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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

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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.

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Feature

3 Years of Rana Plaza: Justice Remains Elusive

The Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation (OSHE) as part of its ongoing action towards ensuring social protection for the workplace accident victims and affected families organized a human chain and laid wreaths at the site of the Rana Plaza disaster on April 24th, 2016 to mark the 3rd anniversary of the disaster.

The Rana Plaza Accident Victims Rights Network convener Ohidul Alom along with more than 100 victims and family members paid tribute to their sisters and brothers who lost their lives or were injured in the tragedy.

A discussion meeting was organized in a hall overlooking the site to assess the present status of compensation and rehabilitation of the victims.

Network member Shafiqul Islam stated that the government should ensure that justice is delivered, laws are enforced and that the employers and erring officials will be held accountable. Victims should



receive just and fair compensation immediately while ensuring workplace safety to prevent future tragedies. Network member Akhi also demanded free treatment facilities (both short and long term), rehabilitation of the survivors, provision of alternate jobs, education of impacted children and most importantly establishment of a special tribunal for speedy delivery of justice.

Representatives from the Asia Monitor Resource Centre (AMRC) Sanjiv Pandita and Omana George from Hong Kong, Jagdish Patel from People's Training Research Centre (PTRC), India, Mohit Gupta, ANROEV coordinator, Executive Director of OSHE Foundation Repon Chowdhury and several

union leaders were present as special guests to express solidarity with the victims' rights network.



[Read More](#)

Asbestos free South Asia - If not now, then when?

The South Asia Strategic meeting on the ban of asbestos took place in Brac Inn in Dhaka on April 23, 2016. The strategic meeting brought together 20 advocates, activists, victims and trade unionists from Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Nepal who are working towards a ban of asbestos and was hosted by Bangladesh Ban Asbestos Network (B-

BAN), Asian Ban Asbestos Network (A-BAN) and Asia Monitor Resource Centre (AMRC). The global burden of disease estimate of asbestos related diseases in 2013 was 218,338 compared to 107,000 in 2004. The goal of the meeting is to have focused discussions on building strategies nationally with the sub-region and work on coordinated activities in South Asia in terms of diagnosis, compensation and advocacy working towards a ban in the region. Mr. Mahmood, a worker from the ship breaking yard in Chittagong aged 43 has worked in the yard for 17 years stated that he was not aware of the deadly nature of this carcinogenic substance. He handled asbestos with his bare hands and then used his hands without washing it to ingest food. Even his sputum had asbestos fibres. The asbestos fibres were found all over the worksite. He now suffers from chest pain, breathing problem, malaise and physical weakness. Mr. Sugio Furuya, coordinator of the Asian Ban Asbestos Network (A-BAN) stated that Nepal has banned asbestos in 2015 and Sri Lanka is working its way now towards a ban with a timeline in sight of 2018. In Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Ban Asbestos Network (B-BAN) since its inception in 2013 has been working on raising awareness, education, identifying affected workers and communities especially in Chittagong and B-BAN has the backing of the regional and global advocates for the complete ban of asbestos in Bangladesh.

The Indian state of Rajasthan has set up a Pneumoconiosis Board comprising of Government doctors to diagnose cases of occupational lung diseases and the identified workers have been paid compensation out of a Government managed fund. This is the only example in the region where consistent pressure exerted by grassroots organisations and victims have led to the formation of a government infrastructure for diagnosis and compensation. The meeting consolidated these developments which can be replicated and built upon in countries in the South Asian region.

Mr. Repon Chowdhury, National coordinator of B-BAN stated that 'now' is the time for collective action and pressurizing Governments in the sub region to ban asbestos following the example of Nepal. The Bangladesh government should

immediately come up with a national asbestos profile and a national plan of action to combat against asbestos related diseases delivering justice to the asbestos victims and national time-bound plan to the complete ban of asbestos in the country.



[Read More](#)

NTUF press conference and rally in Karachi, Pakistan

3rd anniversary of Rana Plaza (Bangladesh) - Karachi, April 24: Millions of textile and garments workers in Pakistan have been facing modern day slavery like conditions but the government is not taking any steps to improve their lot, said National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) leaders, addressing a press conference at the Karachi Press Club (KPC) here on Sunday.

They said that April 24 is the third anniversary of Rana Plaza Bangladesh tragedy. Three years ago on this day 1129 workers had died and 2515 others seriously injured when the building of Rana Plaza collapsed in Dhaka. A same tragedy had also happened in Karachi on 11th September 2011 in Ali Enterprises where 260 textile workers were burnt alive.

They said these tragic incidents show that the local and international labor laws are being deliberately and criminally violated in factories and mills, especially textile and garment factories. Regretfully, the government departments are also involved in this conspiracy. In Bangladesh, Pakistan and other countries millions of workers are engaged in textile and garment industry, but in these countries especially in Pakistan and

Bangladesh these workers are deprived of their basic rights guaranteed to them under the law and constitution. [Read More](#)



Updates from Partners

CEPHED, Nepal

Compliance Monitoring of Effective implementation of Asbestos Ban in Nepal

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 stopped the import but the remaining stocks from the previous import has been found to be marketed and still used in Nepal. We aimed effective implementation of the government decision with increased awareness and capacity of the people about the Asbestos and its health & environmental implications in Nepal.

This period is important for us as we have initiated the compliance monitoring of the effective implementation of the Asbestos banning decision of the government in one hand whereas carrying out the research and awareness program on asbestos in some 10 districts of Eastern and Central Nepal where there is great problem of asbestos were identified.

Additionally, increasing the engagement in the court case as well as increasingly engaging in research, awareness and monitoring by

implementing a project entitled "Research and Awareness Raising about Asbestos in Terai Region of Nepal" with the support of The Takagi Fund for Citizen Science, International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS) and Asian Asbestos Ban Network(ABAN).

ABAN Coordinator Mr Sugio Furuya travelled to Nepal in April 2016 to appraise the government officials about problems faced by the government after a ban and thing which are important and to be looked at carefully.

To read a detailed report on the activities of CEPHED [click here](#)

AMRC

A South Asian Sub Regional Strategic meeting on OSH was organised in Dhaka from April 21-22, 2016. Participants from Nepal, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka participated in the meeting while participants from Pakistan joined the meeting through Skype due to Visa issues. The meeting was organised on the eve of the Rana Plaza Anniversary to take stock of the current situation of the victims and their demands. The participants discussed the current developments in their countries including the advances made in India in terms of medical camps for diagnosis of victims in vulnerable communities and several achievements in litigation and compensation towards victims of occupational lung diseases. In Pakistan, as a result of the medical practitioners training, similar initiatives are being taken to identify victims of occupational lung diseases in remote areas where workers are involved in construction and stone crushing. In Bangladesh the victims' rights network of both Tazreen and Rana Plaza have been able to articulate and engaging with groups expressing their demands for compensation and rehabilitation.

The participants discussed and formulated an action plan including identification of OSH victims in among the Ship Breaking workers in Bangladesh & Pakistan, Brick Kiln workers in Nepal and Plantation workers in Sri Lanka. A campaign to increase compensation amount and bringing it at par with compensation in other countries is also proposed. As statistics has been a big stumbling

block, the participants also planned to build their own reliable data collection system to challenge the government.



OSHE, Bangladesh

An evaluation meeting on “Making New Hope”

An evaluation meeting held with beneficiaries of OSHE education support program in OSHE Foundation on last 23 January, 2016. There were 6 beneficiaries along with their guardians and executive director of OSHE A R Chowdhury Repon presented the meeting. Tazreen Fashions Accident victim Zarina Begum's daughter Sabina Yeasmin successfully promoted play to class one from Nishchintapur Model School. On the other hand, Shimu is studying now in class eight at Fulkucha Ali Azam High School in Melandaha, Jamalpur and she is now five in merit list. At present Mousumi attain first position of her class and promoted successfully in class six from Bachamara Govt. Primary School.



Health camp for waste pickers

Organized a health camp with the aims to provide basic health care services, awareness about

occupational health & safety, hygiene and ensure health services at the door steps of the waste pickers in 05 February, 2016 at OSHE Training and Welfare centre (OTWC), Matuail, Jatrabari. Dr. S M Morshed, ViceChairperson of OSHE inaugurated the health camp. OSHE provided free medical treatments, consultation and medicines to improve the workplace by personal health and safety practices of the informal waste pickers. A number of 30 waste pickers received this service claiming pain of backbone, chest, waist and shoulder pain, vomiting, fever and headache, loss of appetite, glaucoma and burning sensation of eyes etc.



