

## **Press Release**

Asian Ban Asbestos Network Meeting 2013

November 22-23

### **“Working towards a Complete Ban of Asbestos in Asia”**

A gathering of more than 80 eminent experts, labour activists, doctors, victims, trade unions, consumer groups and government representative took place in Dhaka during the annual meeting of the Asian Ban Asbestos Network (ABAN). Apart from sharing of experiences and strategies to ban asbestos from the region and globally, the Bangladesh Ban Asbestos Network will be launched at the close of this meeting. Mr. Sugio Furuya, Coordinator of the ABAN network stated that the network has spread to more than 14 Asian countries and aiming towards a complete ban of Asbestos in Asia. Asbestos is used widely in construction and as a heat resistant; it has been banned globally in more than 50 countries yet used widely in Asia.

Mr. Aminul Islam, deputy secretary, Ministry of Labour and Environment, in his opening remarks in the meeting, expressed the commitment of Bangladesh government to protect the health of workers and the community. He shared that government has already adopted new national OSH policy and will explore how asbestos issues can be accommodated in the national plan of action. He acknowledged the significance of this issue and sought recommendations from the assembled guests towards dealing with this issue.

Mr. Jung Ji Yol, an asbestosis victim from South Korea who has been involved in asbestos victims relief work actively with the Ban Asbestos Network Korea stated that “as a victim, the relief program of S. Korea has been helpful but has huge deficiencies and he wants to develop a wholesome solution towards the ban of asbestos by sharing experiences and ideas”.

Mr. Sanjiv Pandita, Executive Director of the labour rights NGO based in Hong Kong highlighted the damage asbestos has caused in many countries not only to workers health but also to the fabric of the society. He expressed that Bangladesh does not need to go through similar painful experiences and should ban asbestos completely.

Dr. Domyung Paek, an eminent medical practitioner from Seoul National University who has been an active member of the network from its inception stated that as Bangladesh has been in the limelight in the past year with factory fires and other safety issues. However for the long term sustainable development of the country, banning asbestos is a top priority step as it is achievable in a timely manner using minimal resources and with sound scientific basis.

Mr. Repon Chowdhury, Executive Director from the Occupational Health Safety and Environment Foundation who hosted the network meeting in Dhaka said that Bangladesh cannot close its eyes on asbestos issues. It is time to act and work with the concerned stakeholders to ban asbestos in

Bangladesh and to ensure safe and healthy workplaces, green communities and a ‘better Bangladesh’ in the public health domain.

The two day meeting will discuss and look at the steps to identify and control asbestos related diseases, safe removal of asbestos, organizing of victims and development of a regional action plan towards a complete ban of asbestos in Asia.

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