Meeting On OSH

The South Asia Sub- regional Strategic Meeting on OSH took place in BRAC Inn in Dhaka on April 21-22, 2016. The strategic meeting brought together 20 activists, victims, trade unionists and advocates from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India and Nepal. The two-day meeting had several group efforts to identify future campaigns and strategies for the upcoming year where energy should be focused nationally and regionally. Although participants from Pakistan were not able to join the meeting due to visa problems, they shared their views through using modern technology (Skype conference)

The South Asia meeting had some thorough discussions with a cross cutting theme on diagnosis and building the capacity of medical professionals across 3 countries in the sub region.

Following the South Asia meeting, looking at the outcome of the discussions, needs were identified on capacity building and the needs of the organisations to strengthen their work.

In both Nepal and Sri Lanka, the first step would be to identify the area of work focussing on specific sectors to understand the OSH situation, identify problem areas and work on laws on OSH, enforcement and implementation. In Sri Lanka, the plantation sector has been identified while in Nepal the work would be focused on the brick kiln, cement and stone crushers sectors while also looking at how to address the findings of the research at the policy level.

In India, along with the Indian OSH movement OEHNI, the identified need was to hold a two-day meeting to bring together stakeholders who work with coal fired thermal power plants and to understand the situation of workers from different plants in different states of the country. In India, the Apex court has ordered all the High Courts to monitor the work conditions in Power Plants and directive of the Apex court are implemented.

In Bangladesh, the identified need was to build the capacity of doctors nationally on OSH and to further train trainers who are organising workers at the factory level on OSH.

In Pakistan, two-day training will be carried out with organisers and trade union leaders from the textile, ready-made garments and home based sector.



South East Asia Sub-Regional Strategy Meeting On OSH

The South East Asia Sub- regional Strategic Meeting on OSH took place in I-Residence Silom Hotel, Bangkok on June 16-17, 2016. There were participants from Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

During the meeting, it became clear that the needs of the organisations in the region are numerous ranging from building the capacities of organisers and trade union leaders on OSH, the need for workers to be diagnosed by trained medical professionals on Occupational diseases, working at the policy and advocacy level on OSH, setting up OSH committees in the workplace and the need for developing a deeper understanding on OSH issues for informal and home based workers.

A mapping exercise enabled the participants to list out important milestones in their respective countries regarding the OSH movement. He exercise demonstrated that the OSH movement is comparatively younger in the region as compared to other regions like South Asia

Brief update about work by different Organisations as reported in the meeting –

WEPT, Thailand - WEPT has been covering a number of cases involving threats to occupational health of workers in Thailand. Several cases concerning fires in factories, building collapses, lung diseases and more have been covered.

WEPT uses a number of ways to address increasing problems related to workers' health problems:

- Work with labour federations
- Develop policies on health and labour matters;
- Set-up and strengthen safety promotion agency for workers
- Increase the number of medical specialists and set-up clinics that workers can access
- Empower workers to negotiate their rights

IOHSAD, Philippines narrated their experiences while organizing the Kentex Fire Victims.

On May 13, 2015, more than 72 workers died in what is tagged as the deadliest industrial fire in the Philippines. Only 36 workers are regular workers, the rest are agency hired/informal workers. Contractual workers get 200 Pesos (4.5 USD) while regular workers earn 10 USD a day.

Kentex management was found to have violated health and safety standards. IOHSAD did a fact finding study and spoke to the victims and their families after the incident. Grave violations including mishandling chemicals, absence of fire safety measures and barred windows were some findings.

Worker movements and institutions were able to gather 100 victims to attend meetings and The Justice for Kentex Workers' Alliance was formed. Cases have been filed and brought to the National Labour Related Commission.

Ms. Rosemarie Magracia, mother of a 27 year old victim of the Kentex Fire painstakingly narrated her trauma on learning of her daughter's demise. She narrated how she was offered a compensation of 150,000 pesos from Kentex management which she rejected and opted instead to join the movement.

Coalition of Cambodian Apparel Workers' Democratic Union (C.CAWDU), Cambodia spoke about the mass fainting's in the garment factories in Cambodia.

Mass fainting's in Cambodia is a common problem in garment sector. These occur mainly due to unsanitary working conditions, low salary which leads to eating non- nutritious food, long working hours. Overtime is needed in order to meet huge demands of buyers to produce and deliver. Workers are also exposed to harmful chemicals which can even be fatal to female workers' feeble bodies. Many garment factories do not have proper exits and ventilation systems.

C.CAWDU has been working to raise awareness about labour rights, union rights and OHS. They are also trying to convince garment workers to unionise. They also conduct livelihood programmes to ensure that skills are enhanced to provide workers alternatives to earn money.

Center for Development and Integration (CDI)—Vietnam

The Centre for Development and Integration (CDI), established in 2005, focuses on OSH and labour related issues in Vietnam. In Vietnam there exists the Social Insurance fund which is funded by the employee and the worker. In light of migration and foreign direct investments, there are a number of issues related to labour and OSH in Vietnam.

CDI's key activities include organising worker's group. Through this, workers are able to share their work related stories. CDI also provides legal aid. They also conduct capacity building training for local partners and workers. Multi stakeholder dialogues featuring working conditions at the national and local levels are also organised. They also do policy advocacy, research, surveys and networking. In 2015, they have produced a report on migrant workers, farmers and contraction workers.

National Institute of Labour Protection (NILP), Vietnam

In collaboration with academia and government agencies, NILP conducts a number of programmes

to promote OSH in every corner of Vietnam. They also provide legal consultancy for workers. The consultant is the Trade Union Officer which is available in all 64 provinces. The Institute also conducts a number of studies to provide evidences for policy makers to design regulation and standards. One of NILP's goals is to ban the use of asbestos in Vietnam. The Government of Vietnam agreed to ban asbestos by 2020. The Vietnam Occupational Safety and Health Association (VOSHA), a partner of NILP, serves as a worker assistance centre. It provides research assistance and legal services to workers.

NIOEH- Vietnam

The institute focusses on occupational health diagnosis and treatment. Capacity development of medical service providers is key to solving problems related to OSH. Circular 19/2011TTLBYT aims to guide management of OSH in Vietnam. There are about 70 staff members including 30 doctors available to provide support on OSH in the country.

Training programs for OSH include medical schools which provide Undergrad and graduate degrees. There are also certificate courses offered by the Ministry of Health.

Out of 20 Million workers (industry and service sectors), a total of 101,700 workers have undergone OD checkups. Nearly 500 cases have been reviewed by the export board and only 41 cases have received one time compensation and 174 receive continuous compensation.

ECCDA (Homenet Laos)

ECCDA has been collecting data on waste collectors and have been working with various other sectors. Currently it is implementing relevant activities to support awareness raising and capacity building on OHS with the following activities:

- Support to create Home Based Workers groups and linked with HNL networks
- training for strengthening for the groups
- Training on OSH for the members of HNL groups

They are now focusing on awareness raising on OSH to the members of HNL and collecting data

and reporting to concerned organization and ministry. They are also focusing on Law enforcement and community voice.

Yaung Chi Oo Workers' Association, Myanmar

There are about 3,000,000 Migrant workers from Burma in Thailand. Most of them work in garment factories. These workers work seven days a week, have one day off per month. The minimum wage in Thailand is 300 Baht (9 USD) but the migrant workers get only 200 Baht a day as minimum wage.

In Yangon, there are 13 industrial zones where 60% workers are women. The work place is usually hot and they work 6 days a week. The minimum wage in Myanmar, is 3000 Kyats (3 USD). The highest percentage of deaths is in construction sector followed by fires at the factories (usually without fire exits), and in Mining sites (Jade and Copper—run by Chinese owners). The Labour Ministry is mandated to conduct inspections. But there are not enough inspectors, skilled staff and budget to perform these inspections. Compensation for work related accidents range from 400 USD to 600 USD. Medical expenses are not included in the Compensation package. Workers have to pay for their own treatment and medicines.

Electronic Industrial Employee Union (EIEU)

EIEU has been training workers about the importance of regular medical checkups, using PPE and be able to claim their rights against any abuse and accidents. The Manufacturing sector in Malaysia consists of about 2,214,800 or 16.8% of 13.21 Million members of the labour force in the country. Workers in electronic factories are exposed to hazards like stress, loud noise and radiation.

Most of those working in factories are women (60%). Malaysia does not have laws and policies protecting the rights of women's workers. Women rights are seen through the lens of education, health and employment only. Violence against women is still a rampant problem through the

country. They face risks to their reproductive health and exposure to harmful chemicals.

Federation of Indonesia Metal Workers Union (FSPMI) (Indonesia)

Worker organising on OHS started from Batam Island. Safety is not a priority issue amongst workers and they are not aware of the risks in their work. FSPMI was established in 2010, focused on electronic industry.

The goal for FSPMI is to promote solidarity for safety. Workers have to understand OHS and it has to be a personal guaranty. They are pushing for having one safety expert for every 100 workers. They are pushing for having one safety expert for every 100 workers.

Indonesian Forum for Environment (WAHLI), Indonesia

WAHLI is the biggest environmental group in Indonesia. These groups also cover issues related to health and marginalised sectors. He stated that there are a number of cases that involve waste and health concerns in Indonesia ranging from pollution by garment factories and power plants.

People in the affected region complained about the release of toxic waste leading to air and water pollution. Many of the fisher folk also lost their livelihoods.

Local Initiative for OSH Network (LION), Indonesia

The Local Initiative for OSH Network (LION) is a labour organisation which focuses on OSH and is working towards a ban of asbestos. In Indonesia, about 50.3 Million workers are employed in the formal sector while 70.3 million are employed in the informal sector. The minimum wage is 107-253 USD per month. Only 3, 414, 455 workers are unionised.

There is a provision of establishment of OSH management systems in every undertaking that employs 100 worker or more but this is seldom followed. There are only 1,507 factory inspectors

that monitor 257,000 companies (willing to be inspected) in the country.

Data is a problem. Various ministries have different statistics on work related diseases and injuries. According to the BPJS, it was estimated that a worker dies every six hours. According to the asbestos industry report by LION: 80% complained about their health conditions: skin condition, eyes irritation, coughing and difficulty in breathing. 40-60% workers have undergone medical examinations but do not have access to the reports.

LION is a supporting unit for the labour movement. They push for an understanding that the OHS rights are workers' rights. They want to push workers to build their capacities to claim their OHS rights and access medical services.

Global Statement for Urgent Action Needed - Accident at Tampako Foils Ltd

Following the accident at the Tampako Foils Ltd, the ANROEV network released a global statement directed to the Bangladesh Minister of State for Labour and Employment -

The Asian Network for the Rights of Occupational and Environmental Victims (ANROEV) with more than 150 members in 14 Asian Countries are shocked at the repeated fire accidents in factories in Bangladesh with the recent devastating accident on 10 September 2016 at the site of Tampako Foils Ltd located in Tongi BSCIC Industrial Area adding to the increasing list of fatal workplace accidents in Bangladesh.

The fire caused due to an explosion of the boiler in the factory has already killed 33 workers leaving many injured, some seriously, and many remain missing. According to information received, the building was entirely unsuitable for a factory. The building structure was old and still extra floors had been added. In addition, the building was cramped, full of flammable materials and had only one working exit. In fact, the steel-framed building had eventually collapsed under the tremendous effects of the blaze.

It seems that lessons have not been learnt after the devastating fire at the Tazreen Fashions and the Rana Plaza building collapse and the fire safety of factories in Bangladesh is still suspect despite trainings by ILO and other Bangladesh Government organisations. Illegal changes to building plans and blocked fire exits are being reported as cause of majority of industrial fire accidents in Bangladesh in the last few years.

In addition, it was reported that the Deputy Commissioner SM Alam had announced an assistance of Tk 20,000 for each of the families of the deceased and Tk 10,000 for each of the injured. This immediate assistance to the workers and their family members is welcome. However, we would state that the compensation amount, which should be the responsibility of the employer, must not be below the levels of the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh.

The working conditions and building safety in majority of the factories in Bangladesh is alarming and every accident in Bangladesh brings this glaring problem to the forefront but little changes in long run to make workplaces safer, improve enforcement infrastructure and hold employers accountable.

The companies that procure from Tampako Foils Ltd as those enlisted on their website namely Nestle and British American Tobacco must take responsibility and clear their position with regards to this industrial accident. They should ensure that the victims and the families receive just and immediate compensation and the companies should contribute to the same.

We urge you urgently -

- To issue a public statement on this accident;
- To thoroughly investigate the accident and identify causes;
- To review the Occupational, Health and Safety standards and strengthen the inspection mechanism; and
- To ensure that the employer gives adequate compensation to the victims and the injured

Updates from Partners

CEPHED, Nepal

On the occasion of World Environment Day, Dr Ram Sah was honored with Environment Conservation Award 2016 by K.P. Sharma Oli, Rt. Honorable Prime Minister of Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal recognizing his works for environment conservation and protection of public health.



Nepal is the first country in the South Asia to ban the Import, Sale, distribution and Uses all form of Asbestos (Corrugated / Non-corrugated Sheet, Tiles, Insulators etc.) and Asbestos containing products except asbestos lining of Brake Shoe and Clutch Plates on last December 22 , 2014. The decision took effects since 20 June 2015. Since then there was great reduction of the import about 50 per cent. Some remaining stocks from the previous import has been found to be marketed and illegal imported asbestos has been sometimes still found to be used in Nepal.

Following are the updates of activities campaigning for elimination of asbestos from Nepal.

Research and data analysis

During this period we have obtained new data of import as well as the asbestos sampling results and included into the National Asbestos Profile which is under the preparation.

CEPHED's team mobilized in the ten districts of Nepal. We have collected some nine samples comprising of 7 Asbestos sheets pieces, 1 brake

shoe and 1 clutch plates in the first round of field visit during February and March 2016.

We had sent the sample for testing to Tokyo Occupational Safety and Health Center. The first batch of testing results has been received.