Health Camps for Ship Breaking Workers

Organized 4 nos. in-door health camps with the aims to provide basic health care services, awareness about occupational health & safety, hygiene and ensure health services at the door steps of the workers. The health camps held on January 15 and February 05, 12, 19 at OSHE Training and Welfare Centre, Vatiary, Sitakunda, Chittagong. Dr. Tapan Kumar Nath, General Health practitioner of OSHE provided health care to the ship breaking workers. The total of 65 workers received the treatment. As per the prescription, free medicines were distributed among the beneficiaries.

SHARPS

The Seoul Administrative Court sentenced that the Government should acknowledge the work-relatedness of an ovarian cancer victim from Samsung semiconductor factory! This is the first

acknowledged occupational ovarian cancer in this industry in Korea.

Also the Court decision has great interpretation of current situation lack of knowledge on the association between specific chemicals and specific cancer, pointing the burden of proof should not be used against worker.

PTRC

28 April, IWMD observed at Khambhat by PTRC and Silicosis Victims



Cividep

The Workers' Resource Centre at Sriperumbudur hosted a Focus Group Discussion with current and former workers from Foxconn in Sriperumbudur, on Sunday, 20 th of March, 2016. The purpose of the programme was to gain an understanding of the working conditions at Foxconn's last remaining facility in Sriperumbudur, along with how life had changed for former worker's at Foxconn's factory

unit in the Nokia SEZ, which shut down in December, 2014. The Focus Group discussion was also intended to be useful for an analysis of Foxconn's plans for expansion in India, by putting it in the context of its experience in Tamil Nadu. Eight male workers attended the program, out of which one worker was currently working at Foxconn, and the rest were former workers at the Nokia SEZ unit.

Foxconn's current facility in Sunguvachatram only has around 100 workers, including those in the management. There are no women workers. CITU is the union in the factory. Workers from the erstwhile Foxconn have gotten a settlement amount. However, the settlement amount was not enough for them to start a business or any other way of earning a livelihood.



When workers approach other companies, they face the hurdle of both having worked for Foxconn (which is perceived as a factory where union activity prevalent) and also being older than 25, which is the age limit for jobs in factories in the area. Their experience at Foxconn works against their favour in acquiring new jobs. Even those who managed to find employment are working at very low-paying jobs.

JOSHRC - Victory of Japanese construction workers

On 22-1-2016 asbestos victims and their families among construction workers won against the government at Osaka district court in Japan. This was third victory following Tokyo and Fukuoka district courts. Among other things the judgement said that the government should have prohibited

all kind of asbestos including chrysotile at latest in 1995. View Judgement on Youtube – [Link1](#), [Link2](#)

On 29-1-2016 Japanese construction workers won again against the government (fourth time) but not including the timing of ban for this time) and against major manufacturers of asbestos containing construction materials (for the first time) at Kyoto District Court. View Judgement on Youtube – [Link1](#), [Link2](#)

On 2-2-16 the plaintiffs and 1,000 construction workers gathered in front of the Nichias Corporation which is a former most leading asbestos company of Japan. The workers then divided into 10 groups and visited another 10 companies which are all defendants of asbestos litigation. Some of these companies include Nichias which have shamefully refused to meet representatives of victims. To view pictures [visit](#)

To read report in newspaper [Read More](#)

March 27 was 10th anniversary of the Asbestos Victims Relief Act for asbestos victims and their families not covered by workers compensation schemes and for achieving relief for ALL asbestos victims without omission. The number of receivers of benefits from this has exceeded 10,000 in addition to another more than 10,000 receivers of benefits from workers compensation insurance act.

The Ministry of the Environment will set up asbestos sub-committee under the Central Environment Council to review the relief act soon and Mrs. Kazuko FURUKAWA President of national victims' network will become its member.

IOHSAD

MEDIA RELEASE - Kentex tragedy's 10th month marked with calls for justice, workplace safety

13 March 2016 - Marking the 10th month of the Kentex fire tragedy, workplace safety NGO Institute for Occupational Health and Safety Development (IOHSAD) held a forum in front of the factory this morning and together with the survivors and victims' families called for justice and for safer workplaces.

"We remember the 72 workers who lost their lives due to grave violations of safety standards committed by the Kentex owners and the government's neglect of its responsibility to uphold workers' basic right to safe workplaces," said Nadia De Leon, IOHSAD advocacy officer.

The group tied white ribbons containing the names of the 72 workers who died and placed flowers in front of the factory's gate.

"It has been 10 months since the tragedy but the owners of Kentex and government officials responsible for the workers' deaths have not been held accountable. We also haven't heard any updates on Pres. Aquino's promise to immediately inspect the 300,000 business establishments in the National Capital Region. The government should not wait for another workplace tragedy to happen before it acts on workplace safety issues," said De Leon.

She also urged politicians running for the Senate and Congress to express their support for House Bill 6397 which was passed after the third reading in the 16th Congress.

The bill seeks to legalize stiff punishments for companies that commit occupational health and safety standards violations, especially those that cause injuries or death to workers. It also requires the Department of Labor and Employment to carry out mandatory inspection of employers' compliance with occupational health and safety standards.





Worker's Initiative, India – Four RMG workers died in fire accident at West Bengal

Late at night on 20 April 2016, there was a fire accident at Readymade Garment Manufacturing Work Shop at Maheshtalla, 24 Parganas (South) near Kolkata city of West Bengal. Four young

workers died and a number of the workers were seriously injured.

The workshop has no name or signboard bearing the name of the factory outside and it has been intentionally removed after the accident. Upon further investigation, it was established that the name of the factory was “Minimax Garments” which produces 40,000 Jeans every week and supply the finished garments to Bangladesh. Immediately after the accident the employer of workshop sent the remains of the dead workers to North Bengal to a place called Shiliguri where the workers hail from.

There was no safety equipment available for the workshops in this deathtrap of a workplace where the deceased four workers were sleeping were locked from the outside.

April 20 was a Wednesday and is the day when workers of this workplace have their weekly day off otherwise many more workers would have died.

A fact finding team of Worker's Initiative – Kolkata visited the site and tried to contact the workers, but the police were vigilant and that served as a deterrent for workers to communicate. Workers were scared and were not in a position to speak, it was revealed that both employer and the police warned the workers not to disclose anything to anybody. Upon investigation it was established that about 100 workers are working at the workplace were from Siliguri Dist of North Bengal. Worker's Initiative – Kolkata has decided to publish a pamphlet over the incident particularly about Health and Safety issues at the workplace and extend its solidarity to the workers.

NTUF - Pakistan 1st May rally in Karachi

Labor Day rally demands doling out justice to workers

Karachi, May 01: A big rally of workers staged here on the occasion of the International Workers' Day here Sunday demanded doling out justice to labors, observing that the working condition in many factories and workplaces in Pakistan are even worse than the factories of the nineteenth century.

According to details, on the occasion of the Labor Day, National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) and Home-based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF) staged a big rally in Karachi that marched from the Empress Market to the Karachi Press Club (KPC). It was led by NTUF President Muhammad Rafiq Baloch and HBWWF general secretary Zahra Khan. A large number of workers including women workers belonging to different industries, carrying red flags and banners, participated in the rally. They raised slogans in favor of their demands, displaying placards inscribed with their demands and rich tributes to the martyrs of the Labor Day. Reaching the KPC, the rally turned into a big procession of labors.

Addressing on the occasion, the speakers said despite passing of 130 years to the martyrdom of the workers of Chicago, the capitalists have not changed their anti-labor attitude. The working conditions in factories, industries and workplaces today are far worse than the working conditions in the nineteenth century. To get rid of this situation the only solution is the victory of labor over capital and for this the workers of whole world are giving birth to a new brave resistance movement. Today the workers of Pakistan pledge that they would organize their struggle to get the country rid of the brutal dominance of industrialists and feudal lords, and establishing a government of workers in the country.

