Special Session

[SS012]

Asbestos Problems in Asia

Topic: Elimination of Asbestos-related Diseases

Date: June 4 (Thu.)

Time: 16:00-17:30 Location: 318A



Description

Asian countries have become the leading producers and consumers of asbestos since turning of the century, and this trend has become ever stronger with decline of asbestos consumptions elsewhere in the world. As Asia is witnessing chances of rapid economic development by taking risks such that cheap labors are exposed to indiscriminate use of chemicals, increase in asbestos consumption in this region should be curtailed not to repeat the gruesome experience of industrial development of already developed countries. Here in this special session of asbestos problems in Asia, we are trying to shed Asian perspectives on this urgent problem based on Asian experiences. We believe that knowledge cannot be transferred in the classrooms but only be learned by facing the problems in the fields.



Programs

Chair: Paek, Domyung (*Republic of Korea*)

Responsible Person: Paek, Domyung (*Republic of Korea*)

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1	[SS-0528] Need for Appropriate technology to diagnose asbestos related diseases	Sanjiv Pandita Hong Kong	Abstract
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Need for Appropriate technology to diagnose asbestos related diseases

Sanjiv Pandita

Occupational Safety and Health, Asian Monitor Resource Center, Hong Kong

Many developing countries in Asia continue to consume asbestos despite its proven devastating impact on workers' and community health. In spite of the widespread usage in these countries, the reported cases of asbestos related sicknesses (like asbestosis and mesothelioma) are relatively low. One of the major reasons being the lack of proper diagnosis, leaving many possible cases undiagnosed and thus underreported. Moreover the science of diagnostic has made many strides and advanced technology and diagnostic equipment has improved diagnosis. However, it requires highly skilled and trained doctors with access to technology which is nearly absent at the ground level thus a big gap between the available science and reality at ground. In order to address the problem there is a providing an appropriate technology at the ground level remains a challenge. This paper will look into the gap between the science and applicability and how the challenge may be addressed to provide better diagnosis, treatment and thus justice to the victims of asbestos related diseases.

Asbestos problems in India, abandoned or neglected

Mohit Gupta

Secretary, Asian Network for the Rights of Occupational and Environmental Victims, New Delhi, India

India has banned the mining of asbestos but there is no restriction on the import of Asbestos fibres. Duty has been systematically reduced and more and more fibre is being imported in the country. Production of Asbestos fibre products mainly Cement pipes and roofs is increasing with the reason stated as the urgent need of the rural population. However, there is no consideration for the health and safety of the workers in the manufacturing facilities. Even the workers who used to work in the mines have been left in the lurch many of them sick with Asbestos related disorders. Even in the organized sector many workers have been diagnosed as suffering from these dilapidating diseases. Various studies undertaken by the government agencies have been flawed in the manner they have been conducted and the industry has been instrumental in affecting the final outcome of these studies. The government should urgently review the current situation in the country and ensure that the workers and general public health is not impacted.

Asbestos Issues after the Ban

Yeyong Choi

Asian Citizen's Center for Environment and Health, Seoul, Republic of Korea

In Korea, asbestos was banned partially from 2007 and completely from 2009. Asbestos issue is, however, one of the still hottest social agendas. Old but still active asbestos issues are construction materials at public and private buildings such as school and hospital. Especially asbestos slate roof is a very serious issue because at least 123 million residential houses use it, which is 18% of total buildings. Government's removal plan is so slow and little that it may takes 85 years to remove all. Massive city remodeling projects by central and local governments are major environmental asbestos exposure sources. There are two new asbestos issues in Korea. One is that hundreds of environmental asbestosis patients, has been diagnosed around closed asbestos mine areas which is one of environmental asbestos contamination hot spot. The other is Naturally Occurred Asbestos, NOA, issue. About 6.2% lands of South Korea is assessed as possible places of asbestos contamination naturally. 169 versus 1,461 are symbolic numbers for asbestos victims in Korea. 169 cases have been compensated as asbestos related occupational disease for 14 years since 2000 and 1,461 cases have been relived as environmental disease cases by the relief law. In fact, about 60% of environmental relief cases are occupational exposure cases. The level of environmental relief is only 10%~30% of occupational compensation. Thus industry and government pay quite small money for most asbestos worker victims in the name of environmental relief system, which is promoted as advanced policy by Korean government. Most old and new asbestos issues has been raised by civil groups that have focused on asbestos issue with environmental health perspective.

Government responsibility for the already known carcinogen, asbestos

Sugio Furuya

Japan Occupational Safety and Resource Center (JOSHRC), Japan

In last October Japanese Supreme Court ruled the government illegally failed to act for protecting workers from asbestos exposure in the past. This is the first time in Japan and maybe in the world. For a certain regulatory measure, this ruling said the actual timing of its introduction by the Ministry of Lavour was too late in the light of purpose and nature of deputed authority, judged as illegal under the State Redress Act and ordered the government to pay compensation for the plaintiffs. This judgment is for a case of asbestos product manufacturing plant and a measure of local exhaust ventilation system, and the acknowledged liable period and compensation fraction are limited. But there has been three district courts decisions holding the government liability for cases of construction workers and a measure of protective mask. All governments should review and reconsider their actions against asbestos from such viewpoint too.

Science and technology studys insights to asbestos in Asia

Yeonsil Kang

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Science and technology study (STS) is an interdisciplinary academic field to study how science and technology on the one hand, and politics, culture, and society on the other, interact with each other. One of the important questions of STS is about risks. Seeing risks as products of modernity, many case studies in STS highlight on politics and social conflicts regarding the production and resolution of risks. In this presentation, several case studies from STS on risk, health, and occupation and environment with topics ranging from silicosis, agricultural chemicals poisoning, sick building syndrome among office workers, and study of my own on asbestos in South Korea will be presented. These studies collectively argue that science of risk and technology of measurement are not value neutral and often provide fragmented pictures. Historical studies show numerically defined risks and threshold limit values (TLV) are loaded with technological limits, particular assumptions on body, environment, and disease, and political interests in power to control laborers' bodies. These studies from STS altogether provide an important insight to understand and solve asbestos problems in Asia that what science forgets to ask could be very important in understanding the nature of risks rampant in the modern society.