Figure 1. Samples for testing of Asbestos

6 samples out of a total of 9 samples tested positive for Chrysotile asbestos

Collection of Dust and roof material samples

Though the recent current Asbestos uses are rampant in the Terai Region of Nepal, the exempted items such as lining of brake shoe and clutch plates, a number of shops are there for fixing the brake lining. Visits have been made to one such brake shoe lining center and try to meet as well as took the samples. Some five samples (two dust wipe, two dusts and 1 brake shoe pad) were taken from this shop to see the level of asbestos contamination in their working environment. In addition to this, a special UPVC plastic roofing panel has been newly introduced in Nepal and we also able to see and take sample of it as well. The results are still awarding.



Figure 2. Dust samples from Working Station

Development of National Asbestos Profile

An enlarged and updated version of National Asbestos Profile of Nepal prepared as an important documents under the project entitled "Research and Awareness about Asbestos in Central and Eastern Nepal" with the support of Takagi Fund for Citizen Science, International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS) and Asian Ban Asbestos Network (ABAN) has been expected to serve as the first ever reference documents for all government agencies and stakeholders including the potential vulnerable workers and people who work as well as live with asbestos and have already suffered from Mesothelioma cancer and/or other health implications to be protected and also conserve the environment.

This document provide the latest information on asbestos and status of compliance of the government banning decision, current import, uses, hot spots, associated health and environmental implications of asbestos and action plans to address the related issues thus meets the spirit of the government positive and progressive decisions towards protection of public health and environment and plays an important role in effective implementation of the government banning decision as well as also serve as the inspirations at least for the Nepal's neighbors that are the world's second biggest asbestos producer and consumer (China) and the world's biggest asbestos importer (India)and to the other regions. The profile is planned to be published and widely disseminated soon.

Monitoring of Asbestos Imports

Regular updates on import data has been obtained from personal contact, reference materials as well as data uploaded from the Department of Custom website and analyzed. Follow up with the Department of Custom, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Population and Environment, and Prime Minister Office and several complains has been made to these institution. As per the latest import data if physical years 2015/16 (Mid July 2015 to mid-July 2016), which is exactly the period after the effective date (i.e. 20th June 2015) of the Government's asbestos banned decision shows 12052910 Kg of Asbestos , asbestos containing

including some asbestos not containing products has been found to be imported into Nepal. This is about 52 % of (last physical years imports 23037848 Kg), indicating heavy reduction (about 48%) within a year of effective implementation of the government banning decision. With the further coordination and cooperation as well as robust marketing monitoring mechanism, we are very much hopeful that the total import ban will be achieved soon. CEPHED will continue follow up these issues.

Market Monitoring for sale and uses

Several round of field visit as well as established a monitoring networking along with the notice publications about sharing the information about the import, sale and distributions, evidence based complains have been filed to the Department of Custom, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Population and Environment (MOPE) and OPMCM. This has lead to drastic reduction in the import but not able to stop completely.

Market monitoring evidences has been collected about the import, sale and distribution of asbestos and asbestos containing products and duly informed to the all respective concerned government agencies mentioned above. Coordinated and follow up for the effective implementation and tightening the importation of the asbestos and asbestos containing products.

Follow up with the government and court cases

Regroups filed level monitoring, networking, public message through social media as well as news article, and continued communicating with all government agencies have helped to improve the situation. More has to be done to achieve zero import, sale and distribution. We have increased our engagement in the court cases and providing the technical backstopping to the case in favor of government decision and became allies with the case. Also providing technical and scientific feedback to a group of environmental lawyers to fight against the entrepreneur claims and support the government decision. At the same time, preparation has been made for the court cases,

despite of allocation of different dates of hearing of the court case.

Challenges for effective implementations

Following are the challenges perceived during the campaigning and advocating for effective implementation of the government banning decisions.

- Country is absolutely lacking of testing facilities of the asbestos containing products. Some importation has been halted and asked for the testing of the products, which is not able to happen smoothly within the country and hence it is difficult for even the implementing agencies to rectify the problem at the entry point. Department of Custom somehow started to test the products. It should be done by third party.
- Corporate pressure to the government and lobby to the court. Some of the corporate house having direct access to the political parties and ministers, tried to influence them towards revoking the decision but we have convince our government authorities to resist the pressure. Same has been happening to the court cases.
- Awareness raising and monitoring needs to be continued. We have already ongoing radio program on asbestos and continually broadcasting the radio jingle on asbestos.

OSHE, Bangladesh

Medical Camp for Ship Breaking workers

A medical camp for determining cases of ARDs was organized between 24-7-16 and 29-7-16. The camp was organized by OSHE foundation with the support from AMRC, IBAS and ABAN. Dr Murlidhar from India was present in the camp to diagnose the cases. 100 workers were selected for examination based on the tenure of working in the yards and those who complained of regular chest pains, breathlessness and weakness.

Detailed occupational history was taken for every worker followed by PFT and SPO2 examination, Clinical examination and x ray reading based on ILO

standards. In the camp 26 workers were found to be suffering from ARDs.

Further examinations are in progress and B-BAN is planning to take the next steps in Bangladesh. A second and more elaborate camp is being planned.

OSHE Field Report: - 2 ship breaking worker died at Baro Awlia, Chittagong on 8 June 2016 while descending from a newly beached ship at the Mahin Enterprise ship breaking yard at the evening time prior to 'Iftar'. All of them were working as 'fitter men' at that ship.

Name of the killed workers are:

1. Md. Alamgir (Age- 40) son of Md. Wahab from Norail district
2. Md. Anis (Age- 30) son of Md. Anwar Hossain from Norail district.

After the accident at yard, all the victim workers were taken to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where the doctors declared 2 of them as dead.

Mahin Enterprise ship breaking yard authority claim that, cause of accident and death of two workers at their yard was due to drawing of a boat which was at the accident spot with a responsibility of transporting workers back to shore.

Local police informed that, shortly before 'Iftar' all the workers at that newly beached ship were given a work break, and workers had started to come down from the ship using stair case and hanging chains at that ship for getting down to the boat quickly. Suddenly, 3 workers fell down due to breaking of the hanging chain. A police case is under process of filing.

Accident at Tampako Foils Ltd – Press Release

Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation (OSHE) expressed deep concern over tragic accident in the Tampaco Foils Ltd factory at Tongi, Bangladesh due to boiler explosion, where 33 workers lost lives and around 100 injured. Some workers are reportedly missing and death toll is increasing day by day.

It was learned from various sources that, Tampaco Foils' customers include two of the largest multi-

national brands such as Nestle and British American Tobacco.

According to OSHE's primary filed investigation report, there was no visible trade union for workers at that specific enterprise, no safety committee was formed so far, Boiler at that factory was not properly inspected by Boiler Inspection Department and the labour inspection at that factory was not up to the mark..

In a statement, Mr. Repon Chowdhury, Executive Director said, "after the Rana Plaza tragedy in Bangladesh everyone here thought that, workplace rights and safety situation in the country as a whole gradually would improve at all sectors, but reality shows something else. At present whole national development focus is on factories at readymade garments sector. Workplaces, factories and establishments in other economic sectors are less priority list, workers rights to safety is not properly visible at the supply chains of other industrial; sectors, boiler inspection department and labour inspection regime still shows ineffective. Recent accident at the Tampaco Foils Ltd. is a best example of it".

OSHE foundation urged the Government to take immediate step on formation of a judicial inquiry committee to find out actual causes of this accident and make recommendations for preventing such kind accidents in future. OSHE also suggested the government to set up a high powered national committee to find out the limitation of the Department of Boiler Inspection under the Ministry of Industry and prospect of merger of it with the Labour Inspection Department under Ministry of Labour for the interest of building a better and integrated inspection regime for the industries at country .

OSHE appreciated the good responses of the government immediate after the Tampaco accident in Tongi and ongoing recovery operation carrying-out by the Army, Fire Service and other government agencies at the ground.

The OSHE Foundation demanded due legal justice and pay fair compensation for all the victims at this accident.

SHARPS

SHARPS Goes to Geneva - Kwon Young-eun, SHARPS's full-time organizer, partook in the UN Human Rights Council. On Sept. 14, joined by other activists from NGOs in South Korea, she mounted a street performance on the cluster victims. On Sept. 16, SHARPS co-hosted a side session on chemical hazards caused by multinationals in Asia, where Mr. Tuncak also spoke.

SHARPS's Sit-in To Mark One-Year Milestone - Since Oct. 7, 2015, SHARPS and its supporters have been staging a sit-in at Samsung D'light, the company's so-called global exhibition space in south Seoul, calling for the world's largest technology company to: 1) compensate all victims of occupational disease transparently and sufficiently; and 2) make a sincere and full apology. Korean activists in Geneva demanded responsibility of the companies and the governments on chemical hazards.

This protest sit-in will complete one year on Oct 7, 2016 and there are several events planned including a statement of protest.

Cividep

There have been many staff changes at Cividep during this period. Kohila Senbagam has been appointed as the Project Coordinator in the greater Chennai region. Anibel Ferus-Comelo has begun managing the electronics sector work for Cividep. A former electronics worker, Nandhini K. has joined Cividep's staff as a field activist. The primary focus of Cividep's work in the industry this year has been to engage with workers in the major electronics companies currently functioning in the area - Samsung, Dell, Foxconn, Salcomp, Sanmina and Flextronics - through activities at our Workers' Resource Centre (WRC) in Sriperumbudur.

Between May and July, we held a few study circles and skills-building workshops for electronics workers. Workers who participated in English language classes on 8th May and 19th June expressed interest in attending more sessions. Hence, sessions in English listening, reading and vocabulary will be held on a regular basis at the

WRC at no cost to workers. Due to previous requests, a handicraft workshop was held on 22nd May. During the workshop, a former Foxconn employee shared her observations of the workplace, describing the sub-human treatment to which workers are subjected. She had resigned from her job as her body could not cope with the rotational shifts and dust allergies.

In addition to handicraft and English skills, a legal counseling session was held on 29th May. The participants raised many questions about contract labour law and how they could uphold their rights as workers. The lawyer educated the workers about the rights of workers especially the rights of contract workers and various grievance mechanisms that exist in the law. At the end, he urged the workers to organise themselves to have a strong union to fight for their rights.

On 12th June, the documentary "Disconnecting People," produced by Nokia Thozhilalar Sangam, was screened at the Workers' Resource Centre. The film is about Nokia's flight out of India leaving behind workers who depended on it. The film screening was intended to generate a discussion about corporate accountability to workers and the negative impact of capital flight on local communities. After the screening, the participants who worked at electronics companies shared that they live with the constant fear of losing their jobs, since their companies, like Nokia, could also close their factories in Sriperumbudur any day without any concern for the workers.

Besides the activities of the WRC, Cividep has produced two company profiles - Samsung and Foxconn - based on desk research and an empirical study of working conditions. The main issues at the Samsung unit in Sriperumbudur are: low wages, a strict no-union policy, differential treatment of contract workers, irregularity in recording and paying for overtime work, and lack of awareness about occupational health and safety. Data collection for the Foxconn report was conducted at the company's plants in Sunguvachatram, Tamil Nadu and in Sri City, Andhra Pradesh. Foxconn's anti-union practices were prominent in the company profile.

BANJAN

11st anniversary meeting of the Kubota Shock was held on June 25 in Amagasaki city and about 230 asbestos victims and supporters gathered. Annual meeting of the national network of asbestos victims and their families was held on 26 June



The number of ENVIRONMENTAL asbestos victims who had lived near an asbestos plant of the Kubota in Amagasaki city who have applied compensation to the company exceeded 300 (311). The company has paid compensation to 291 of them To view pictures [click here](#)

On 20-May 2016, 3,000 construction workers had a mass meeting again and they marched to the headquarters of the Taiheiyo Cement Corp, one of defendant construction material manufacturers which have never even met the plaintiffs. Pictures of today's 7th anniversary gathering and rally of the launching asbestos litigation by victims among construction workers and their families against the government and former manufacturers of asbestos containing construction materials in Tokyo, Japan [Click here](#)

Annual meeting of BANJAN was organized on May 28



NTUF

A Follow-up meeting on ILO fact finding mission on Baldia factory fire tragedy was organised on 26 Sep in Karachi. The five hours long meeting discussed the fact finding report and the mechanism for disbursement of compensation of USD 5.15 million agreed from German brand kik to the victims in agreement in mid of September in Geneva.

The meeting was attended by representative of ILO, victims association, the NTUF, Piler, ministry of Over Seas, EOBI, EFP, labour department, minimum wage board, German consulate and lawyer.

Workers representatives demanded an over viewing committee of stakeholders to monitor the disbursement process and also suggested distribution of compensation amount in one go.



Statement - The \$5.15 million compensation decision is a milestone in struggle for justice; the amount should be disbursed at once, demands Baldia factory fire victims

The Baldia factory fire victims have demanded that the \$5.15 million compensation amount should be disbursed at once rather than in installments to avert any kind of complications.

The demand was made at a general body meeting of the fire affectees at the Pakistan Medcial Association auditorium on Sunday. The event was jointly organized by National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) and Ali Enterprises Fire Afectees Association (AEFAA).

Two-hundred-and-sixty laborers were burnt to death in a fire at Ali Enterprises garment factory, dubbed as Baldia factory, located in Baldia Town area of Karachi on September 12, 2012.

The representatives of the victims' association welcomed the recent agreement with German company KiK, which was the major buyer of the products made at the Baldia factory, that it will pay a compensation of \$5.15 million to the affectees.

The agreement was reached between IndustriALL Global Union and Clean Clothes Campaign, as the two represented the victims, and KiK in Geneva, Switzerland with the mediation of International Labor Organization on the request of German government.

The victims' representatives said that the agreement was a success on their part as they continued their struggle against the companies and corporations exploiting laborers for the sake of profits.

They endorsed the decision and added that a committee, comprising of NTUF and AEFAA and other organizations, should be involved in the compensation disbursement process to make it more transparent and to solve the issues, if any arising, at the earliest.