NTUF deputy general secretary Nasir Mansoor said today we are observing the Labor Day in such a conditions where the ruling class has proved that it is the main enemy of working class and this animosity runs into its bloodstream. In Pakistan the working class has remained deprived of their legal and constitutional rights in every government: democratic and dictatorial. From the right of making unions at workplace, minimum wages, fixed working hours, health and safety and decent wages to the fundamental rights like social security, everything is being violated by the rulers. When the workers raise voice for these rights they are declared terrorists. The lives of workers especially women workers in farms, factories and workplaces have been made bitter as they toil as forced labor in these sweat shops. However, the state

organizations including labor-related departments, courts, police, administration and assemblies have not only been playing the role of silent spectator but also covertly supporting these crimes.

NTUF president Muhammad Rafiq Baloch said the rights of labor class have been virtually omitted from the agenda of all political and religious parties. These parties only remember the working class when they need manpower for their rallies and processions. These anti-worker forces have divided labors on religious, sectarian and ethnic lines to control democracy. To make this controlled democracy a real democracy the workers would have to struggle themselves; otherwise, the opportunist and dictatorial forces would push the country towards more darkness. These anti-workers forces with the assistance of international capitalism have occupied the national resources and put the independence of the region at the stake.

HBWWF general secretary Zahra Khan said whole country is put in the fire of religious extremism. The biggest city of workers, Karachi, has been given to ethnic terrorists, land mafia and fanatic elements, who enjoy full patronage of industrial, financial and trade capital. This conspiracy has dealt a fatal blow to the pro-workers traditions of this city. Not only the cities and towns but rural areas also have been handed over to the feudal lords, where they have got a free hand to play with lives and honor of Haris. In the name of privatization, vital sectors of education, healthcare and public transport have been handed over to profit-hungry capitalists and businessmen who have hit hard the whole society. This has resulted in a sharp rise in tariffs of electricity, gas and water and pushing the basic facilities of education, healthcare and public transport out of the reach of common man. There are about 60million workers in Pakistan and out of them 80percent belong to informal sector, majority of them home-based women workers who have even no identity as a worker under the land of land.

The speakers said now time is ripe that working class should enliven the traditions of the workers of Chicago and organize them as an alternative political force. Different movements of workers and

peasants have already been showing this spirit. The struggle and movements of farmers of Okara, workers of PIA, heirs of Ali Enterprises fire martyrs, home-based women workers, Haris, and power loom workers of Faisalabad are some of the shining examples in this regard. It is hoped that this movement of workers would get more power and organize itself also on political front and establish a labor government in Pakistan by eliminating dominance of imperialism, capitalism and feudal lords.



The rally demanded that:

- The minimum wages should be fixed at Rs25000 per month.
- All workers should be issued written appointment letters at the time of their recruitment.
- Health and safety at workplaces should be ensured.
- Labor inspection system for factories and industries should be revived.
- All workers should be registered with social security, old age benefits and their social welfare institutions.
- Eight hours a day working hours should be implemented.
- In all institutions including Karachi shipyard the right of making labor unions should be accepted.
- The policy of privatization should be ended immediately.
- Contract system including third party system should be abolished.

- All temporary and contract workers of government, public and private sector should be regularized.
- All labor and human rights promised under the GSP+ should be implemented and solid steps taken to implement labor laws and agriculture workers.
- Minimum pension should not be less than minimum wages.
- Sindh government should announce and implements the home-based workers policy without further loss of time.
- The demands of the affectees of Baldia factory fire should be accepted.
- Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, chief minister Sindh Syed Qaim Ali Shah and Malik Riaz of Baharia Town should fulfill their promises with the affectees of Baldia factory fire.
- The right of ownership on land of Okara farmers should be accepted.
- The government should announce the shipbreaking policy.
- The lives of mine workers should be saved by bettering safety measures.
- The demands of power loom workers should be accepted.
- The illegal occupation of land mafia on 4008 flats of workers in Gulshan e Maymar and Northern Bypass should be ended and these flats should be handed over to workers.
- Emergency based steps should be taken to provide facilities of water, electricity, gas and other social amenities in the localities of workers.

Those spoke included NTUF president Muhammad Rafiq Baloch, deputy general secretary Nasir Mansoor, HBWWF general secretary Zahra Khan, NTUF Sindh chapter president Gul Rahman, HBWWF leaders Saira Feroze and Shabnam Azam and Democratic Students Federation (DSF) leaders Waqas and Saqib Dombki.

NTUF seminar in Karachi on safety and health on 28April



Campaigns and Support

No More lead in paint

Sign Petition against lead in paint – [Click Here](#)

Stop Killing Innocent babies and Pregnant Women

In Korea, since 1990s, many families have used humidifiers at home and office, especially during dry winter seasons. Since 1994, the first humidifier disinfectant was marketed to humidifier users to be added into the water tank. A survey in 2011 indicated that more than 8 million out of 50 million Koreans have used around 200,000 different humidifier disinfectant products. The victims are visiting London and Copenhagen to confront Reckitt Benckiser during their Annual General Meeting. To Sign a petition asking RB to apologise, compensate victims and remove all harmful products – [Click here](#)

Amadiba under attack

For 10 years, Amadiba communities in the Eastern Cape have been fighting against a company trying to mine titanium in their area. Last week, the community leader was assassinated.

This attack can't be ignored. It's hard to believe that a campaigner has been murdered for standing up against this international mining giant. Other members of the community who have been standing together to protect their area are fearful for their lives.

A woman from the community said: "My tears won't fall on the ground for nothing. You can bring

your machine guns. I am prepared to die for my land, I am not going anywhere."

The MRC mining company is known to abuse human rights. They've been trying to mine this land for more than a decade. The community has used people power to block this international company. Now let's use people power to stand with the community. To Sign Petition [click here](#)

Upcoming Events

- South East Asia Sub Regional strategic Meeting on OSH June 2016, Bangkok
- 14th EWHN conference in May 27-29, 2016 Rotterdam
- 27th National Hazard Conference, July 29-31 2016, Keele University, Stoke-on Trent, Staffordshire.
- Kentex Fire Anniversary Memorial events May 2016

Tributes

Shyamu Luniya aged 50 years died due to Silicosis on 8-2-2016 in Panna, Madhya Pradesh



Articles of Interest

International Workers Memorial Day 2016

ITUC/Hazards 2016 posters

Spanish



French



English



For more details [Visit](#)

View the map of events across the world [visit](#)

International Workers Memorial Day 2016

On April 28, 2016, the Hartlepool Trades Union Council joined with other labor federations, trade unions and campaigning groups around the world to commemorate International Workers Memorial Day (IWMD). Despite a cold wind blowing in off the North Sea, the day's activities were informative, productive and reinvigorating. In the years that IWMD has been observed in Hartlepool, this was judged to be the best one ever. That this is the case

was down to the efforts of Edwin Jeffries, President of the Hartlepool Trades Union Council (HTUC), his union colleagues and their civil society partners.

With wreath laying ceremonies for students and the public, a health and safety seminar, a dedication service at Christchurch, the premiere of a film for IWMD 2016 and a buffet lunch, participants had a multitude of opportunities to learn and interact with the experts and each other.

The theme for IWMD 2016 was “Strong Laws - Strong Enforcement - Strong Unions,” a subject which was addressed by Professor Andrew Watterson in his presentation entitled: “The degradation of workplace health and safety in the UK and what can be done through strong agencies, strong laws, strong enforcement and the role of the trade unions.” Watterson condemned the “abysmal leadership” of the Health and Safety Executive and highlighted the advantages of the Scandinavian model which showed that good health and safety policies produced not only healthier workers but also higher profits. By Laurie Kazan-Allen [Read More](#)

PPG Industries will phase out lead from all paints by 2020

PPG Industries on Thursday said it will phase out lead from all of its paints by 2020.

Michael McGarry, president and chief executive of the Downtown-based coatings and glass company, told shareholders at the company's annual meeting that PPG's sustainability committee adopted the new policy to reduce and eventually eliminate lead from industrial paints used for automobiles, heavy equipment, bridges, airplanes and other applications.

Exposure to lead-based paint is known to cause severe health issues in children and adults, including damage to body organs, behavioral problems, and impairments to mental and physical development.

In a statement, PPG said it has complied with U.S. regulations that limit lead in consumer paints since the rules were introduced in 1978.

In a new corporate sustainability report published Thursday on its corporate website, PPG said lead is not used in any of its consumer paints worldwide.

During the annual meeting at the Fairmont Hotel, Downtown, Perry Gottesfeld, executive director of a San Francisco, Calif.-based activist organization, Occupational Knowledge International, asked the company to stop making and distributing lead paint in any coatings it produces. He presented a petition signed by more than 5,700 people.

