



Press Statement

Canada's Racist and Hateful Asbestos Policy

Delhi, India: December 6, 2011:

Plans to increase Canadian exports of deadly asbestos to India are an appalling travesty of all ethical codes of human behaviour. Are only light-skinned people entitled to breathe clean air and drink clean water are the questions being asked in light of news which emerged yesterday.

The Government of Prime Minister Stephan Harper, an avowed asbestos proponent, is working to end tariffs on asbestos exports to India through the Canada-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.¹

Canada's Chief Government negotiator for this deal has admitted that his team is striving to eliminate the current 10 per cent duty on Canada's asbestos exports to India. Reducing the duty would, unquestionably, lead to an increase in sales of Canadian asbestos to India.

Mohit Gupta, Coordinator of the Occupational and Environmental Health Network of India and an organiser of the November 2011 meeting of the Asian Ban Asbestos Network in Jaipur, said:

“India is Canada's best customer for chrysotile asbestos. It is outrageous that even as asbestos removal experts decontaminate government buildings, schools and hospitals throughout Canada due to the potential harm posed by asbestos exposure, Canadian asbestos producers are ever anxious to send more of this substance to India. Are not our lives worth the same as the lives of Canadian citizens. This intolerable behaviour is as immoral as it is reprehensible. The fact that Indian politicians would even consider such a concession is a sad indication of the price put by our elected representatives on the value of human life in our country.”

¹ <http://www.ndp.ca/press/harper-government-plans-to-increase-asbestos-exports-to-india>

Notes to editors:

1. The Occupational and Environmental Network of India (OEHNI) was formally proposed at World Social Forum in 2004 and was formed following the National Consultation meeting in 2006. OEHNI is a unique solidarity group, which works towards making Indian workplaces safe. OEHNI combines the OSH rights struggle in different regions of India into a single united struggle and demands better health and safety for the workers across the nation. Mohit Gupta (Coordinator) can be contacted via email – oehni.del@gmail.com.
2. The Asian Ban Asbestos Network was set up in 2009 to work towards achieving a regional ban on asbestos. A range of initiatives have been progressed including the 2010 ABAN mission to Canada, during which Asian asbestos victims, health and safety campaigners and trade unionists confronted the Canadian public with the reality of asbestos use in Asia. ²
- 3 More information on the work of the Asia Monitor Resource Centre and the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat can be accessed on their websites at: <http://www.amrc.org.hk/> and <http://www.ibasecretariat.org>

² http://ibasecretariat.org/quebec_mission_2010_arch_events.php