They urged the federal and provincial governments to register all the factories, and manufacturing facilities and ensure safety measures out there so that incidents like of Ali Enterprises could be averted.

Mentioning the recent decision of an anti-terrorism court over the charge sheet, they said that the judge's order of keeping the factory owners and others implicated in the case was plausible.

They expressed apprehensions that some elements in police and government were trying get the factory owners away with this mass murder by just highlighting the terrorism factor in it. A petition will be filed with the Sindh High Court against any such move, they added.

The factory owners ordered gates closure after the fire and this resulted in these hundreds of deaths but unfortunately the authorities were trying to present the same culprits as victims, they deplored, adding that the fire victims condemn such acts by the police and will go to courts against it.

They demanded that the cases filed by the victims for gratuity and group insurance should be taken up immediately and legal proceedings against those who took money in name of victims must start.

They welcomed the assurance of Sindh labor advisor Saeed Ghani on resolving the victims issues on priority basis and also urged him to make measures for fulfillment of his government's promise to provide each victim family a plot and life-long pension.

The demands made in the general body meeting are:

- The arrangements should be made to disburse compensation amount under the ILO, CCC and IndustriAll Agreement through a single payment in one go instead of paying it in number of installments spread over couple of years.
- Monitoring committee consisting of representatives of the Victims Association, the NTUF and PILER respectively should also be constituted to monitor the distribution of compensation under the ILO, CCC and IndustriAll Agreement through SESSI and any grievances of the victims should be addressed through the committee.
- Factories and all other manufacturing facilities must be registered and labor inspection system and health and safety measures should be ensured
- September 11 should be commemorated as health and safety day and the law pertaining to it should be renamed after the Baldia factory fire victims
- The burnt site of Baldia factory should be turned into an institute where workers will be given health and safety trainings
- Italian social auditing company RINA must admit its responsibility over this fire incident and tender an apology to the families of victims along with compensation
- Private social auditing system in Pakistan must be replaced with labor inspection system
- The moves on the government level to save factory owners from legal proceedings must be

stopped and those involved in this carnage must be held accountable

Those who spoke at the event include president Rafiq Baloch, deputy general secretary Nasir Mansoor and Gul Rehman of NTUF, president Jabir Khan, senior vice president Saeeda Khatoon and general secretary Abdul Aziz of AEFAA, and general secretary Zahra Khan of Home Based Women Workers Federation.



Hesperian Health Guides

Since the launch of Workers' Guide to Health and Safety in 2015, this practical worker health book has become available in print at our [online bookstore](#), as single or whole-book [PDF for download](#), and in [Hesperian's HealthWiki](#), a free, online platform that is searchable and easy to use across many languages. You can read more about how people have received this book under the Show More tab on the [Workers' page](#).

ANROEV members and other Hesperian partners have been busy getting this book into the languages of the workers they support. The book was first translated into **Vietnamese**, by CDI, our host for ANROEV's annual meeting last year. **Chinese** and **Bahasa Indonesia** translations are well on their way. And OSHE has agreed to do the **Bangla** edition. And we are also working now on the **Spanish** edition. Feel free to reach out to Miriam if you would like more information.

Through funding from the United States Department of Labor/Occupational Safety and Health Association, Hesperian is now also piloting a chemical hazards curriculum to complement and facilitate the use of *Worker's Guide* chemical hazards content ([Chapter 8: Chemical Hazards](#) and

the [Chemical Charts](#)). This companion training guide will support workers, organizers, educators, and anyone working towards safer workplaces to use the book in for training purposes. The curriculum is divided into 3 modules, which can be used individually or as a unit. Module 1 covers the kind of chemical hazards information workers need and how to find and understand it; Module 2 covers body mapping and how chemicals enter the body and harm our health; and Module 3 includes actions and solutions to protect ourselves from chemical exposures. The curriculum will be available in Spanish only at the beginning of October in our [HealthWiki](#).

Miriam Lara-Meloy, Bilingual Program Coordinator - Worker Health

IBAS

Having been a sponsor of the April 2016 South Asia strategic meeting in Bangladesh of colleagues from the Asian Ban Asbestos Network (ABAN),¹ IBAS was pleased to receive news of current regional developments from conference organisers and participants. July 2016 meetings with Omana George and Sanjiv Pandita in London provided a welcome opportunity for updates and planning of future ABAN-IBAS initiatives.



¹ *Asbestos free South Asia - If not now, then when?* April 2016

http://ibasecretariat.org/south_asia_strat_meeting_on_asb_2016_press_rel.pdf

Also in July 2016, IBAS took the lead in highlighting concerns over possible illegal asbestos imports to the UK by Yuanda UK, a Chinese company which is part of an industrial conglomerate implicated in an ongoing asbestos scandal in Australia.²

During this quarter we were very interested to hear news from ABAN colleagues in Nepal who continue work on the development of a National Asbestos Plan; IBAS has been and continues to be a supporter of this important work.³

ADAO

2016 has been a monumental year for asbestos legislation in the United States.

In June, President Obama signed into law a bill reforming the [Toxic Substances Control Act \(TSCA\)](#), a 40-year old, badly broken chemical safety law. The Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization (ADAO) served as a stakeholder in this legislative process for more than six years, collaborating with allies and compromising with opponents to help usher in this monumental law with bipartisan and bicameral support. This new chemical safety law is landmark step forward and eliminates obstacles that prevented the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from banning asbestos. The EPA now has the clear authority to finally ban the import and use of asbestos.

And that's not all—ADAO is proud to share that ahead of signing the bill into law, [President Obama](#) became the first sitting U.S. president to publicly acknowledge asbestos as a carcinogen, framing it as the poster child for why TSCA so badly need to be reformed: "The system was so complex, so burdensome that our country hasn't even been able to uphold a ban on asbestos—a known

² *UK Toxic Asbestos Imports from China?* July 27, 2016.

http://ibasecretariat.org/press_rel_uk_tox_asb_imp_chi_na_jul_27_2016.pdf

³ *Implementing Nepal's Asbestos Ban.* May 25, 2016.
<http://ibasecretariat.org/rcs-implementing-nepals-asbestos-ban.php>

carcinogen that kills as many as 10,000 Americans every year. I think a lot of Americans would be shocked by that."



This was a hard-earned and shared victory, but it is a shining example of how successful collective activism can be. President Obama's mention of asbestos ahead of the signing is proof that our voices, nationally and internationally, were heard.

Although this is time to celebrate, our work continues to raise awareness, strengthen prevention, and stop asbestos imports for once and for all. ADAO and our colleagues have already participated in several discussions and meetings with the EPA since the law took effect. We are confident the EPA can expeditiously take regulatory action to ban asbestos. By Linda Reinstein, President/CEO

Campaigns and Support

- The accident at Tampako Foils Ltd in Bangladesh has left 33 workers dead with many seriously injured.

OSHE foundation, ANROEV member in Bangladesh, is working towards targeting the Government, management and brands sourcing from the factory to pay due compensation, provide short and long medical care, due rehabilitation and legal justice for the victims and affected families.

OSHE Foundation requests financial support to help provide food, medical support to victims and their families. Interested people can email to AR Chowdhury Repon, Executive Director, repon.chowdhury@gmail.com

-
- SHARPS petition to support occupational disease victims of Samsung Electronics requesting endorsement – [Click Here to open petition site](#)

Upcoming Events

- South East Asia Ban Asbestos Network (SEA-BAN) Meeting to discuss issues related to use of Asbestos in the region, November, Indonesia

Tributes

Shankar Dattaray Jog, a former worker at a factory owned by the British asbestos conglomerate Turner & Newall Ltd. in Mumbai, India, died from asbestos cancer on July 19, 2016. Mr. Jog had been employed at the Hindustan Ferodo brake linings factory for forty years commencing his employment in 1961 in the maintenance department. By the time he retired in 2001, he had risen to the position of health inspector.

In early 2016, 76-year old Mr. Jog was suffering from breathlessness and fluid in his lungs; he realized he was ill. On April 12, he was diagnosed with mesothelioma following a CT scan and biopsy at the KK Raheja Hospital. He underwent several rounds of costly chemotherapy to buy more time with his wife Rohini, son Prasad and other family members and friends but it was not to be. by Laurie Kazan-Allen [Read More](#)

Articles of Interest

Improving Workers' Health across the Globe: Advancing the Global Plan of Action for Workers' Health

AAI was recognized as one of the WHO “success-stories” of the global network of WHO collaborating centres for occupational health. AAI was included in a recent WHO publication “Improving workers’ health around the world: Advancing the WHO global plan of action on workers’ health”. It is featured in page 16 and listed briefly in page 45.

The booklet “Improving workers’ health around the world: Advancing the WHO global plan of action on

workers’ health is jointly published by NIOSH and the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOH), which are both World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centers for Occupational Health. The booklet illustrates the shared goal of NIOSH, FIOH, and the Network of WHO Collaborating Centers for Occupational Health: to enhance international workplace safety and health through global collaborations.

In 2014, WHO reviewed accomplishments of the WHO Global Network of Collaborating Centers for Occupational Health during 2006–2012. The review reported the network generated 150 products and trainings during this period. Many of these are in the Geolibary and are available for use.

This booklet highlights examples of successes and serves these purposes:

- To celebrate the 25th anniversary of the network, which was formed in 1990.
- To recognize the achievements of the collaborating centers and non-governmental organizations to improve worker safety and health.
- To give examples of effective approaches to improving workplace health and safety.
- To inform Health Ministers, universities, professional associations, employers, unions, funding sources, and other interested parties about products and trainings that are available to be modified and used in additional settings.

[Read More](#)

Wiping Out Asbestos by 2024?

The country will get away or wipe out asbestos from 2024, a top Government official said.

Speaking at the Climate Conference titled ‘Sri Lanka’s Readiness for Implementing Paris Climate Agreement,’ Mahaweli Development and Environment Ministry Secretary Udaya Senevirathne said from 2018 President Maithripala has instructed that it would be banned in 2018 and completely wiped out in 2024

He stressed that the Government is committed to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

The conference was organised by the Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ). However, a policy maker told *The Sunday Leader* that the Government had not taken a clear cut policy on banning asbestos, immediately.

He said that replacing roofing sheets would be a very costly affair. Thus, there won't be immediate steps to ban it. He said that the good news was that the President had come forward with a pledge, citing that previously many former ministers failed to do so despite their noble intent.

He also said that however, steps had been taken to minimise the use of various kinds of asbestos that were banned in a majority of the countries.

He added that it was impossible to ban roofing sheets immediately, when the country is on track for rapid development. Apart from that, replacing thousands of roofs on buildings particularly schools would be a herculean task.

Recently a special committee was appointed by the Central Environment Authority (CEA) to look into the health hazards posed by Asbestos roofing sheets. It is a well-known fact that asbestos causes cancer, respiratory and other dangerous diseases.

The Authority's senior officials said that the use of asbestos is banned in some countries, whereas in others it is not.

"This has created an open market for us in Sri Lanka. There are multiple opinions about its uses from it being hazardous to health to it being otherwise. People's speculation raised the need for the CEA to take up the responsibility and appoint a committee," the official said. [Read More](#)

Import, sale of asbestos products to be banned in Moldova

Import and marketing of asbestos products in Moldova will be banned, under a draft law approved by the government today.

"We are the only European country, which will allow import, storage and sale of these products. All the countries excluded these products ten years ago, we still have problems to this end", Environment Minister Valeriu Munteanu said.

European Union has banned the use of asbestos products since 2005.

The draft law is debated "during five-six years and even now, for the third time, is approved by the government".

"All attempts had major interest on behalf of producers (from Russia and Ukraine) and importers, who hindered adopting legislative measures in the favor of citizens and environment. We are sure that in the nearest future, Moldova will overcome this soviet reminiscence, which kills our citizens", a declaration made earlier by the Environment Ministry reads.

Under the draft law, it will enter into force six months upon adoption. Marketing the asbestos products will be allowed during one year after entrance into force of the law, and the citizens will not be forced to get slate sheets off houses. [Read More](#)

World rings asbestos alarm, India ignorant about cancer-causing agent

NEW DELHI: Even as environmental protection agencies across the world are pushing for a complete ban on usage of asbestos in auto parts that put millions of auto technicians, repair mechanics and commuters at risk of contracting fatal diseases, India's environment ministry has claimed to be unaware of the problem in absence of any specific study on the issue.

Though the ministry has general guidelines in place since 2010 for carrying out environmental impact assessment of the asbestos-based industries, it mainly talks about emission limit and ways of disposal of asbestos waste by the user agencies.

While most auto companies adhere to strict guidelines to meet emission norms of their export vehicles, the same variants in India are fitted with asbestos parts. The after-sales auto component market specially brakes, clutches and brake linings are full of asbestos products and their handling and disposal puts technicians and commuters at risk.

"The ministry of environment, forests and climate change (MoEFCC) has no information on use of asbestos in auto components such as brake, clutches and heat seals", Bishwanath Sinha, joint secretary in the ministry, told TOI.

Asked why should this practice continue in India, Sinha said, "There are no peer reviewed study reports on the subject commissioned by concerned administrative ministry or its subordinate organisation, in the government of India, based on which a tangible course of action may be taken on merit". [Read More](#)

EterNOT not Eternit!

On September 10, 2016, the world came to Casale Monferrato, a small Piemonte town which has, for many of us, become a symbol of the global struggle against asbestos tyranny. On a day of celebration and remembrance, the community joined together to mark a new future with the inauguration of the EterNOT park built on the former site of the notorious Eternit asbestos factory. Separated by distances great and small, campaigners for asbestos justice sent tributes to show their solidarity with their Italian allies. As the day's activities got underway in the ornate surroundings of the Casale Monferrato council chamber, the decorative floral arrangements were on display at the front of the room.



From the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat.