The same petition was delivered to coatings giant Sherwin-Williams on Wednesday at its annual shareholders meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, where a small group of protesters showed up outside to pressure the company.

Sherwin-Williams told The Plain Dealer newspaper that protesters were misleading the public and that it does not produce lead-based paint for residential use. April 21, 2016 11:12 PM [Read More](#)

Why We Need a Minimum Wage Law: A Comic Book

The right to a living wage is a core demand of the labour movement, and a strong minimum wage law is an expression of worker solidarity across employment sector, region, ethnicity, caste, and gender. There is still a long way to go in the struggle for a just minimum wage in India, but the Minimum Wages Act of 1948 provides a natural starting point for understanding the fight. Thozhilalar Koodam presents a comic on the Minimum Wages Act: how it is used, abused, and how it can better serve the interests of the working class. [Read More](#)

Fear of N.G.O.s, in Beijing and Beyond

The law that China passed on Thursday imposing stern controls on foreign nongovernmental organizations is deplorable but, sadly, not surprising. Illiberal and authoritarian governments are inherently allergic to civil society and, more broadly, to any institutions they don't control.

The law, which goes into effect next January, requires that foreign groups find an official Chinese

sponsor and register with the police. More than 7,000 such groups would have to comply, according to Chinese news reports, and their operations and finances would be subject to police examination and office searches at any time.

Recent years have witnessed what the Carnegie Endowment terms a "viral-like spread of new laws" around the world designed to limit or shut down the activities of nongovernmental organizations that promote human rights, democracy, the environment, education and other causes. China had plenty of examples of such laws to study, most notably Russia's noxious law requiring groups that get any foreign money to register as "foreign agents," a term that in Russia is taken to mean "spies."

Like the other governments that have imposed such crackdowns, the Chinese government claimed its foreign organizations "management" law was an effort to protect friendly organizations while curbing political or religious activities that damage China's "national interests" or "ethnic unity." In the context of President Xi Jinping's continuing efforts to tighten control over Chinese society and suppress criticism of Communist Party rule, that could mean just about anything that is not state approved or state sponsored. APRIL 30, 2016 [Read More](#)

Video: Organizing for Change: Workers in the Informal Economy

The majority of non-agricultural workers in most regions of the developing world work in the informal economy. When agriculture is added to that, the percentages are even higher. Importantly, in many countries, a higher percentage of women workers than men are engaged in the informal economy.

Yet despite their numbers, the contributions of informal workers to cities, communities, and the economy as a whole are not well recognized.

Organizing gives the poorest segments of the working class – those working in the informal economy, especially women – a way to be heard by the decision makers who can affect their lives.

Informal workers are coming together to amplify their visibility, voice and power, and local organizations are uniting into federations and networks nationally, regionally and globally. [Read More](#)

Climate Litigation in India: gaining traction?

The recently concluded negotiations at the Paris COP and the Paris Agreement emerging out of it underscore the importance for all countries to undertake meaningful national climate action. But like many other countries, India is much more likely to pursue effective climate action if there are compelling domestic drivers at play.

Environmental regulation is one such driver. India does not have a comprehensive legislation on climate change, but there are other legislations that speak to different aspects of climate change – impacts and causes. These laws could potentially provide triggers for climate action. Unfortunately, the experience with other environmental issues shows that enactment of a legislative instrument is not an adequate response, given enforcement is weak or non-existent. The Indian judiciary has often stepped in to compel executive action. In this context, it is worth examining the prospects for climate litigation in Indian courts. The prospects are *not too bad, and hopefully getting better*.

Over the last three decades, environmental governance in India has been shaped and reformed by the courts. Most issues of environmental concern in the country have made it to our courts – wildlife protection, forest conservation, industrial and vehicular pollution, waste management, processes for regulatory approvals, etc. The Indian judiciary has recognised (otherwise unenumerated) environmental rights, significantly influenced (and occasionally dictated) policymaking, and closely monitored the implementation of its orders. This judicial activity is possible, in part, because the higher judiciary in India enjoys extensive powers under its constitutional writ jurisdiction: powers it has exercised innovatively and expansively in rights-based environmental litigation. It is therefore not surprising that Indian courts in their well-

intentioned enthusiasm to address environmental problems have been referring to ‘climate change’ and ‘global warming’ much before the issue gained the national and international salience it enjoys now. But these were mostly limited rhetorical references and climate concerns have not been determinative of final judicial outcomes. 1-15-2016, Author Shibani Ghosh [Read More](#)

Chinese labour activist He Xiaobo released on bail

One of China’s most prominent labour activists has been released on bail more than four months after being seized by police outside his home in a region known as the “factory of the world”. He Xiaobo, a 42-year-old former migrant worker, was known for campaigning on behalf of workers who had been injured or maimed while working in the manufacturing heartlands of Guangdong province.

Until his detention he had run a group called the Nanfeiyan Social Work Service Centre in the southern city of Foshan, where he lived with his wife, Yang Min, and baby daughter. On 3 December, he was taken into custody during what activists called an unprecedented government attack on China’s labour movement.

On Friday, the activist announced his conditional release by way of a brief audio message posted online by the advocacy group China Labour Bulletin. “Hello everyone. This is He Xiaobo. I have just arrived home. Thanks to you all for paying attention to me. Thanks for your help. I hope one day we can all meet so I can thank you all in person,” he said. Yang, who has been living under police surveillance since her husband was taken, confirmed his release but declined to discuss the situation further. He’s lawyer, Shang Manqing, said it was not clear what would happen to his client after his release but said he had instructed the activist to keep a low profile.

He is facing accusations of embezzlement, charges supporters believe were concocted by authorities in order to silence the activist. Campaigners believe the police clampdown against labour activists such as He is designed to crush workers’ dissent at a

time of growing unrest caused in part by the slowing economy. [Read More](#)

Allegations of arbitrary and abusive force against women protesters must be investigated

Karnataka state authorities must conduct a prompt, impartial and independent investigation into allegations of arbitrary and abusive use of police force during protests by garment workers in Bengaluru, Amnesty International India said today. Women garment workers who took part in peaceful protests must be protected against reprisal attacks.

On 18 and 19 April, thousands of garment workers in Bengaluru took to the streets to protest recent revisions in the central government's employee savings policies. Garment workers blockaded highways leading to Electronic City and the Peenya Industrial Area. Some of the protests turned violent. Protesters threw stones at private vehicles and offices, attacked a police station in Hebbagodi, and set public buses on fire. Police officials used baton-charges and teargas to disperse protesters on both days. Scores of protesters and police officials have been injured.

"The police have a right to defend themselves and a duty to protect lives and safety. But this role must be carried out with respect for the constitutionally guaranteed rights to freedom of expression and assembly," said Gopika Bashi, Women's Rights Campaigner at Amnesty International India. "The police must only use force which is strictly necessary and to the extent required. They must always distinguish between individuals using violence and peaceful protesters."

"A peaceful protest is a legitimate use of public space."

Amnesty International India spoke to 18 women garment workers who all said they saw the police beating and abusing peaceful protesters. One woman garment worker who took part in a protest in Peenya on Tuesday said, "The police used their batons to poke us in our private parts. One of them said, 'You whore, what problem do you have with working in a garment factory?'"

Another garment worker who took part in the same protest said, "I was beaten with a baton on my thighs. There is a blood clot there. They beat us however they wanted to, trying to make way for the traffic."

Journalists covering the demonstrations said that the police did not differentiate between peaceful and violent protesters. A journalist with a prominent English newspaper who covered a protest in Jalahalli told Amnesty International India, "It was an undeclared baton-charge. There was no considerate treatment for women."

Journalists themselves were also beaten. A photo-journalist with an English newspaper who was reporting on a protest in Bommanahalli on Monday said, "I was taking pictures when the police was baton-charging the women protesters. One of them asked me not to take pictures, after which I got five hits on my left thigh. They took my camera, broke my lens, and tried to take the memory card."

Police officials have claimed that the violence was justified. The Additional Commissioner of Police, Bengaluru East, said, "My force has behaved with concern for the workers. Our major concern was to protect the women. We never resorted to baton charge against any peaceful protesters." Media reports quoted the Chief Minister of Karnataka as saying that there had been no failure on the part of the Bangalore police. The police have arrested over 100 people, most of them men who are not garment workers.

