

Press Release

14/10/2010: New Delhi/Mumbai: Trade unions, occupational safety and health groups have strongly condemned the \$15 million (Rs 66.3 crores) bid by a consortium of Indian investors to buy 151 year old open-pit Jeffrey asbestos mine in Quebec, Canada. "It is unconscionable that Indian investors want to open up new asbestos mine that would export this deadly product to India and elsewhere," said Mohit Gupta, Coordinator of Occupational and Environmental Health Network of India. Some prominent Indian Asbestos Manufacturers are allegedly behind this bid.

Jeffrey mine in Quebec is one of the biggest asbestos mines in the world, which had been declared bankrupt over a decade ago. The current efforts are to revive the mines by tapping the underground deposits and extend its life by 25 years, which will cost up to \$73 million. The Quebec government has proposed to give \$58 million loan guarantee and the balance will be offered by the private investors. "Indian investors will own the mine outright if the bid is successful and the deadly asbestos from Jeffrey mines would be exported to Asia and other countries for decades to come", said Anup Srivastava of Building and Woodworkers' International.

The Quebec government's Workers Safety Commission sets the standard of Zero tolerance for exposure to any kind of asbestos fibre to protect people in Quebec from asbestos harm, but they have no qualms about exporting the harm and killing workers overseas.

"It's truly a double standard. The Quebec government is proposing to loan money to revive these death traps which the Canadian health authorities have called for a closure. The Indian companies are hoping to make profit from exporting asbestos disease and suffering to India and elsewhere", said Ravi Mohite, Secretary of Krantikari Kamgar Union, and a former asbestos worker with Mumbai based Hindustan Composites Ltd. Mohite is suffering from the deadly asbestos disease-Asbestosis.

Jeffrey mine had exported chrysotile asbestos for the past century to Europe, the US and other industrialized countries. Everywhere its asbestos was exported, it was followed by an epidemic of asbestos-related diseases. The industrialized countries to which it exported asbestos in the past have now banned it or refuse to use it. Consequently, the asbestos industry is targeting countries in Asia to export its asbestos.

Lobbyists for the asbestos industry claim that chrysotile asbestos can be safely used. All reputable health authorities, including the World Health Organisation, totally disagree. WHO claims that 90,000 people die annually across the world due to asbestos related diseases.

Press statement released by:

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