From the Asian Ban Asbestos Network.

by Laurie Kazan-Allen [Read More](#)

Repaying the Human Cost of Our Gadgets

Jeong-ok Kong says the security guards at the Samsung factories outside of Seoul, South Korea, recognize her instantly. If she tries to talk to Samsung employees as they leave work for the day — to ask them about their working conditions, or to invite them to learn more about a national workplace safety campaign she's helped organize — the guards block her access and confiscate any brochures she may have been able to hand out.

So instead, Kong, a physician who specializes in occupational and environmental health, has spent the last six months with other protesters camped out in front of the company's headquarters in downtown Seoul. The organization behind the campaign — Supporters for the Health And Rights of People in the Semiconductor industry, or SHARPS — is small, with only a handful of staff and volunteer organizers, but has attracted a broad network of support from labor unions, former Samsung employees, families of employees who have gotten sick or died after working at Samsung, as well as ordinary, unaffiliated people who sympathize with those employees and families.

“The secret on how this small organization can continue [the protest] is people’s solidarity and sacrifice,” says Kong. “Almost every day since the beginning, we have had guests and visitors [at Occupy Samsung].”

With a reported 24-hour presence — even through the cold, harsh Korean winter — the campaign has had one key goal: to get Samsung to provide its employees with better protections against the dangerous chemicals they use every day.

Since 2007, SHARPS has documented nearly 300 people who have fallen ill while working at Samsung manufacturing facilities in South Korea. (The figure is thought to be underreported, although it’s not clear by how much.) Most cases have involved brain cancer, breast cancer, or blood cancer, some with a particularly aggressive form known as acute myeloid leukemia. Most victims are in their 20s and 30s when they get sick. [Read More](#)

Award for GoodElectronics and ICRT

May 26, 2016 - Sustainable Purchasing Leadership Council honours International Campaign for Responsible Technology and GoodElectronics Network for their work on chemicals

The GoodElectronics Network and the International Campaign for Responsible Technology (ICRT) have been awarded the 2016 Public Interest Advocate Award by the Sustainable Purchasing Leadership Council (SPLC) for their work on the responsible management of hazardous chemical substances during the production process of ICT hardware. In announcing the award, the SPLC declared that the actions of the both network organisations “have enabled institutional purchasers to better understand and take responsibility for the consequences of their spending”.

Alejandro Gonzalez (coordinator GoodElectronics): “We feel honoured to receive this award on behalf of all members of the GoodElectronics Network as it highlights and promotes our efforts towards guaranteeing respect of human rights, workers’ rights and the environment throughout the entire production cycle of the electronic industry”.



Ted Smith (ICRT): “We will continue our work on chemical safety. Currently we are working on a gap analysis that identifies weaknesses in the EICC code and audit protocol and compares them to the Chemicals Challenge. We have offered to engage with the industry to work together for safer chemicals. This award encourages us to carry on.” [Read More](#)

Revealed: the toxic trail of e-waste that leads from the US to Hong Kong

The acrid stench of overheating plastic fills the air as a grime-covered worker perched on a bench surrounded by old printers nonchalantly tosses a cigarette to the ground. It’s dirty work disembowelling the detritus of the digital economy.

Welcome to the New Territories district of Yuen Long, which if environmental campaigners are to be believed, threatens to become ground-zero for the world’s electronic waste.

In recent years a cluster of legally questionable work sites have sprung up to store and dismantle the disgorged contents of the growing number of shipping containers arriving in Hong Kong from the planet’s biggest producer of e-waste – the United States.

Monitors pile up, circuit boards are separated from smartphone cases and LCD screens are smashed to

smithereens in scenes that are more Mad Max than Silicon Valley.

In partnership with a Seattle-based environmental group that has monitored the flow of hazardous electronic waste out of the US for two decades, the *Sunday Morning Post* visited 10 such sites identified by the group using tracking devices planted inside waste products.

The Basel Action Network (BAN) says Hong Kong's traditional role as a transshipment point for mainland-bound e-waste is changing – bringing danger to not only the health of the often undocumented workers who break down the technology but the wider environment. [Read More](#)

Another Milestone: S. Korean Workers Comp Agency Deems Two Samsung Chip Workers' Lung Cancer Occupationally Caused

Korea Workers Compensation and Welfare Service (KCOMWEL) has posthumously granted workers compensation benefits to two Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd. workers, after deeming their lung cancers to be occupationally caused—the service's first-ever admission of a pulmonary condition as an occupational disease for semiconductor workers.

Counterbalance

On Aug. 29th and 30th KCOMWEL approved workers comp benefits for Lee Gyeong-hui and Song Yu-gyeong, based on epidemiological findings by its lung disease investigation unit.

KCOMWEL's approval is a counterbalance to the latest ruling by the country's highest court, which turned down three Samsung employees' workers comp petitions by passing the burden of proof on to the infirm or deceased workers for their occupational disease claims.

The Victims

Employed at Samsung's chip lab in April 1994, Lee resigned from the job in Nov. 2011, after his diagnosis with lung cancer. He died, at age 41, in May 2012. Five months later, his family petitioned for workers comp.

Between Jan. 1984 and March 2001, Song worked at two different units, chip and LCD, of Samsung. He died in 2011, at age 44, three years after his diagnosis with the cancer. In 2014, his family filed for workers compensation.

As maintenance engineers, both Lee and Song engaged in etching processes involving arsenic, a well-documented carcinogen. Additionally, routinely long working hours and daily exposure to other chemicals also cumulatively caused the workers' cancer, the epidemiological findings indicated.

Parsimonious on Pulmonary Conditions

Despite ample evidence that Samsung's chip and LCD production processes are limned with chemical exposures, KCOMWEL had cited a lack of evidence and rejected workers comp petitions for workers suffering pulmonary conditions.

This has been true particularly of Samsung's LCD workers while Song, a LCD line engineer, could receive workers compensation benefits because he spent more than half of his employment at a chip lab. In December 2015, Lee Jie-hye, aged 29, died of lung cancer after working in a Samsung LCD lab in 2003-2011. Her workers compensation petition was denied for lack of what KCOMWEL said was "substantial evidence."

As if in tune with the government's policy, Samsung's own limited and divisive compensation scheme does not cover even a single pulmonary condition. Samsung has no plans to make the change even after KCOMWEL's decision, according to independent news site Ohmynews.com. [Read More](#)

Test your lung function over a call

Scientists, including those of Indian-origin, have developed a new health sensing tool that can accurately measure lung function over a simple call made using any phone.

Most people in the developing world who have asthma, cystic fibrosis or other chronic lung diseases have no way to measure how well their lungs are functioning. "With SpiroCall, you can call a 1-800 number, blow into the phone and use the

telephone network to test your lung function," said Shwetak Patel of University of Washington.

SpiroCall transmits the collected audio using a standard phone channel -as opposed to a sound file that is transferred by a smartphone app over the Internet. The team combined multiple regression algorithms to provide reliable lung function estimates despite degraded audio quality.

The team also developed a 3D printed whistle that can be used in conjunction with SpiroCall that changes pitch when the patient exhales. [Read More](#)

S. Africa court allows huge class action over miners' silicosis

Hundreds of thousands of South African gold miners can pursue a multi-million-dollar class action against mining companies over an often-fatal respiratory disease contracted at work, a judge ruled Friday.

The decision opens the way for up to 500,000 current and former miners to sue about 30 companies for damages after suffering silicosis from dangerous underground working conditions dating back decades.

Many miners caught silicosis, which has no known cure, from inhaling silica dust while drilling rock. The dust lodges in the lungs and causes permanent scars.

Symptoms include persistent coughing and shortness of breath, and the disease regularly leads to tuberculosis and death.

"We hold the view that in the context of this case, class action is the only realistic option," Judge Phineas Mojapelo told the High Court in Johannesburg.

"It is the only avenue to realise the right of access to the courts provided by the constitution."

A group of about 60 former miners brought the case, which is set to expand to involve thousands of elderly men from the poorest rural areas of South Africa as well as Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi and Mozambique.

They accuse 32 mining companies -- including Harmony Gold, Anglo American, Anglogold Ashanti and Gold Fields -- of knowingly and systematically failing to protect workers against silicosis.

The judge said the number of people involved in the class action could range from 17,000 to 500,000.

Speaking on the steps of the High Court, former miner Vuyani Bwadube, who contracted silicosis after 16 years working for Harmony Gold, said there was "no turning back".

"Today's judgement is most welcome... The companies do not have time for us. Even today they don't care," he said. [Read More](#)

India: The Burning City

Underground fires have been burning for more than a century beneath India's largest coalfield, but in recent decades open-cast mining has brought the flames to the surface with devastating consequences for the local population.

As communities are destroyed and thousands suffer from toxic fumes, what lies behind this human and environmental disaster?

Filmmakers Gautam Singh and Dom Rotheroe went to find out.

The devastating impact of coal mining

After the US and China, India is currently the world's third-largest energy consumer; a position that is set to consolidate in coming years as economic development, urbanisation, improved electricity access, and an expanding manufacturing base all add to demand.

Right now much of those energy needs - up to two thirds of all electricity generated - are being met by domestically produced coal, of which India has abundant reserves.

A significant proportion of that production comes from the Jharia mines in Jharkhand state in the east of the country, which are also India's primary source of coking coal, an essential ingredient in steel production.

But the Jharia coalfields, which cover some 270sq km around the city bearing the same name, also pose a dreadful environmental and health challenge for hundreds of thousands of local inhabitants. [Read More](#)

Mining kills 4 times More Workers than any other Job in Brazil

Minas Gerais and Pará —South-East and Northern Brazilian regions— are the states with the most probabilities of death while working. This is no coincidence. Both states contain the main region under mining exploitation of the country.

From 2000 to 2010, the Jorge Duprat and Figueiredo Foundation (Fundacentro) proved that the General Index of Accidents in Brazil amounted to 8,66%. Meanwhile, the average rate of accidents in the mining industry was of 21%, which almost triplicates the national average.

But there's a great amount of error in the information provided by companies and public entities in the matter is, warns Marta Freitas, Secretary of Health of Minas Gerais.

“Many workers have died and we don't even know about it. We have many cases of people who have died in Minas Gerais and their families can't even have access to their corpse nor take it out from the mining pit to give it proper burial”, Freitas said.

The team of the Foundation and the National Confederation of Industry (CNTI) cross-referenced 11 million pieces of data from 34 mining municipalities in Minas Gerais and found out that there was a reduction in the number of deaths and work accidents in the industry.

An example of this is the document issued by the Social Welfare Ministry, which received 1,907 Work Accident Notifications (CATS), between 2004 and 2008. Of those, only one of the notifications issued by a mining company referenced a death that occurred on location. Their report indicated that other workers had died on their way to the hospital. [Read More](#)

Chinese miners are nearly unrecognizable at the end of a long day of work

A photo series showing Chinese miners covered in soot has gone viral on social media in the country.

The series shows coal miners from east China's Anhui province after work, their faces blackened with soot.

They posed for a picture with their wives, before washing up and taking another.



[Read More](#)

How India's Sixteen Occupational Safety Laws Couldn't Prevent Two Deaths

On June 21, 2016, two young men died. Their bodies were found in a tank at the Anna University campus in Chennai. They were employees of a subcontractor who had been hired to seal the tank with rubber to prevent any leakage of air. The tank was being constructed as a part of a project by the

Ministry of Renewable Energy to explore the possibilities of using compressed air to store energy. The two workers, Ramesh Shankar and Deepan, had arrived at the site at around 11.30 am and begun work. By 3.30 pm, when they were pulled out of the tank, Deepan was dead and Ramesh Shankar, while still breathing at the time, died a few minutes later.

According to statements from the university and the police, it seems that Shankar and Deepan had been working with two chemicals, silicone and toluene. Toluene is a solvent derived from benzene. While less harmful than benzene, inhaling or ingesting toluene can cause serious damage to the nervous system and even be fatal. Despite the confined nature of the tank, with only a solitary opening right at the top, the two men were given no safety gear and no supervisor from either Anna University or their employer, Kavimeena Rubber Products, was standing watch. Subsequent investigation by a team of labour activists found the situation to have been “lethal right from the beginning”.

The needless tragedy of the two deaths is mirrored by the tragedy that is the state of the laws and public institutions set up to deal with incidents such as these. There are sixteen laws (and a dozen or more boards, directorates, inspectorates and other bodies) that deal broadly with the subject of working conditions and occupational health and safety (OHS) in India. But despite this seeming glut, the circumstances that led to the death of Shankar and Deepan seem to have contravened no law at all.

Like most such deaths, this one too was easily reduced to a question of compensation. U. Lakshmikanthan, Deputy Commissioner of Labour, stated that after reading the media reports on the deaths, he suo moto initiated a complaint, summoning representatives of the university and the employer to his office. But his intervention was only to adjudicate on the amount of compensation that would be paid to the family of the deceased as per the statutes of the Employees Compensation Act 1923 (formerly called the Workmen’s Compensation Act 1923). This Act discusses the

terms on which compensation will be paid by the employer in the event of the death or disability of an employee. It doesn’t have anything to say on questions of occupational health in the strict sense. Lakshmikanthan did not disclose the compensation that had been decided but the maximum allowed under the law is approximately Rs 11 lakh.

BY THOMAS MANUEL [Read More](#)

Contamination: Kadena Air Base’s dirty secret

Located in the center of Okinawa island, Kadena Air Base is the largest U.S. Air Force installation in Asia.

Equipped with two 3.7-kilometer runways and thousands of hangars, homes and workshops, the base and its adjoining arsenal sprawl across 46 square kilometers. More than 20,000 American service members, contractors and their families live or work on the base alongside 3,000 Japanese employees.

Kadena Air Base hosts the biggest combat wing in the U.S. Air Force — the 18th Wing — and, during the past seven decades, the installation has served as an important launchpad for wars in Korea, Vietnam and Iraq.

Given the long history of Kadena Air Base and its city-sized scale, it is easy to understand why the U.S. Air Force calls it the “keystone of the Pacific.”