"Women garment workers may be hesitant to speak out about the violence that they faced, as they are afraid of being targeted in the future. They have to go back to work in the same factories where they are currently employed. The government therefore needs to investigate these allegations in a sensitive manner," said Gopika Bashi.

"All incidents of violence and vandalism should also be effectively investigated, and those suspected of human rights abuses prosecuted." AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL INDIA 22 April 2016 Bengaluru

Activists Celebrate as Unilever Settles with Kodaikanal Workers

9 March, 2016 -- The settlement between Hindustan Unilever and 591 former mercury workers from its thermometer factory in Kodaikanal is an unprecedented victory and a fitting culmination of the 15-year campaign by workers and the hundreds of thousands of supporters worldwide, said campaign organisations The Other Media, Chennai Solidarity Group and Jhatkaa.org.

According to activists, it is public outrage, not corporate responsibility that prompted Unilever to do what it had refused to do for 15 years. Millions of people shared the viral music video Kodaikanal Won't, and more than 150,000 people in over 100 countries petitioned and tweeted to hold Unilever CEO Paul Polman accountable.

"The much-delayed settlement is great news, but Unilever still has unfinished business in Kodaikanal. You can expect a high-decibel global campaign in the coming months to ensure that Unilever cleans up its mercury contaminated site in Kodaikanal to international standards," said Nityanand Jayaraman, a Chennai-based writer and activist who has been part of the campaign since 2001. Unilever is insisting on leaving up to 25 milligrams/kg of mercury in soil – 250 times higher than naturally occurring background levels -- even after clean-up. According to activists, that is far laxer than global standards and will harm the environment. The factory is located on a ridge surrounded by the densely forested Kodaikanal Wildlife Sanctuary.

In the United Kingdom, where Unilever is headquartered, even residential standard for mercury in soil is 1 mg/kg – 25 times stricter than what Unilever is proposing for an eco-sensitive area in India. "With its refusal to clean up Kodaikanal as it would a site in the United Kingdom, Unilever is begging for another global campaign, and we are happy to oblige," said Shweta Narayan, an activist with The Other Media. Campaign organisations have declared that they will build pressure on Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board and Unilever to

commit to a world class clean-up in the lead up to the state Assembly elections in May 2016 and Unilever's Annual Shareholders Meetings in England, the Netherlands and Mumbai in the coming months.

"People power works. That's the key lesson we're drawing from today's big announcement. We'll continue to lift up the hundreds of thousands of voices who have joined this campaign since last July to ensure that Unilever now cleans up its mercury mess in Kodaikanal," said Rachita Taneja of public mobilisation group Jhatkaa.org. Jhatkaa.org was one of the coordinators of the successful social media campaign that broke the media silence surrounding Unilever's pollution in Kodaikanal. Additionally, concerted actions by corporate accountability group SumOfUs in the United States and 38 Degrees in the United Kingdom helped draw in more international support and build pressure on Unilever.

A mercury thermometer factory operated by Hindustan Unilever in the South Indian hilltown of Kodaikanal was shut down by state regulators in 2001 after the company was caught for dumping toxic mercury wastes in a densely populated part of town. By the company's own admissions, more than 2 tonnes of mercury have been discharged into Kodaikanal's environment. A 2011 Government of India study on workers' health concluded that many workers suffered from illnesses caused by workplace exposure to mercury. <http://kodaimercury.org/final-report-of-the-goi-committee/>

For more information, visit: kodaimercury.org

South Korean Administrative Court Seen Misjudging the Impact of Carcinogens Used At Samsung

South Korea's administrative court has rejected at least two separate appeals filed for workers' compensation by victims of Samsung's blood-disorder cluster by dismissing the causal link between a widely recognized cancer-causing chemical and two former workers of Samsung

Electronics Co., Ltd., said a researcher in a recent study published in an academic journal.

Group 1 Carcinogen

The two workers who suffered from leukemia and malignant lymphoma had used trichloroethylene on their jobs at Samsung's chip labs. In 2012, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, a cancer risk research arm of the World Health Organization, upgraded the carcinogenic-risk level of the chemical to Group 1 from Group 2.

Ill-informed or Negligent

However, after the upgrade by the agency that practically wrote the global rules of cancer risks, the court dismissed the appeals, citing the old risk level, Group 2, Kim Jongyoung, a sociologist with Kyung Hee University in Seoul, in his paper, "The SHARPS Movement And The Political Economy of Workers' Health" published in the spring 2016 issue of *The Economy and Society*. Prof. Kim did not further elaborate whether the court was ill-informed regarding the update or just negligent. April 1, 2016 by stopsamsung [Read More](#)

Overhead hazard

Mar 20, 2016- Asbestos is a mineral fibre that occurs in rock and soil. Although asbestos fibres are tiny in nature, they are extremely durable, resistant to heat, fire, chemical reactions, electricity and breakdowns. It has become the material of choice for roofing

shingles, floor tiles, ceiling materials, cement compounds, textile products and automotive parts. However, all forms of asbestos are carcinogenic. It has been increasingly imported, sold, distributed and used in Nepal, especially in the Tarai region which is home to 51 percent of the population. Asbestos used as roofing material in houses and schools has become a growing cancer risk in the Tarai.

The reason behind the growing use of asbestos in the Tarai is misleading advertising. People were told that asbestos is the best construction material, is easy to fix, provides warmth in the winter and

remains cool in the summer. Asbestos is being freely imported, marketed, promoted and used in Nepal despite being legally banned since June 20, 2015. All types of asbestos cause lung cancer, mesothelioma, cancer of the larynx and ovary and asbestosis (fibrosis of the lungs). Exposure to asbestos occurs through inhalation of fibres in the air in the working environment, ambient air in the vicinity of point sources such as factories handling asbestos or indoor air in housing and buildings containing friable (crumbly) asbestos materials.

Currently, about 125 million people in the world are exposed to asbestos at the workplace. In 2004, asbestos-related lung cancer, mesothelioma and asbestosis from occupational exposures resulted in 107,000 deaths and 1,523,000 disability adjusted life years, according to the World Health Organisation. Asbestos is classified as a known human carcinogen. Asbestos fibres are microscopic and, therefore, are easily inhaled. Once inhaled, the fibres stick to the respiratory system, including the lining of the lungs and inner cavity tissue. As asbestos fibres are typically quite rigid, they become lodged in the soft internal tissue of the respiratory system, and are not easily expelled or broken down by the body. Over time, these fibres can accumulate and cause scarring and inflammation, which can affect breathing and lead to serious health problems. [Read More](#)

Adult and underage workers risk their lives in Bangladesh's rising ship-breaking industry

In late November, a 52,000-ton barge eased into this ramshackle port on the Bay of Bengal and came to rest on a wide, muddy beach.

After nearly four decades crisscrossing the oceans for an American offshore engineering company, the DB-101 did not come to erect another oil rig or lay miles of undersea pipe. It came here to die.

For scores of large commercial vessels that reach the end of their seagoing lives each year, the final port of call is Chittagong in southern Bangladesh, home to the world's largest — and least regulated — ship-breaking industry. Dead tankers, cruise

liners, cargo ships and fishing trawlers from around the world molder in the hazy sunshine along a 10-mile stretch of beach. Thousands of laborers, many wearing plastic sandals and street clothes, use blowtorches to cut through the steel and then crank rust-ridden winches to haul the pieces up to dry land to be sold as scrap.

The world disposed of 768 ships last year. In terms of tonnage, a third of that demolition took place in Bangladesh, which surpassed India because of a decline in Indian demand for scrap steel. The two countries and Pakistan account for about 70% of all ship breaking.

Bangladesh's increased market share has raised alarm among environmental and labor activists, as well as United Nations officials, who say the country has not kept pace with industry reforms elsewhere. Despite new laws aimed at making the business cleaner and safer, ships are taken apart here much as they were in the 1980s. [Read More](#)

Work factors that predict sleep problems revealed

Recent research has revealed the specific psychological and social work factors that are associated with sleep problems.

Results show that quantitative job demands, decision control, role conflict and support from a superior in the workplace were the most consistent predictors of troubled sleep, which was characterized by difficulty initiating sleep or disturbed sleep.

Findings remained significant after adjustment for potential con-founders such as age, sex and occupation skill level.