But until now, nobody has realized the damage the base is inflicting on the environment and those who live in its vicinity. Documents obtained under the U.S. Freedom of Information Act reveal how years of accidents and neglect have been polluting local land and water with hazardous chemicals, including arsenic, lead, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), asbestos and dioxin. Military authorities have often hidden this contamination, putting at risk the health of their own service members and the 184,000 civilians living in neighboring communities.

This week, we examine the pollution of local water resources and the exposure of on- and off-base residents to lead and asbestos. The accompanying article explains the flaws in current guidelines that allow the U.S. military in Japan to conceal such contamination.

Next week, we will investigate the installation's ongoing struggles to manage contamination from PCBs, its coverup of the discovery of hazardous waste near two on-base schools and the human impact of this pollution.

In January, the U.S. Air Force released 8,725 pages of accident reports, environmental investigations and emails related to contamination at Kadena Air Base. Dated from the mid-1990s to August 2015, the documents are believed to be the first time such recent information detailing pollution on an active U.S. base in Japan has been made public. [Read More](#)

When Uber drivers are hurt at work, who pays?

Kip Baldwin was driving four Uber passengers near downtown San Francisco when his car was broadsided by another Uber driver who ran a stop sign. Three months later, lingering pain from neck injuries and a concussion leave him unable to work. Uber's insurance company has offered him \$21,000 for medical expenses, lost wages and "inconvenience."

He considers that amount "ridiculously low" but feels that he may have to accept it because he needs the money.

"This was my main source of income," said Baldwin, 51, a San Rafael resident whose receipts show he averaged about \$800 a week (before expenses) working for rival ride service Lyft. He had switched to Uber shortly before the mid-March accident after renting a car through an Uber program. "I'm being forced into a position of settling for almost nothing because I don't have the deep pockets to fight them and go to court."

His situation highlights the precarious status of gig workers who lack workers' compensation coverage, insurance that's designed to help people who are injured on the job — but is generally only offered to employees. Uber and Lyft base their business models on independent contractors, and both have battled lawsuits seeking to reclassify drivers as employees.

"I'm being forced into a position of settling for almost nothing because I don't have the deep pockets to fight them and go to court, which would take a year or more," said Kip Baldwin.

"Uber drivers deserve to be covered by the same labor protections for safety and workers' compensation as are taxi drivers and others," said Deborah Berkowitz, senior fellow at the National Employment Law Project, who just published a policy brief arguing that point. [Read More](#)

Remembering the Legionnaires' Outbreak

Forty years ago, thousands of American Legion members and their wives convened inside a Philadelphia hotel. Within days of returning home, dozens of them had died from a strange respiratory disease, sparking one of the most extensive medical investigations in history in a quest to solve one of the greatest medical mysteries of the 20th century.

In the midst of a star-spangled summer in which the United States celebrated its bicentennial, more than 4,000 members of the Pennsylvania chapter of the American Legion gathered just blocks away from Independence Hall where the country's forefathers had severed their ties with King George III two centuries earlier. While Philadelphia sweltered on July 21, 1976, the military veterans discovered an icy refuge inside the air-conditioned quarters of the elegant Bellevue-Stratford Hotel as they kicked off the organization's annual convention. For four days Legion members mixed and mingled inside the Philadelphia landmark, dubbed "The Grand Dame of Broad Street," before returning home after what they believed was another successful gathering.

Within days, however, the phone at the American Legion's Pennsylvania headquarters began to ring with the distressing news of the deaths of a number of convention-goers. By August 2, however, it was clear that this was no string of bad luck as 12 members had died and three dozen more had been hospitalized with a mysterious respiratory illness. The pneumonia-like symptoms were nearly the same in every case—muscle aches, headaches,

severe coughs, diarrhea, muscle and chest pains and fevers as high as 107 degrees.



Bellevue-Stratford Hotel, Philadelphia. (Credit: Public domain)

Many of the dead were older men and smokers, but the ages of the victims ranged from 39 to 82.

[Read More](#)

Windows Of susceptibility

Do OELs Really Protect Workers from Reproductive and Developmental Effects?

The latest data from the United States Census Bureau indicate that 66 percent of women who gave birth to their first child between 2006 and 2008 worked during their pregnancy. That figure is a dramatic increase from earlier generations; for example, only 44 percent of women who had their first child during the 1960s worked during pregnancy. Given this trend, the potential impact of workplace chemical exposures on reproduction and development is a significant concern. This concern involves not only exposures of pregnant women but also of male and female workers prior to conception. Furthermore, because children may be exposed to chemicals via breast milk, the period of concern for developmental toxicity does not cease at birth. Here we address the question of whether occupational exposure limits (OELs) protect workers against developmental and reproductive toxicity (DART) effects. We also identify several

difficulties that industrial hygienists may face in assessing the appropriateness of an OEL for workers who are pregnant or who expect to conceive.

OELS AND DART EFFECTS

The basic process for developing an OEL, as described in a December 2015 supplement to the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene (JOEH)*, is to review and evaluate relevant scientific literature; select the critical health endpoint (that is, the most sensitive effect); select the point-of-departure (POD) from the key study (the dose or concentration near the low end of the observed range of the critical health endpoint); apply assessment factors that most appropriately represent the uncertainty and variability associated with the POD; and calculate the OEL as the POD divided by the assessment factors. (The calculation may involve other factors such as route-to-route extrapolation, animal-to-human conversions, or other adjustments.) Although definitions vary slightly, the resulting OEL is generally intended to protect all or the vast majority of workers against adverse effects during their working lifetime and beyond. [Read More](#)

Landmark compensation arrangement reached on 4th anniversary of deadly Pakistan factory fire

After four years of campaigning and months of negotiations, an agreement has been reached to pay compensation in excess of US\$5 million to the survivors and families of workers killed in Pakistan's worst industrial accident.

After four years of campaigning and months of negotiations, an agreement has been reached to pay compensation in excess of US\$5 million to the survivors and families of workers killed in Pakistan's worst industrial accident.

On 11 September 2012, more than 250 workers lost their lives and over 50 were injured in a fire at the Ali Enterprises garment factory in Karachi. Workers burnt to death trapped behind barred windows and

locked doors. Others jumped for their lives from the upper floors, sustaining permanent disabilities.



German retailer KiK, Ali Enterprises' only known buyer, has now agreed to pay an additional US\$5.15 million to fund loss of earnings, medical and allied care, and rehabilitation costs to the injured survivors and dependents of those killed in the disaster.

Previously KiK paid US\$1 million to a relief fund after signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Pakistani labour organization PILER in December 2012. In the MoU, KiK also committed to funding long-term compensation for victims. [Read More](#)

Kids more vulnerable to toxic chemicals in household dust

American researchers have reported that dust contains a wide range of toxic and cancer-causing chemicals, and kids are at higher risk for exposure when they crawl, play on the floor and put their hands in their mouths.

According to the American meta-analysis, in the peer-reviewed journal *Environmental Science & Technology*, 10 harmful chemicals were found in 90 per cent of dust samples taken from homes across more than a dozen states.

These 10 harmful chemicals found in dust samples were: Vinyl flooring, food contact materials DEHA (phthalate) Vinyl flooring, food packaging HHCB (fragrance) Scented products BBzP (phthalate), Vinyl flooring TPHP (flame retardant) Treated

furniture, baby products, carpet padding, electronics TDCIPP (flame retardant), Treated furniture, baby products, carpet padding DnBP (phthalate) Nail polish, paints DiBP (phthalate), Vinyl products, personal care and beauty products HBCDD (flame retardant), Polystyrene building insulation MeP (phenol), Cosmetics, lotions, and deodorants.

People need to be educated about these chemicals found in greater amount in home environment, said Dr. Ami Zota, an assistant professor of environmental and occupational health at Milken Institute School of Public Health at George Washington University. [Read More](#)

App for NIOSH Pocket Guide Now Available

On Thursday, NIOSH launched a new mobile app version of its *Pocket Guide to Chemical Hazards*. The *NIOSH Pocket Guide to Chemical Hazards* is a source of general industrial hygiene information on more than 600 widely used chemicals for workers, employers, and occupational health professionals. The guide, which was first developed more than 40 years ago, is intended to help users recognize and control occupational chemical hazards.

NIOSH's new app works on any mobile device with an HTML5-compliant web browser and can be used offline. Users can search the *NIOSH Pocket Guide to Chemical Hazards* mobile web app by chemical name, trade name or synonym, DOT number, and CAS number. The app also allows users to save chemical records as "favorites" for later use, and control which data about a given chemical are displayed. Links to IDLH as well as NIOSH and OSHA methods are available in the app; however, accessing this information requires a data connection. NIOSH's press release seeks to alleviate any privacy concerns, stating that no data is sent between users' devices and NIOSH other than the initial download and updates.

"The development of this app takes us into the 21st-century world of knowledge dissemination and allows quicker access to information that can keep workers safer on the job," said NIOSH Director John Howard.

For more information or to download the mobile *NIOSH Pocket Guide*, visit NIOSH's website. [Read More](#)

Dangerous chemicals hiding in everyday products

It was long believed that you could acquire "better living through chemistry." But that may really not be the case. In a landmark alliance, known as Project TENDR, leaders of various disciplines have come together in a consensus statement to say that many of the chemicals found in everyday products can result in neurodevelopmental disorders, including autism and attention-deficit disorders.

"Ten years ago, this consensus wouldn't have been possible, but the research is abundantly clear," said Irva Hertz-Picciotto, an environmental epidemiologist at the University of California, Davis and co-chairwoman of Project TENDR.

"At some point, we say we know enough to take preventative action," said Frederica Perera, a professor of environmental health sciences at Columbia University. Perera is also a signatory on the statement.

Last year, the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (PDF) stated that "Widespread exposure to toxic environmental chemicals threatens healthy human reproduction." Other medical groups such as the Endocrine Society (PDF), the world's oldest and largest organization devoted to researching hormones, have expressed similar concerns.

But this is the first time that leading scientists, doctors and policy advocates across various disciplines have come together to say that the science on toxic chemicals is clear: They can harm brain development. [Read More](#)

Report on night work and atypical working times highlights risks to workers

The French Agency ANSES has been commissioned to assess health risks for workers exposed to atypical working schedules, particularly night work.

This expert report highlights proven risks such as sleep disorders and metabolic disorders, and likely risks of carcinogenic nature or cardiovascular disorders and mental health problems among concerned workers.

Workers who work at night are generally subject to more physical strain, greater time pressure (schedules, rhythms constraints, deadlines, etc.), or more frequent tensions with colleagues and the guest public. However, organizational characteristics and conditions of night work may vary, particularly from one sector of activity to another, which can reduce or increase the effects of night work on the health of workers.

The expert report highlights health effects, with different levels of scientific evidence:

- effects such as sleepiness, reduced sleep quality and reduced total sleeping time, and metabolic syndrome are proven;
- the effects on mental health, cognitive performance, obesity and weight gain, type 2 diabetes and coronary heart disease (coronary ischemia and myocardial infarction) are probable;
- the effects on dyslipidemia (too high levels of certain fats in the blood), high blood pressure and ischemic stroke, are possible.

In 2012, night work, regular or occasional, accounted for 3.5 million people in France, or 15.4% of the workers. Night work concerns many sectors. It can be set up to ensure continuity of social services (health, police and enforcement bodies or other emergency services, etc.), or be a modality of work organisation (company that wishes to maximize the profitability of its equipment and personnel by means of shifts). [Read More](#)

Regional News

Articles on IBAS website

UK Asbestos Alert: Update

Enquiries made by a coalition of civil society groups (see: Press Release July 27, 2016) disturbed about the possibility of UK imports of asbestos-containing building materials from China have spurred the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) into action according to an emailed letter dated August 11, 2016:

“Given the nature of your concern, we have already established contact with Yuanda (UK) Co. Ltd. to conduct preliminary enquiries, establish their relationship to Yuanda Australia, understand the operation of their supply chain and the specification and quality assurance and quantity of materials they bring into the UK. by Laurie Kazan-Allen [Read More](#)

Why Most Ships Still Contain Asbestos

Asbestos has been banned from ships since July 2002; however, it is still found in over 90% of ships. More concerning is that asbestos is found in over 80% of new ships, even though the builders have declared the ships to be asbestos free.

How does asbestos get into ships?

First another question: when a shipyard or shipowner orders materials and specifies they are to be asbestos free, what exactly are they going to get?

by John Chillingworth, Senior Vice President at Centre Testing International Marine Services (CTI Marine) [Read More](#)

Implementing Nepal's Asbestos Ban

On December 22, 2014, Nepal became the first country in South Asia to ban the import, sale, distribution and use of all forms of asbestos and asbestos-containing products with the exception of asbestos-containing brake shoes and clutch plates. The prohibitions came into force on June 20, 2015; data sourced from the Ministry of Finance's Department of Customs shows that from mid-July

2015 to April 2016 the import of banned asbestos and asbestos-containing products continued despite the ban.

Disseminating the necessary information to customs officers and others required to enforce the ban is taking time. Our organization, the Center for Public Health and Environmental Development (CEPHED) has taken steps to monitor compliance with the ban and research levels of asbestos awareness in ten districts of Eastern and Central Nepal. by Ram Charitra Sah [Read More](#)

100th Issue of Unique British Publication

London: A significant landmark has been reached with the distribution this month of the 100th issue of the British Asbestos Newsletter, a quarterly publication which has over the last 25 years become a national resource for asbestos victims, campaigners, legal experts, professionals and concerned citizens. The two dozen chapters in the commemorative edition have been authored by leading stakeholders amongst the UK community of asbestos activists; their contributions highlight the efforts that have been made to secure the human and legal rights of asbestos victims and signpost measures for achieving future victories. The image on the cover was conceived by celebrated artist Conrad Atkinson, whose work hangs in the Tate Gallery, the British Museum, the Australian National Gallery, the Museum of Modern Art (NY), the University Museum and Gallery, Berkeley, CA and the Pushkin Fine Arts Museum (Moscow) among others. [Read More](#)

Schools Asbestos Awareness Workshop – Asbestos the Silent Killer

Venue: Galotolo Primary School; **Date:** 16 June 2016; **Facilitators:** Asbestos Interest Group Staff; **Target groups:** pupils from local primary and middle schools

Introduction - The Asbestos Interest Group is a non-profit organisation based in Kuruman Town. It is responsible for teaching about and identifying asbestos in the local municipalities. The main aim is to create asbestos awareness in John Taolo Gaetsewe District Municipalities. The awareness is achieved through workshops, campaigns and

community awareness initiatives. The asbestos Interest Group is funded by the Asbestos Relief Trust & Kgalagadi Relief Trust. Report by Prudence Kotoloane, Asbestos Interest Group [Read More](#)

The Asbestos Hazard at Shipyards

A high incidence of asbestos-related disease has been recorded amongst military and civilian workforces at shipyards in England, Scotland, Italy, Japan, the U.S. and many other countries.¹ In the 1898 annual report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops, clear warnings were given regarding the “abundant evidence” about the “evil effects of [asbestos] dust” by Lucy Deane, one of the country’s first female factory inspectors. While Miss Deane was reporting observations from inspections of factories and workshops, what was true in those settings was clearly also true in other locations where asbestos was used. by Laurie Kazan-Allen [Read More](#)

Action Mesothelioma Day 2016

From Glasgow to Portsmouth, from Swansea to Gateshead via the Isle of Man, events were held throughout the UK on July 1, 2016 to observe Action Mesothelioma Day 2016. The extent and diversity of the activities marking the 11th national mesothelioma day underscored the growth in support for those suffering from a supposedly “rare” disease which nevertheless caused 7,398 deaths between 2011 and 2013.

By coincidence AMD this year fell on the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme. From July 1 to November 18, 1916 British and French troops fought against the German Empire in the largest battle of the First World War. by Laurie Kazan-Allen [Read More](#)

Italy’s hope and Glory

On July 21, 2016, the news finally came. Italy’s Constitutional Court issued its ruling in the long-running battle to achieve justice for Italy’s asbestos victims.¹ The verdict was categorical - a second round of proceedings (Eternit BIS) against Swiss billionaire Stephan Schmidheiny could go ahead.² The fact that the defendant had already been tried over asbestos deaths of Italian citizens

did not prevent him from facing additional charges. “It is clear,” the Constitutional Court’s verdict stated “that even from the strictly material point of view, the death of a person, although occasioned by the same conduct, gives rise to a new event, and therefore an act other than the death of other people.” by Laurie Kazan-Allen [Read More](#)

Asbestos-laden building materials slipping into Australia as result of weak regulation, report finds

Glaring weaknesses in regulations and border protection issues are allowing building products contaminated with potentially deadly asbestos into Australia, a Senate committee has warned.

In an interim report tabled late on Wednesday, the committee raised particular concern about "the ability of Australia's enforcement agencies to effectively police borders so that [contaminated products] are detected and prevented from entering Australia".

"At the moment, this area of enforcement appears to require substantial strengthening and should be a high priority for government," it read.

"The importation of banned materials, such as asbestos, raises very serious concerns about the capacity of Australian authorities to deal with this issue, particularly in light of our open and dynamic trade environment."

The report notes only two importers have been fined over asbestos-laced building material since tougher penalties were imposed in February 2014. by Stephanie Smail, [Read More](#)

Asbestos prosecutions 'difficult' due to defence and differing international standards, report finds

A lack of evidence and companies' use of "a mistake of fact defence" are hampering Australian Border Force's ability to prosecute against the importation of asbestos.

Key findings from a KGH Border Services report commissioned by the Immigration Department

found there was confusion about policy and regulatory responsibilities, and there was no dedicated trade and good customer function for people to seek advice about asbestos.



PHOTO: Border Force only tests a small portion of materials shipped into Australia for asbestos. (ABC News)

By Sarah Scopelianos [Read More](#)

Asbestos-related cancer costs Canadians billions

A first-ever estimate of the toll of asbestos-related cancers on society pegs the cost of new cases at \$1.7-billion per year in Canada, and notes that is likely an under-estimate.

The economic burden of lung cancer and mesothelioma from work-related asbestos exposure in Canada amounts to an average of \$818,000 per case, according to a team led by health economist and senior scientist Dr. Emile Tompa at the Institute for Work & Health, a research organization, whose calculation includes costs related to health care and lost productivity and quality of life.

This is the first time a tally of these costs has been made public. Asbestos remains the top cause of occupational deaths in Canada: Workers' compensation boards have accepted more than 5,700 claims since 1996. About 150,000 Canadian workers are exposed to asbestos in their workplaces, the research project Carex Canada estimates, among them construction workers and contractors, mechanics, shipbuilders and engineers. By TAVIA GRANT, [Read More](#)

[New Zealand] Government bans importation of (most) asbestos

Win for working people; Government bans importation of (most) asbestos

Working people have been demanding that the Government ban the importation of cancer causing asbestos for decades. Yesterday the Government took action and banned most importation of asbestos.

"Thousands of kiwis have been killed from being exposed to asbestos. We've known for a long time how dangerous this material is. It is certainly a relief that the Government has finally acted," CTU Secretary, Sam Huggard said.

Thursday, 16 June 2016, Press Release: Council of Trade Unions [Read More](#)

Mesothelioma patients get no relief from state govt

JAIPUR: Bhagwati Mathur, a housewife in Vaishali Nagar, Ajmer, was diagnosed in December, 2012 as suffering from mesothelioma - a lung cancer caused by inhalation of particles found in asbestos mines. Not only mine workers, even others living in the vicinity of these mines are found to be affected. Mesothelioma is a more advanced version of asbestosis, which affects the lungs of those long exposed to dust from asbestos mines.

In a letter of May last year, the district collector of Ajmer explained to Mathur's husband Kanwar Lal Mathur that only mineworkers were entitled to the Rs1 lakh compensation that the government offers those suffering from silicosis.

Rosamma Thomas | TNN [Read More](#)

Asbestos industry fighting to destroy UN Convention that protects populations from asbestos harm

For over ten years, the asbestos industry has succeeded in preventing chrysotile asbestos from being put on the Rotterdam Convention's list of hazardous substances so that it can keep on

exporting chrysotile asbestos to countries in the global South while hiding its hazards.

Chrysotile asbestos meets all the criteria of the Convention and should be listed, but a tiny number of countries allied to the asbestos industry, led first by Canada and now by Russia, have put industry profits ahead of human health and for the past ten years have sabotaged the Convention.

A special UN initiative, led by Australia, has been launched to try to stop the sabotage of the recommendation made by the Convention's expert scientific body to list chrysotile asbestos and to enable the Convention to be implemented effectively without industry interference. Kathleen Ruff, [Read More](#)

South Korea Tightens Asbestos Regulations

South Korea is strengthening its Asbestos Safety Management Act (ASMA) beginning next month to better protect those involved in the renovation or demolition of older structures.

The country has added to the recent, worldwide momentum aimed at minimizing health risks stemming from exposure to asbestos. South Korea already is one of 58 countries that have banned the toxic mineral, joining that club in 2009.

New Zealand became the latest country to ban asbestos in June. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in May announced his intention to work toward a ban. The United States earlier this year amended its Toxic Substances Control Act, which will give the Environmental Protection Agency more power to restrict the use of asbestos. The U.S. still does not ban it.

South Korea's revised ASMA, which becomes effective Aug. 15, would require owners of commercial and residential buildings with asbestos to have a certified safety inspector present to supervise all work.

That inspector must record the changing status of asbestos within the structure and ensure that proper asbestos removal and disposal procedures are followed. [Read More](#)

Asbestos Court Decision and Implications in Japan

On 29 January 2016, the District Court of Kyoto, Japan ordered nine manufacturers of construction materials containing asbestos to pay a total of JPY 112 million (approximately USD one million) to 23 workers and their families who died from or are suffering from asbestosis and/or lung cancer.¹

The court maintained that the companies sold construction materials without proper warning labels in violation of the series of government regulations introduced in 1972, 1974, and 2002, respectively.²

The challenge facing the plaintiffs was that the workers may have been exposed over a number of years to asbestos produced by a myriad of companies. They were unable to establish direct causation and apportionment of responsibility among potentially liable parties. [Read More](#)

Asbestos Industry Covered Up Danger for Decades, and Evades Responsibility Today

The asbestos industry was well aware that asbestos was deadly. Yet, the companies that mined asbestos, and those that exposed workers, military personnel and consumers to it, and their insurers kept what they knew secret for decades -- endangering hundreds of thousands of Americans; many of whom perished as a result.

Even in recent years, decades after the dangers of asbestos became widely known, some companies continue trying to cover up -- even destroy -- evidence of their products' devastation to workers, their families and many others who have been sickened and died from asbestos diseases.

Today, some of the most well-known companies in the country are lobbying Congress to pass legislation that would tip the scales of justice heavily in their favor when facing lawsuits from people who are sick and dying. [Read More](#)

Will look for alternatives to carcinogenic asbestos: Environment Minister

NEW DELHI: Waking up to the hazards of asbestos use that puts millions of workers at risk of contracting cancer, the government has said its use must end and the Centre will ask scientists to look for alternatives.

"Since the use of asbestos is affecting human health, its use should gradually be minimised and eventually end. As far as I know, its use is declining. But it must end," environment minister Anil Madhav Dave told TOI.

He said his ministry would ask scientists and other stakeholders to find out whether technology or any nonhazardous substitute could provide an alternative. [Read More](#)

Asbestos: more than 50 nations have banned it. Why is India refusing

Last month, after a five-year struggle, the Bihar Pollution Board cancelled permissions for seven asbestos plants across the state due after incessant efforts from various activists group and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

The activist groups had listened to the anxious villagers near the factories, especially in Bhojpur where a factory had employed more than 500. They complained of hazardous factories that manufactured chrysotile white asbestos-cement products. The toxic waste from the factories had been dumped indiscriminately in the adjoining villages and the agricultural fields. [Read More](#)

November is National Asbestos Awareness Month

An initiative of the Asbestos Education Committee working in partnership with the Asbestos Diseases Research Institute and supported by the Heads of Asbestos Coordination Authorities, Australia's leading National Asbestos Awareness Month Campaign throughout November educates homeowners, renovators, handymen and

tradespeople about the dangers of asbestos and how to manage it safely.

Asbestos is not only found in fibro homes. Australia was among one of the largest consumers of asbestos-containing materials in the world with asbestos-containing products still found in 1 in 3 brick, weatherboard, fibro or clad homes built or renovated before 1987. [Read More](#)

Dangerous Dust: Asbestos Story in Indonesia

Watch a You tube video from Indonesia describing the dangerous aspects of Asbestos. [Click here](#) to watch.

Samsung in India: 20 years on, but low labour standards

Cividep India together with GoodElectronics has published a profile of Samsung's operations in India. Cividep describes how Samsung India has completed 20 years of operating in India with special offers called "Celebrating 20 years" for twenty days in December 2015, as a way of "giving back" to its ever growing customer base in India.

However, this generosity of spirit is not evident in Samsung's attitude towards its greatest resource: its hardworking labour force. The reality on the ground is that workers in Samsung are given poor wages that do not meet even their basic monthly expenses. Their working conditions are unfavourable, and there are no effective grievance redress mechanisms. Samsung's attitude to the right to freedom of association is particularly unsympathetic and at odds both with national and international labour standards and regulations.

Download the report - Samsung in India: 20 years on, but low labour standards [Read More](#)

The Terrible Truth about How Your Gadgets Die

The sleek, thin electronics of today are gorgeous to behold -- and hell to recycle.

Consumer demand for small devices has helped create a system where products are recycled via shredding, which is very much what it sounds

like. Gadgets are essentially pulverized down to their smallest bits, after which relevant parts are scavenged for repurposing. It's neither cost-effective nor sustainable, experts recently told The Huffington Post.

But if design priorities don't change, the system isn't likely to, either.

"This is a really scary thing," Jim Puckett, head of the Basel Action Network, told HuffPost in a recent interview. "It's not a perfect system to shred things and try to separate them. There's so much that's lost, so much that's contaminated."

The Basel Action Network, or BAN, is a non-governmental organization dedicated to eliminating "toxic trade." The group recently made headlines for exposing serious faults in American recycling programs. [Read More](#)

Foxconn replaces '60,000 factory workers with robots'

Apple and Samsung supplier Foxconn has reportedly replaced 60,000 factory workers with robots.

One factory has "reduced employee strength from 110,000 to 50,000 thanks to the introduction of robots", a government official told the South China Morning Post.

Xu Yulian, head of publicity for the Kunshan region, added: "More companies are likely to follow suit."

China is investing heavily in a robot workforce.

In a statement to the BBC, Foxconn Technology Group confirmed that it was automating "many of the manufacturing tasks associated with our operations" but denied that it meant long-term job losses. [Read More](#)

Lighting firms flout e-waste rule in India: Toxics Link

NEW DELHI: A green body today alleged that many international lighting firms which comply with the European countries' rules on e-waste, refuse to accept responsibility for management of mercury-bearing waste mandated under India's e-waste rules.

Toxics Links alleged that while these firms have been fulfilling their commitments under the European Union directives while they don't do so in India. "This exposes their double standards and reflects that they have very little.."

The revised e-waste Rules have brought Compact Fluorescent Lamps and other mercury-containing lighting equipment under its ambit.

It mandates that manufacturers have to take responsibility for the collection, transportation and disposal of fluorescent and other mercury-containing lamps under the EPR, one of the most progressive principles on e-waste management. It puts in place stringent provisions for violations.

These companies are opposing the EPR principle by challenging it in the court, which is in stark contrast to their actions in Europe, the green body said. [Read More](#)

iPhone7 Supplier Cuts Workers' Wages

Pegatron is one of the largest iPhone7 suppliers for Apple, currently recruiting more than 60,000 workers. Since the beginning of this year, the treatment of workers in Apple's supply chain in China has clearly worsened. By comparing the wage structure in May 2016 and September 2016, we can see that workers' real wages have decreased substantially from 457 USD to 354 USD, a reduction of 22.6%. Also, it is important to note that this is happening against the background of a steadily increasing minimum wage in China.