Lead author Jolien Vleeshouwers from the National Institute of Occupational Health in Oslo, Norway said, "Apart from raising a general awareness of the significance of these factors for health and well-being, the results should be directly applicable in practical efforts to target sleep problems among employees."

Vleeshouwers added that since these work factors are relatively specific and modifiable, intervention programs may be developed to target employees'

appraisal of these work factors in order to improve sleep, which could in turn have an effect on health, sickness, absence and productivity.

The study involved Norwegian employees from 63 different companies, covering a wide variety of jobs. The General Nordic Questionnaire for Psychological and Social Factors at Work was used to explore factors such as quantitative job demands, decision control, role conflict and support from superiors. [Read More](#)

Cambodia passes disputed trade union law as tension flares

Cambodia's parliament approved a disputed trade union law on Monday without making changes demanded by labor groups and the opposition, who decried it as too strict and designed to limit workers' rights.

The law is a hotly contested issue in Cambodia, where the \$5 billion textiles and footwear sector is the biggest employer and economic driver, producing goods for Nike, H&M, Puma, Marks and Spencer and Inditex, among more than a dozen global brands.

Read the full article from Reuters here.

The manufacturing of electronics in Cambodia has been on the rise over the last couple of years, with mostly Japanese companies slowly coming online in Cambodia's special economic zones. A good example is Sumitomo Corporation announcing the establishment of an electronics manufacturing services site in Cambodia last month. Global union IndustriALL wrote to the Cambodian Prime Minister last month expressing its deep concern over the proposed trade union law.

IndustriALL: "Not only does the new law place severe restrictions on the right to strike, but unions awaiting registration would be unable to act. The new law would mean that if elected leaders act illegally, the entire union could be dissolved. It also places unreasonable demands on financial audits of the unions, which could easily be manipulated to harass and impoverish them.

Furthermore, the maximum sanctions against employers are so low as to be powerless (at

US\$1,250), while for trade unions they could be fatal." Prak Chan Thul, Reuters & IndustriALL [Read More](#)

About 'Science for Sale' - The danger of tainted science

"Science is the father of knowledge," Hippocrates famously wrote, "but opinion breeds ignorance."

Nearly 2 ½ millennia after the father of Western medicine offered that insight, science and opinion have become increasingly conflated, in large part because of corporate influence. As we explain in "Science for Sale," an investigative series launched today by the Center for Public Integrity and co-published with Vice.com, industry-backed research has exploded "as government-funded science dwindles. Its effects are felt not only in courtrooms but also in regulatory agencies that issue rules to try to prevent disease."

Tainted science affects us all. It is used to fend off, or lessen the sting of, lawsuits filed on behalf of sick people. It freezes the regulatory process, forcing the EPA to redo chemical reviews underlying rules designed to protect public health. It has swayed the Food and Drug Administration and made it harder for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to protect workers.

It creates doubt where little or none existed. [Read More](#)

Under this series four articles were published

Ford spent \$40 million to reshape asbestos science

In 2001, toxicologist Dennis Paustenbach got a phone call from a lawyer for Ford Motor Company. The lawyer, Darrell Grams, explained that Ford had been losing lawsuits filed by former auto mechanics alleging asbestos in brakes had given them mesothelioma, an aggressive cancer virtually always tied to asbestos exposure. Grams asked Paustenbach, then a vice president with the consulting firm Exponent, if he had any interest in studying the disease's possible association with brake work. A meeting cemented the deal.

Paustenbach, a prolific author of scientific papers who'd worked with Grams on Dow Corning's

defense against silicone breast-implant illness claims, had barely looked at asbestos to that point. "I really started to get serious about studying asbestos after I met Mr. Grams, that's for sure," Paustenbach testified in a sworn deposition in June 2015. Before that, he said, the topic "wasn't that interesting to me."

Thus began a relationship that, according to recent depositions, has enriched Exponent by \$18.2 million and brought another \$21 million to Cardno ChemRisk, a similar firm Paustenbach founded in 1985, left and restarted in 2003. [Read More](#)

Meet the 'rented white coats' who defend toxic chemicals

BELLEVUE, Ohio — At 2:15 in the morning, an insomniac corporate defense lawyer in San Francisco finished crafting a "revolutionary" scientific theory. Now Evan Nelson of the law firm Tucker Ellis & West needed a scientist willing to publish it in a medical journal. If his theory were given scientific validity, Nelson could use it to win lawsuits.

Nelson defended companies that had exposed people to asbestos, a heat-resistant, fibrous mineral. Asbestos causes several deadly diseases, including mesothelioma, a rare cancer that often drowns the lungs in fluid.

Nelson had expressed frustration with the argument that asbestos is the only known cause of mesothelioma. After scouring the scientific literature and applying his own logic, Nelson came up with a new culprit: tobacco.

Nelson sent a typo-ridden email to Peter Valberg of Cambridge, Massachusetts. A former professor at the Harvard School of Public Health, Valberg was by then a principal at the environmental consulting firm Gradient Corporation, with offices in Harvard Square. [Read More](#)

Making a cancer cluster disappear

TEXAS CITY, Texas — It began with a headache; then came shaking of the hands. Leuvell Malone's wife noticed unusual behavior. He struggled to button his shirt straight and crashed the car into the hot-water heater in the garage. Finally, a

seizure landed the 55-year-old chemical worker in the hospital.

His doctor at first thought Malone might have suffered a stroke. But it turned out to be worse than that. The father of four had a rare and deadly brain tumor.

During his 32 years of greasing machines at the sprawling Union Carbide plant south of Houston, Malone feared the chemicals he breathed might one day make him sick, his sons recall. So he reported his illness to the local office of the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

That was in November 1978. Just a few days later, Bobby Hinson, one of Malone's co-workers, died of the same rare tumor, known as glioblastoma. He was 49 years old. OSHA inspectors went to the plant to find out how many other workers there had died of brain cancer. [Read More](#)

Brokers of junk science?

Hardbound volumes of *Critical Reviews in Toxicology* and *Regulatory Toxicology and Pharmacology* spanning decades are shelved at the National Library of Medicine's subterranean archives — the world's largest medical collection — in Bethesda, Maryland.

The peer-reviewed journals are among a select group of medical titles indexed by the National Institutes of Health, and they belong to international associations whose members pledge to uphold ethical and scientific standards. The titles come at a price: an issue of *Critical Reviews* retails for \$372, while an annual subscription to *Regulatory Toxicology* costs \$275.

Yet critics also claim the journals are purveyors of "junk science" — misleading, industry-backed articles that threaten public health by playing down the dangers of well-known toxic substances such as lead and asbestos. The articles often are used to stall regulatory efforts and defend court cases.

An analysis by the Center for Public Integrity found that half of all review articles written by top scientists at the consulting firm Gradient since 1992 were published either in *Critical Reviews* or

Regulatory Toxicology. No other journal came close. [Read More](#)

New Toolkit on Gender and Waste

A *Gender & Waste Toolkit*, has been written by WIEGO's Sector Specialist Sonia Maria Dias and Ana Carolina Ogando, an independent consultant. As part of the Waste & Gender Project, this academic/practitioner toolkit was developed for a broad audience interested in understanding the connections between gender inequalities in the waste sector.

There are three books, available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, along with pullout exercises from workshops conducted with women waste pickers on gender and waste. [Read More](#)

Fifa promises panel to ensure decent conditions for 2022 World Cup workers

Amid intense criticism, the Fifa president, Gianni Infantino, has promised to set up a panel to ensure "decent working conditions" for labourers building the stadiums that will host the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

Following reports by human rights groups and a series of Guardian investigations into the plight of migrant workers in the Gulf state, criticism over inaction by the authorities has grown.

On his first visit to Qatar since he was elected in February Infantino announced the new panel, which will include "relevant sectors of civil society and other relevant Fifa stakeholders".

While the committee organising the World Cup has introduced new labour standards for its contractors, there is concern not enough is being done to tackle the problems caused by the kafala system that bonds workers to their employers.