Compared to September 2015, Pegatron workers' rewards and subsidies have declined from about 150 USD to merely 54 USD in May 2016, and the individual payment of social insurance (about 50 USD), which was paid by Pegatron, is now paid out of workers' pockets. (Please see Table 1 and paystub samples below)

Apple claimed that wages had raised an average of 13% each year. According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, the legal minimum wage in China has been increasing at a rate of 13.1% in the past five years and wages in Pegatron has remained the same as the local minimum wage. [3] As such,

the increase in wages is unrelated to Apple's efforts and in no way reflects an improvement in the treatment of workers. Rather, it is the result of Chinese law. In addition, through examining the 93 Pegatron paystubs in September 2015 and 194 paystubs in May 2016, we find Pegatron workers' real wage in May 2016 is even lower than that in 2015. In April 2016, Shanghai Municipal Government raised the legal minimum wage from 2020 RMB to 2190 RMB (303 USD to 328 USD), and Pegatron raised base wage of workers' accordingly.

[Read More](#)

Silicosis Victims and the Importance of the Supreme Court Judgment

Earlier this month, the Supreme Court passed an important order which has positive implications from multiple perspectives. It asked the Gujarat government to pay compensation of three lakh rupees within a month to families of deceased migrant workers who died of silicosis, an incurable disease they had contracted due to working in the unregulated quartz crushing factories of Godhra and Balasinor.

The struggle for the rights of these workers, who hail from tribal districts of Madhya Pradesh, is almost ten years old. The long wait for justice has come to a full circle with this order from the highest judicial body.

Godhra ki factory wali bimari (The Godhra factory illness)

Tribal communities from districts of Alirajpur, Jhabua and Dhar of Madhya Pradesh have been pushed to migrate out of their villages in search of work, a phenomenon that has risen significantly in the last decade-and-a-half. Most of them are marginal farmers dependent on rain fed agriculture on a few acres of land. With just one cycle of crop annually and the miserable state of implementation of MGNREGA on the ground, they are left with no choice but to migrate to the bordering state of Gujarat.

Scores of families ended up in the stone crushing factories of Gujarat where they worked for months in deplorable safety conditions. They inhaled fine

silica dust far beyond permissible quantities and by the turn of a year started returning home with common symptoms like coughing, shortness of breath and fatigue. Numerous workers became bed ridden with the occupational disease known as silicosis, which has no cure. [Read More](#)

Investigators Design Experimental Engineering Control for Silica Dust

Silicosis is an irreversible, but preventable, occupational lung disease caused by inhalation of respirable crystalline silica dust (RCS). Each year, millions of workers, primarily in construction, sandblasting, and mining, are at risk of silicosis (and lung cancer) from exposure to RCS. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) investigators study how to prevent workers' exposure to this serious health risk. Recently, they developed a novel engineering control, called the NIOSH mini-baghouse retrofit assembly, to help control RCS released from sand moving machinery on oil and gas extraction sites. Below, study lead author Barbara M. Alexander, Ph.D., P.E., C.I.H., NIOSH engineer and industrial hygienist, explains how the experimental tool works. Clouds of dust are visible as sand trucks are unloaded at a hydraulic fracturing site. Photo courtesy of Michael Breitenstein, NIOSH. [Read More](#)

Child workers die in illegal mica mines as operators exploit their poverty, lack of education

Koderma/Bhilwara/Sydapuram: In the depths of India's illegal mica mines, where children as young as five work alongside adults, lurks a dark, hidden secret – the cover-up of child deaths with seven killed in the past two months, a Thomson Reuters Foundation investigation has revealed.

Investigations over three months in the major mica producing states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh found child labour rife, with small hands ideal to pick and sort the valued mineral that puts the sparkle in cosmetics and car paint.

But interviews with workers and local communities discovered children were not only risking their health in abandoned "ghost" mines off official

radars, but they were dying in the unregulated, crumbling mines, with seven killed since June.

In the mud-and-brick village of Chandwara in Bihar in eastern India, a father's grief laid bare the ugly reality of the illegal mining that accounts for an estimated 70 percent of India's mica output. [Read More](#)

Peruvian town faces another 14 years of air pollution from mine

It didn't matter who the president was. Nor how much time passed: first ten years, then three, another two, and so on until reaching 18 years of breaches and delays in the environmental commitments of Doe Run Peru—the latest operator of the country's main metal smelting plant, located in the gray town of La Oroya. The company declared bankruptcy to avoid meeting its obligations, and in September 2014 it benefitted from the reduction of a fine worth millions, thanks to Law 30230.

With Alejandro Toledo as the president, the period to implement the environmental adaptation plan increased. History repeated itself with Alan García, and in July Ollanta Humala approved the Corrective Instrument for Environmental Management (IGAC in Spanish). In theory, this plan will protect the health of villagers and ensure that the environment is managed according to current requirements when the plant passes on to a new operator. [Read More](#)

China: Foreign NGO management law passed, groups wary of restrictions on activities

Western governments and rights groups lambasted a new Chinese law governing non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on Friday, saying it treats the groups as a criminal threat and would effectively force many out of the country.

The law, which was passed by parliament on Thursday despite months of intense criticism and lobbying by the West, brings NGOs under the Ministry of Public Security, giving police broad authority over their finances and work.

"I think this definitely gives the government the legitimate channels and the excuse to kick out civil society organizations if they want," said Shen Tingting, a China-based advocacy director for Asia Catalyst, a group that trains domestic NGOs. By Megha Rajagopalan and Michael Martina [Read More](#)

China pollution scandal: air, water in school near toxic site normal, say officials

The quality of air and water near a school hit by a pollution scandal in which nearly 500 pupils have fallen ill, is "normal", Chinese authorities say – though environmentalists and parents remain sceptical.

Air quality at six spots in Changzhou Foreign Language School in eastern Jiangsu province tested similar to two other spots in Changzhou, the local government said on Monday, quoting preliminary investigation results.

The findings – from a task force of environmental, medical and health experts from both the local and central governments – also showed that the quality of drinking water and food were within national standards. [Read More](#)

Companies in Viet Nam to become liable for environmental crimes

In many common law jurisdictions, such as the UK and Australia, the concept of 'legal personhood'—whereby businesses and corporations can be subject to not only similar rights, but also similar liabilities, as individuals—is an inherent element of any comprehensive criminal enforcement regime. In contrast, in many code-based jurisdictions the criminal liability of legal personhood is a relatively new concept. For example, France introduced corporate criminal liability in 1994, followed by Italy in 2001, and Spain in 2010.

Against that background, the sweeping revisions to Vietnam's penal code, approved by the National Assembly in November 2015 and which will become effective on 1 July, are notable, indicating

Viet Nam's strong commitment to protecting its environment.

Vietnam's new penal code strengthens provisions specifically targeting environmental crime. The code now stipulates that legal entities, as well as individuals, can be prosecuted for a range of environmental crimes including intentionally causing pollution, non-compliance with environmental remediation and protection regulations, and breaching hazardous waste management regulations. [Read More](#)

Star Investigation: A Poisoned People

For more than 40 years the mercury has percolated through river sediment, the food chain and generations of residents.

From 100 kilometres upstream, the slow, steady drip of the neurotoxin first killed a community's livelihood and then contaminated its people.

A disability board — set up by government officials in the mid-1980s to compensate those who can show doctors they suffer symptoms consistent with mercury poisoning — has approved claims from more than 300 applicants who suffer from tremors, loss of muscle co-ordination, slurred speech and tunnel vision.

One of them was Marlin Kokopenace's 17-year-old son, Calvin.

"(Calvin) was pretty frail. When he passed on he practically had no muscle," Marlin Kokopenace said, adding: "Me, I lose my balance at times. When I'm walking, sometimes I feel like I sidestep . . . (And) I get tremors, sometimes, in my hands." [Read More](#)

What renewables? 16,372MW thermal capacity gets eco nod

Nagpur: When worldwide focus is on renewable energy, during the last two years from July 4, 2014 to July 26, 2016, 15 proposals to set up 16,372MW thermal power capacity have been granted environment clearance (EC) by the BJP government at the Centre.

Gujarat leads the tally with 3,980 MW followed by Tamil Nadu (3,732MW), Uttar Pradesh (3,300 MW) and Telangana (2,400 MW), Andhra Pradesh (1,600 MW), Madhya Pradesh(1,320 MW) and West Bengal (40 MW). When the Narendra Modi government itself has said additional thermal capacity is not required for next 5-6 years, why is environmental clearance being granted to coal-based plants?" asks Pushp Jain, director of Environment Impact Assessment(EIA) Resources & Response Centre (ERC), New Delhi. [Read More](#)

Reckitt Benckiser suspected of covering up health risks

British household goods manufacturer Reckitt Benckiser is facing suspicions that it may have pressed its Korean unit, Oxy Reckitt Benckiser, to cover up health risks associated with its humidifier disinfectants that are blamed for the deaths of 103 Koreans.

During Monday, the first day of a two-day National Assembly hearing on the deaths caused by humidifier disinfectants, lawmakers from the ruling and opposition parties claimed the Korean unit planned to carry out safety tests before sales, but the parent firm asked it to stop such tests and hand over relevant data.

Some 530 victims, including pregnant women and children, suffered lung injuries and related diseases while 146 of them — including the 103 users of Reckitt Benckiser's products — died since the case was first reported in 2011.

In May, the British company acknowledged "full responsibility for the role that this product played in these health issues, including the deaths" but has remained uncertain whether it was directly responsible for the loss of life. [Read More](#)

Air Pollution & Heat Impacts Study during India's Epic Heatwave

Odds are that 2016 is already set to be yet another "hottest year on record". This week Ahmedabad, in Western India, broke a hundred year record with reported maximum temperatures of 46.9°C (116.4°F). The United States White House has

designated this week, as “Extreme Heat Week”. The dangerous health effects of globally rising temperatures and climate change are becoming very real.

Closer to home in India, cities have been feeling the heat since early summer. The Indian Meteorological Department has warned of extreme heat wave conditions in central and north India. Taking action, 3 regions in 10 cities, covering 10 million people, are preparing and responding to sweltering temperatures and related health impacts, including heat stroke and death. Nine Indian cities, including Bhubaneswar and Nagpur have joined Ahmedabad, in releasing Heat Action Plans – early warning systems focus on increased community action, interagency coordination and capacity building among medical professionals.

This year, NRDC and partners, the Indian Institute of Public Health, Gandhinagar (IIPHG), University of Washington and others are working with the city to further strengthen the evidence based case for an occupationally vulnerable group [Read More](#)

Ventilation to Be Required in All New York Nail Salons

All nail salons in New York State will be required to have ventilation systems to protect manicurists and others from the potentially dangerous health effects of chemicals used in nail products, the governor announced this week.

The new rule is among the most sweeping changes in the state’s initiative, more than a year long, to make the industry safer and more equitable for workers, many of whom say they suffer ill health effects as a result of their jobs.

Any nail salon that opens on Oct. 3 or later will have to have a ventilation system. Existing salons will have five years to comply.

The expense of installing new ventilation will be borne entirely by salon owners, Alphonso David, the counsel to Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, said in an interview. [Read More](#)

Left Out - Testimonies on Denial of Health Rights in Karnataka

Human Rights (HR) approaches to health provide a powerful ethical framework for equity and social justice. In the absence of a Right to Health Act in India, courts and activists have attempted to expand the ambit of human rights to address violations of health rights.

One such effort was the collaboration between People & Health Movement (PHM), India and National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in 2015-16 with the objective of organizing public hearings (people's tribunals) on the Right to Health Care across India.

Cases of denial were sought from individuals and groups through outreach activities, workshops and public notices in newspapers.

This short film documents a few cases submitted to PHM in the southern state of Karnataka. It profiles people struggling to navigate complex health systems, access health care through arrangements between the public and private health sectors and enforce legal commitments on health rights. [Watch testimonials](#)

British government defeated as EU court rules travelling to work 'is work'

Time spent by plumbers, decorators and carers driving to their first customer of the day counts towards the 48-hour working week, a European court has ruled, in a decision the government admits will drive up costs for businesses.

In a defeat for the British government, the European Court of Justice ruled that time spent by tradesmen travelling between their home and their clients is “work”.

The judgement amounts to a significant tightening of European labour rules, and could force thousands of British companies to hire more workers to remain in the law.

The ruling could also force companies to pay higher salaries to avoid breaking minimum wages laws, as

well as giving employees more breaks, lawyers warned. [Read More](#)

Environment Ministry's Copy-Paste Job From US Can Spell Disaster

When water filled the basement of a Laxmi Nagar neighbourhood for two months in 2010, the foundations of a four storey building gave way, killing 67 and injuring more than a hundred others. It was one of the deadliest building collapses in Delhi's history.

Many buildings in Laxmi Nagar and colonies bordering the Yamuna river lie in the Yamuna flood plain, an area that is regularly waterlogged. Though the National Green Tribunal has regulations that prevent permanent construction on a river bed, these are often not enforced. And a newly proposed notification, plagiarised from an existing American law, could make it easy for construction companies to bypass environmental impact assessments that are supposed to prevent disasters like the Laxmi Nagar collapse. [Read More](#)

Dutch companies producing garments in India often pay less than minimum wage

The working conditions in factories in India that produce for Dutch clothing brands are downright bad. No garment worker earns a living wage. More than one third of the workers not even gets the official minimum wage. Mandatory overtime is often not paid, intimidation is widespread and women earn even less than men. Also, some factories do not take care of social insurances and medical expenses. That, and more, emerges from the study *Doing Dutch – Research into the state of pay for workers in garment factories in India working for Dutch fashion brands* published today by the Clean Clothes Campaign and the India Committee of the Netherlands.