The Harvard professor John Ruggie, who last week published a wide ranging independent report into Fifa's human rights responsibilities and made 25 recommendations, has said Fifa would have "tough decisions" to take if Qatar did not prove to UN inspectors it was making progress on the issue within 12 months. [Read More](#)

Report on FIFA & Human Rights: John Ruggie makes 25 practical human rights recommendations for FIFA

Abstract

In December 2015, FIFA asked me to develop recommendations on what it means for FIFA to embed respect for human rights across its global operations. The authoritative standard for doing so is the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (“UNGPs”), endorsed by the UN in June 2011, of which I was the author. This report first lays out the relevant human rights context for FIFA, and then presents 25 detailed recommendations for action. They fall broadly under three areas of necessary change:

- From Constitution to Culture: FIFA needs to translate its commitment to respect human rights, included in its new Statutes, into its daily actions and decisions. This includes:
 - Setting clear expectations for the work of all parts of the administration and equipping and resourcing staff to deliver;
 - Ensuring that these efforts are fully reflected in and supported by decision-making on the part of FIFA’s leadership and governing bodies.
- From Reactive to Proactive: FIFA needs stronger internal systems to address the increasingly predictable human rights risks associated with its business. This includes:
 - Evaluating the severity of risks to people across both its activities and its relationships;
 - Building and using its leverage to address these risks as determinedly as it does to pursue its commercial interests.
- From Insular to Accountable: FIFA needs to provide greater transparency in managing human rights risks and improve access to remedy. This includes:
 - Routinely discussing key issues with external stakeholders, including those whose human rights are at risk, and

disclosing its efforts and progress in addressing challenges;

- Ensuring that access to remedy for human rights harm associated with FIFA is available not only on paper but also in practice.

[Read the complete report here](#)

[Read More](#)

The Mesothelioma Handbook 2016

On the evening of March 24, 2016 an important resource for mesothelioma sufferers - The Mesothelioma Handbook - was launched by the June Hancock Mesothelioma Research Fund (JHMRF), at an event in central Leeds.¹ The date was significant as it was almost twenty years since legal proceedings brought by mesothelioma sufferer June Hancock over environmental exposure to asbestos ended with a substantial victory.² Commenting on the precedent set by her lawsuit, Mrs Hancock told journalists: “It proves however small you are you can fight and however big you can lose.”

In the years since the JHMRF was established, more than a million pounds have been donated by the memorial fund to mesothelioma research. According to the JHMRF website: “Proposals that have the potential to improve current treatments, to develop new treatment options or improve the way care is delivered for mesothelioma patients are of particular interest.”

The new handbook certainly has the capacity to make a difference to patients and those who care for their physical and mental well-being. The almost 100 pages of this well-designed book contain essential information presented in an accessible manner. The diagrams, illustrations and cartoons break up the text and provide breathing space for readers; the language is clear and the sections are logically organized. The excellence of the work is no surprise given its origin. The author Dr. Helen Clayson has been involved in the care of mesothelioma patients for over thirty years, first as a general practitioner, then as a physician in hospice and hospital palliative care in the north of England. This lady knows what she is talking about.

In an interview with Dr. Clayson after the launch, she said:

“The Mesothelioma Handbook is based on experience and research in the care of people with mesothelioma and has been produced in collaboration with patients and family carers. I hope that it will be a useful and practical source of information for people facing mesothelioma and empower them with the knowledge they need to deal with this extremely difficult situation.”

The handbook will, in due course, be uploaded to the JHMR website (in the meantime, a hard copy can be requested via the website). I strongly urge anyone who has mesothelioma or is caring for a patient with this disease to acquire a copy of this highly recommended book.

Regional News

The export of hazardous industries in 2015

In the 1970s, there were many reports of toxic hazards at corporate subsidiaries in the developing world that were no longer tolerated in the corporations’ “home” countries. Following the chemical disaster in Bhopal, India, in 1984, leading corporations then announced that they applied uniform standards of worker and environmental protection worldwide. With globalization, corporations should also be obliged to take responsibility for their separate supplier, contractor and distributor companies, and licensees of their technology.

The asbestos industry today consists of national corporations. Individual countries must overcome the influence of the asbestos-exporting countries and asbestos companies and stop building with asbestos, as recommended by WHO, ILO, and World Bank. WHO precautions for limiting governmental interaction with the tobacco industry should be applied in dealing with the asbestos industry. Author - Barry Castleman [Read More](#)

An estimated 12.6 million deaths each year are attributable to unhealthy environments

15 MARCH 2016 | GENEVA - An estimated 12.6 million people died as a result of living or working in an unhealthy environment in 2012 – nearly 1 in 4 of total global deaths, according to new estimates from WHO. Environmental risk factors, such as air, water and soil pollution, chemical exposures, climate change, and ultraviolet radiation, contribute to more than 100 diseases and injuries.

Noncommunicable diseases contribute to largest share of environment-related deaths

The second edition of the report, “Preventing disease through healthy environments: a global assessment of the burden of disease from environmental risks”, reveals that since the report was first published a decade ago, deaths due to noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), mostly attributable to air pollution (including exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke), amount to as much as 8.2 million of these deaths. NCDs, such as stroke, heart disease, cancers and chronic respiratory disease, now amount to nearly two-thirds of the total deaths caused by unhealthy environments.

At the same time, deaths from infectious diseases, such as diarrhoea and malaria, often related to poor water, sanitation and waste management, have declined. Increases in access to safe water and sanitation have been key contributors to this decline, alongside better access to immunization, insecticide-treated mosquito nets and essential medicines. [Read More](#)

Articles on IBAS website

Fact Sheet on Chrysotile Asbestos

A document entitled Chrysotile Asbestos Facts has been uploaded to the IBAS website. This resource has been developed by Dr. Richard Lemen and other international experts to refute the industry’s propaganda. [Read More](#)

Asbestos Justice: The Time Has Come!

From Japan to Brazil via Italy and France, over recent days asbestos victims have secured amazing judicial wins. On January 29, 2016, the Kyoto District Court¹ for the first time upheld the right of construction workers to bring claims against major manufacturers for negligently exposing them to asbestos. Presiding Judge Kazumi Higa said: “It is highly probable that the construction materials sold by the makers caused damage to the plaintiffs.”

Nine manufacturing companies were ordered to pay compensation of 110 million yen (US\$908,000) to 23 construction workers and their families; damages against the Japanese government totalling 216 million yen (US\$1.78m) were awarded to 27 construction workers and their families. The Japanese government had previously been fined for failing to take timely and appropriate action on the asbestos hazard by district courts in Osaka,² Tokyo and Fukuoka.

The issue of anxiety caused by asbestos exposure is contentious; defendants’ lawyers categorize sufferers as the “worried well” even as the mental anguish and depression experienced by people at-risk of contracting asbestos-related diseases often disrupts and derails their life. Last week, two French institutions acknowledged that people negligently exposed to asbestos deserve compensation even if they have no symptoms of disease. On January 28, 2016, an industrial tribunal in Bobigny awarded 315 Bosch employees and former employees €5,000 for asbestos “anxiety prejudice” which resulted from hazardous workplace exposures during the 1990s.³ A lawyer representing the claimants said that an appeal is being considered as other jurisdictions have awarded sums of €10,000 per person. By Laurie Kazan-Allen [Read More](#)

Asbestos Industry Medics Attend Cancer Conference

Dr. Milton Nascimento, the director of Occupational Health at Eternit S.A., Brazil’s largest asbestos conglomerate, is attending the 13th Conference of the International Mesothelioma Interest Group (IMIG) in Birmingham next week

(May 1-5, 2016). Dr. Nascimento frequently presents arguments supporting the continued use of asbestos at events in Brazil and abroad. He is a much-traveled spokesman and a member of respected international organizations such as the American Thoracic Society.

During a recent debate about Brazil’s national asbestos policy, Nascimento told delegates to the Pernambuco Congress of Safety at Work that “from a technical point of view, you can work safely with asbestos and other (hazardous) substances, as long as criteria are observed” (author’s translation). Claiming that ban asbestos propaganda is part of a trade war, Nascimento said that although people had experienced hazardous exposures in the past, modern methods for processing asbestos were nontoxic. [Read More](#)

Global Asbestos Hegemony; Global Asbestos Crimes

In just over three months on May 31, 2016 the Italian constitutional court will hand down a verdict in a criminal case of immense importance not only in Italy but also in every jurisdiction where asbestos entrepreneurs profit from the commercial exploitation of asbestos.