Starvation wages - As many as 53 of the 150 workers interviewed earn less than the minimum wage and thus get paid less than required by the law. On average workers earn just €100 per month, after deduction of various fines often not more than €90. That is about one third of a living wage.

According to the Asia Floor Wage a living wage for workers in India amounts to around €256. Most workers can not properly support their families with this wage. Food and housing, usually a one-room apartment without water tap, with a shared toilet outdoors, are the biggest expenses. [Read More](#)

'Certified Unilever Tea – A Cup Half Empty'

The report *Certified Unilever Tea - A Cup Half Empty*, published today by the India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN), provides evidence that working conditions at two Rainforest Alliance (RA) certified Indian tea estates providing tea to Unilever have improved but continue to be not 'up to standard', in particular for casual workers. Wages – between €3 and just over €4 – are far less than a living wage of around €7.50. Casualization of the workforce substantially increased, most of them migrants or retired permanent workers. They do not receive the same social benefits as permanent workers.

Even though RA and Unilever put into place measures to improve labour conditions at these tea estates in response to non-compliances found in 2010, there are still many issues found that are not in line with the standards used by RA* and that require immediate attention. Since 2010 conditions for workers on both Havukal and Kairbetta estates have somewhat improved. However serious problems were found related to unequal benefits for casual workers, inadequate compensation for overtime working hours, insufficient precautions in chemical handling (e.g. non-mandatory use of personal protective equipment) and lack of freedom of association and worker representation. [Read More](#)

Pole to Pole: Bangladesh

Garrett D. Brown, MPH, CIH, FAIHA, recently retired from a 20-year career with Cal/OSHA, where he worked as a compliance officer for 18 years and as special assistant to the chief of the division for the last two and a half years. Since 1993, Brown has been the volunteer coordinator of the Maquiladora

Health and Safety Support Network, a volunteer network of approximately 300 occupational health and safety professionals that provides information, technical assistance, and training to community-based worker organizations around the world. Brown has directed health and safety capacity-building projects with grassroots worker organizations in Mexico, Central America, Indonesia, China, and now Bangladesh. Two of the worst workplace disasters in the history of the garment industry have occurred since 2012 in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. In December 2012, a fire at the Tazreen Fashion factory killed 112 workers. Four months later, in April 2013, the structural failure and collapse of a building in Dhaka's Rana Plaza killed more than 1,100 garment workers and injured 2,500 others. Brown, a member of AIHA's Social Concerns and International Affairs Committees, is helping establish a workplace health and safety "train-the-trainer" program in Bangladesh with the OHS Initiative for Workers and Communities, a joint effort of six leading non-governmental organizations in Dhaka. [Read More](#)

Global supply chains still full of sweatshops

In the early 1990s, sports apparel giant Nike became the "poster child" for sweatshops in its global supply chain – child labor, forced labor (mandatory overtime), wage theft, confiscation of migrant workers' passports, sexual harassment of women workers, and unsafe and unhealthy working conditions.

Jump ahead 25 years, vast global supply chains with multiple tiers of international "brands," contracted supplier factories, and numerous sub-contractors are now the norm for consumer goods sectors such as electronics, toys, apparel, home furnishings, food like fish and chocolate, sports shoes and equipment. The corporate response to the anti-sweatshop campaigns that started with Nike has been the development of "corporate social responsibility" programs. The CSR industry now involves thousands of corporate codes of conduct, tens of thousands of "third-party audits" of supply chain factories, and hundreds of annual

conferences, books, magazines and web sites, and dozens of CSR consulting firms worldwide. The global CSR industry is now a \$80 billion a year industry. Posted by garrettbrown on September 21, 2016 [Read More](#)

The Rockets' Red Glare

LILING, China—On Sept. 22, 2014, Huang Mingwei fed her 2-year-old daughter, put on a peach-colored dress dotted with yellow flowers—her husband's favorite—and cycled up the road to work.

It was a muggy first day of fall, a morning with nothing in particular to distinguish it from the decade of Mondays Huang had toiled at the Nanyang Export Fireworks Factory in southern China's Hunan province. By that afternoon, 14 women—her co-workers—lay dead or dying in the rubble of the exploded factory, and Huang would begin a year-and-a-half-long hospital stay to treat severe burns covering 70 percent of her body. Of the 47 people working in the factory that day, only three escaped with no injuries. The rest became casualties of one of China's most dangerous and ignored industries: the manufacture of the world's fireworks. [Read More](#)

Occupational hazards among the abattoir workers associated with noncompliance to the meat processing and waste disposal laws in Malaysia

Purpose - This study aims to investigate the occupational hazards among the abattoir workers associated with noncompliance to the meat processing and waste disposal laws in Terengganu State, Malaysia. Occupational hazards are the major source of morbidity and mortality among the animal workers due to exposure to many hazardous situations in their daily practices. Occupational infections mostly contracted by abattoir workers could be caused by iatrogenic or transmissible agents, including viruses, bacteria, fungi, and parasites and the toxins produced by these organisms.

Materials and methods - The methodology was based on a cross-sectional survey using cluster sampling technique in the four districts of Terengganu State, Malaysia. One hundred and twenty-one abattoir workers from five abattoirs were assessed using a validated structured questionnaire and an observation checklist.

Results - The mean and standard deviation of occupational hazards scores of the workers were 2.32 (2.721). Physical, chemical, biological, psychosocial, musculoskeletal, and ergonomics hazards were the major findings of this study. However, the highest prevalence of occupational hazards identified among the workers was injury by sharp equipment such as a knife (20.0%), noise exposure (17.0%), and due to offensive odor within the abattoir premises (12.0%).

Conclusion - The major occupational hazards encountered by the workers in the study area were physical, chemical, biological, psychosocial, musculoskeletal, and ergonomics hazards. To ensure proper control of occupational health hazards among the abattoir workers, standard design and good environmental hygiene must be taken into consideration all the time. Exposure control plan, which includes risk identification, risk characterization, assessment of workers at risk, risk control, workers' education/training, and implementation of safe work procedures, should be implemented by the government and all the existing laws governing the abattoir operation in the country should be enforced. [Read More](#)

It Came From Beneath: Detecting and Mitigating Vapor Intrusion

Indoor exposure to naturally occurring radon gas has rocketed into public awareness since the 1980s, but now a similar, albeit lesser-known form of indoor pollution is gaining attention of its own. That form is vapor intrusion, the migration of volatile chemicals from groundwater and soil into buildings above them.

There are four main sources of vapor intrusion: industrial sites, military sites, dry cleaners, and gas stations—all locations that produced or heavily used solvents, degreasers, and other volatile

chemicals, or that still do. Few experts feel comfortable estimating the scale of vapor intrusion in the United States. But Kelly Pennell, an engineering associate professor at the University of Kentucky Superfund Research Center, says, "Almost every urban environment we have has some kind of historical contamination associated with it." If volatile chemicals are present as contaminants, then vapor intrusion may be a concern.

"No one really knew [vapor intrusion] had the potential to have as many impacts as it does until the late 1990s and even into the 2000s," says Dave Folkes, a Colorado-based engineer and senior principal at Geosyntec Consultants. "There was a lot of fear, unknowns, uncertainty because it was very new science, and we really didn't know much about it. We were all running around trying to learn how to do things quickly." [Read More](#)

The salt farmers of India's Rann of Kutch marshes

Rann of Kutch, Gujarat - Rann of Kutch is a seasonal salt marsh located in the Thar desert just 10km from the Arabian Sea in India's Gujarat district. This is the land of the Agariya people, who have lived here for centuries, knowing only one means of livelihood - salt production.

From October to June, they work day in and day out under a fierce sun, harvesting up to 76 percent of the salt produced in India.

In the monsoon months, Rann of Kutch is submerged in sea water. As the water recedes from October, the Agariyas move in to set up square fields to grow the salt. They dig wells to pump out the briny groundwater and fill the fields where the natural evaporation process leaves behind white crystals.

In winter, the harvest season begins in the salt fields, which are now silvery white with raw salt. Braving a relentless 40 degrees during day time, which often dips to 4 degrees in the desert night, the Agariyas live for six to seven months in the shacks beside their salt flats. [Read More](#)

1,400 tonnes of hazardous ash illegally stored in Brisbane and Gympie

The ABC can reveal Sydney-based firm Coal Reuse, which has exclusive rights to resell coal waste from Stanwell's Tarong and Tarong North power stations near Nanango, has instead stored 1,400 tonnes of hazardous ash in industrial sheds on a property at Gympie and the Brisbane suburb of Pinkenba "for months".

The company has denied the allegations and said it was storing a safe form of the waste.

The contractor is facing a maximum of more than \$7 million in fines for breaches of its approval, for conducting an environmentally sensitive activity without an approval, and for the cost of the clean-up.

The company has been issued a warning by the Environment Department asking it to explain why it should not be fined. [Read More](#)

BHP Billiton faces £30bn compensation claim over Brazil dam disaster

The mining group BHP Billiton and its partner Vale are facing a 155bn reais (£30bn) claim from Brazilian prosecutors over an iron ore mine dam collapse last year that released a torrent of toxic mud, killing 19 people and leaving 700 homeless.

Shares in the London-listed BHP plunged almost 10% after the charges were revealed into what is being called Brazil's worst ever environmental disaster. They closed down nearly 6%.

The damages claim has been based on the clean-up costs of BP's Deepwater Horizon accident in the US, say federal prosecutors in Minas Gerais, south-east Brazil, where the two companies' joint mining venture, Samarco, is based.

"Preliminary studies show the human, economic and socio-environmental impacts of the collapse of the dam are, at least, equivalent to those verified in the Gulf of Mexico," they said. "It does not seem credible, neither technically nor morally, that the

value of the human, cultural and physical environment in Brazil should be worth less than other countries," they added in a statement. [Read More](#)

Bangladeshi child labourer 'tortured to death' at textile mill

Police in Bangladesh have arrested a spinning mill worker for allegedly torturing a nine-year-old boy to death with an air compressor, the second such claim in less than a year, officers said.

Sagar Barman, who worked at a textile mill in Rugganj town, just south of Dhaka, died of internal injuries in a hospital in the capital late on Sunday. His family alleges that eight workers were involved in forcing the compressor into the boy's rectum and turning on the machine.

The boy was one of millions of child labourers in impoverished Bangladesh, many of them employed in hazardous industries.

"We have arrested the mill's assistant administrative officer. We've also launched a hunt for others accused including three production managers who were named in the case," Rugganj police chief Ismail Hossain said.

Hours after the arrest, police also raided the mill, one of the country's largest, and rescued 27 child workers, many of them aged under 14, Hossain said.

"The children were returned to their families. There are some 4,000 workers in the factory," he said, adding that police suspected still more children were employed there. [Read More](#)

Kerala's textile store employees are struggling for their rights to sit down or take a leak

Every time you walk into a textile shop, they welcome you with a smile and tempt you to buy from the collection on display. But behind that smile could be a person who hasn't had a minute to sit down in hours or hasn't even been allowed to go to the bathroom.

In December 2013, five female salespersons at Kalyan Sarees in Thrissur had gone on strike demanding better working conditions. It was only after three months that the management acceded to all their demands and revoked their suspension.

Their demands were simple: the right to take toilet breaks, the right to sit and the guarantee that they are paid wages as per the 2009 Minimum Wages Notification Act, which amounted to Rs 7,415 per month.

In spite of this strike getting much attention, nothing much seems to have changed.

“A few things changed after the strike, but now we are back to the old situation. I reach home around 11 pm and by then my knees are aching severely. They continue to cut our salaries for small and silly reasons as a way to reprimand us,” says Fahima (name changed) who works in a store in Ernakulam. [Read More](#)

‘Doctors at frontline in occupational disease battle’

Jaipur: Earlier this month, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences at Jodhpur hosted a conference on occupational health. Given that there are over 5,300 patients of silicosis in the state, occupational health is a big concern in Rajasthan. Last year, silicosis was declared a notifiable disease, under laws pertaining to epidemics. One of the speakers at the seminar insisted that no amount of NGO action or government compensation can reverse the trend of the large numbers of people falling prey to occupational disease. Only when a proper diagnosis is made, and when people are informed of the prognosis once the condition is detected, can the battle against occupational disease be won, said Dr Murlidhar Venkateshwaran, who in the 1990s was actively involved in making the diagnosis of byssinosis among textile workers in Maharashtra.

Byssinosis is a lung disease that afflicts people who

work with cotton and yarn and are exposed to the dust of these for long periods, working as they do in poorly ventilated spaces.

Venkateshwaran told TOI that the trend was for doctors to conduct research and write for medical journals about occupational diseases. "However, often these are conditions that are incurable, and doctors sometimes think there is no purpose served in informing the patient. I think that is unethical. The worker must know the prognosis. He must know why he is falling sick." [Read More](#)

100,000 child workers in Sri Lanka

There are almost 100,000 child workers in Sri Lanka, with girls working mostly as domestic helper in towns and boys doing agricultural work in the villages.

Schooling is a distant dream for many children, the survey by the Labour and Trade Union Relations Ministry shows, with 13.9 per cent of the child labour population being aged five to 14 years – the period when school attendance is compulsory.

Child labourers in the rural sector (58.7 per cent) showed a preference to attend school compared to children in the urban (39.1 per cent) and estate (10.5 per cent) sectors. In the estate sector, nine out of every 10 children in child labour do not attend school (89.5 per cent).

Most – 70.3 per cent – of 107,259 children from 20,000 households surveyed last year were in the age group of five to 16 years, working in “elementary occupations” as “street vendors and mobile vendors, street services, domestic helpers, agricultural and related labour workers, labourers engaged in mining, construction, manufacturing, transport and related workers”.

Girls were mostly paid monthly while most boys were paid daily. [Read More](#)

ANROEV Secretariat

Environics Trust
Khasra Number 177, Neb Sarai, IGNOU Road,
New Delhi – 110068, India
Email – anroev@gmail.com
URL - www.anroev.org