At issue is whether Swiss asbestos billionaire Stephan Schmidheiny can be held to account for the deaths of 240 Italians who received toxic exposures to his company’s asbestos during the 20th century. Central to the defense, is the concept of double jeopardy whereby a person cannot be tried twice for the same crime. Schmidheiny has, indeed, already been tried three times for Italian asbestos crimes; he was convicted by the Turin Court (2012) and the Appeal Court (2013) of causing a permanent environmental disaster as a result of which 3,000+ Italians died. These verdicts were overturned by the Italian Supreme Court (Court of Cassation) in November 2014 due to the expiration of the statute of limitations.

In the wake of that reversal, Turin Public Prosecutors Raffaele Guariniello and Gianfranco Colace accused Schmidheiny of the manslaughter of hundreds of other Italians; there is no statute of

limitation for this crime. by Laurie Kazan-Allen [Read More](#)

Liberia: Cemenco's Asbestos Dumped in Communities

Some concerned residents of the Doe Community within the vicinity of CEMENCO on Busrod Island, on Thursday, January 27, discovered huge quantity of Asbestos within their community.

According to the concerned Doe Community residents, they were alerted by a community member, who observed a truck load of asbestos in December of last year. The community member, only referred to as Mr. Jukon, claimed that while on his way home that night, a group of men was seen offloading the Asbestos materials from the truck. "My attention was not really to them because I was walking home when the car passed me by. But when I got closer to my house that night at around 11:00 pm, I saw them offloading the Asbestos from the truck. I did not take it seriously since I did not know it was dangerous to the health and wellbeing of the people and community," he claimed. [Read More](#)

Living on a Tropical Island—and an Asbestos Wasteland

BANABA ISLAND, Kiribati—Asbestos dust covers the floors of Banaba's crumbling colonial houses, buildings, and schools. It's in the field where people plant cassava. Broken pieces of asbestos sheeting litter the ground, and children use them to make toys and skateboards.

All of this in an environment already littered with scrap metal, industrial waste, and oil sludge. [Read More](#)

Dying Kiwis win payouts in Australia for asbestos exposure

It's in Des Sayegh's nature to help others, but his work rebuilding cyclone-ravaged Western Australia nearly 40 years ago is helping to kill him.

The 81-year-old Aucklander has just won a confidential payout from Australia for asbestos exposure while working as a cabinet maker and

carpenter in 1978 around Nyabing, a tiny township about 300km south-east of Perth. Last April, his nagging cough was diagnosed as mesothelioma, a fatal cancer of mesothelial cells that line a person's lungs and abdominal cavity, caused by inhaling asbestos fibres. "We never wore masks or ear muffs in those days because it was just sort of unheard of – you'd have felt a bit of a fool going around with those things on in those days, as stupid as it is now, but that's the way it was then."

[Read More](#)

Lawmakers Want Change of Asbestos Water Pipes

The National Environment Agency (NEA) Wednesday said they have the grit to work with relevant institutions in the proper and environmentally sound procedure for the disposal of Asbestos materials, as the institution re-appeared before deputies of the Public Accounts and Public Enterprise Committees PAC/PEC for scrutiny.

The Agency's report was eventually adopted with unanimous vote despite its low compliance rate as indicated by The Gambia Public Procurement Authority (GPPA) during the year under review.

The issue became a concern among deputies after the NEA's Executive Director, Ndey Siren Bakurin, informed the joint committees that Asbestos, when broken can cause cancer, making some lawmakers conclude that they need a change for Asbestos.

[Read More](#)

New Study Supports Link Between Length of Occupational Asbestos Exposure and Mesothelioma Risk, According to Surviving Mesothelioma

Scientists in Padova, Italy used public cancer and mesothelioma registries to track the outcomes of asbestos workers who were still alive when the country implemented its asbestos ban in 1992. What they found was that those who worked in their jobs the longest had the highest mesothelioma rates. Surviving Mesothelioma has

just posted an article on the new research. Click here to read it now.

Research led by the organization SPISAL, which is dedicated to workplace health and safety, tracked the rates of mesothelioma and lung cancer over a 20-year period in people who were eligible to take early retirement because of asbestos exposure. [Read More](#)

Why the Deadly Asbestos Industry Is Still Alive and Well

Despite irrefutable scientific evidence calling out the dangers of asbestos, 2 million tons of the carcinogen are exported every year to the developing world, where it's often handled with little to no regulation.

For this episode of *VICE Reports*, correspondent Milène Larsson traveled to the world's largest asbestos mine in the eponymous town of Asbest, Russia, to meet workers whose livelihoods revolve entirely around the dangerous mineral. Surprisingly, the risks associated with asbestos mining didn't seem to worry the inhabitants; in fact, asbestos is the city's pride, celebrated with monuments, songs, and even its own museum.

Larsson then visits Libby, Montana, another mining town almost on the other side of the globe, where the effects of asbestos exposure are undeniable: 400 townspeople have died from asbestos-related diseases, and many more are slowly choking to death. Why is the deadly industry of mining and selling asbestos still alive and well? [Read More](#)

Fincantieri to pay 1.1 million

ANSA) - Ancona, February 26 - A labour court judge on Friday sentenced Italian shipbuilder Fincantieri to pay 1.1 million euros in damages to the three children of a retired electrical welder who died of asbestos-related complications in 2006. The court found the company failed to adequately protect the welder from 1973 when he first joined the company to at least 1990, when he was exposed to asbestos on a daily basis. He took early retirement in 2000, because work-related accidents and illness agency INAIL recognized he had been exposed to

asbestos for 17 years. He died in April 2006 aged 55. [Read More](#)

Labor group warns of asbestos risk in demolition of iconic PNB building

MANILA - Alan Tanjusay, advocacy officer of the Associated Labor Unions (ALU) and spokesperson of the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines-Nagkaisa, is urging the public to protect themselves in the face of the impending demolition of the iconic Philippine National Bank (PNB) building in Escolta, Manila.

"We are urging Chinese-Filipino community staying or living in the vicinity, and office workers, including those construction workers involved, to protect themselves in the event of the demolition," Tanjusay said.

Asbestos dust fibers are very friable and cannot be seen by naked eyes, Tanjusay pointed out. "Inhalation can cause these fibers to penetrate deep into the lungs, which can cause incurable lung cancer and other debilitating diseases," Tanjusay added. [Read More](#)

South African asbestos mines rehabilitation project makes good progress

The South African government remains underway with a major programme to close and rehabilitate some 660 abandoned asbestos mines and shafts in various regions around the country.

Global programme and construction consultancy Turner & Townsend is providing quantity surveying expertise to the project.

"So far we have worked with the SRK Consulting team on nine abandoned asbestos mine sites in the Northern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo," says Gordon Bulmer, senior quantity surveyor of Turner & Townsend.

"With three of these now closed and completed, we are currently involved on a further six mine sites, while we are preparing tenders on another three, with possible additional projects in the pipeline. [Read More](#)

Pacific Region Awash with Asbestos

A report issued this week entitled “The State of Asbestos in the Pacific” was compiled by the regional environment programme SPREP and the World Health Organisation, with funding from the European Union. It confirms that the ongoing use of asbestos-containing products imported from Asia is “exacerbating an already serious problem.” The survey undertaken of 13 island countries located more than 180,000 square meters of asbestos [sic] in non-residential buildings; not one Pacific island nation has banned asbestos. Stewart Williams, the project’s manager, expressed serious concerns about the aftermath of natural disasters in areas with asbestos-riddled buildings. [Read More](#)

ADAO Wraps Up the 12th Successful Asbestos Awareness and Prevention Conference in DC!

On behalf of the Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization (ADAO), we would like to thank all of our attendees, speakers, honorees, volunteers, sponsors, and supporters who participated in the 12th Annual International Asbestos Awareness and Prevention Conference! This year’s conference, “Where Knowledge and Action Unite,” held April 8 – 10, 2016 in Washington, DC, marked 12 years of ADAO’s leadership in raising asbestos awareness, spearheading advocacy efforts, and fostering our united community. The conference brought together medical, academic, occupational experts, asbestos victims, and friends of ADAO from nine countries to spread awareness about asbestos, clarify recent academic and legislative news, disseminate educational/preventative resources, and work towards a ban on asbestos. This year, we were honored to feature nearly 40 conference presenters, an Awards and Recognition Dinner, a Unity and Remembrance Brunch, and a Candle Light Vigil honoring and supporting all those touched by asbestos. ADAO’s campaign, “Hear Asbestos. Think Prevention.” was once again an underlying theme repeated again and again by conference attendees, mesothelioma warriors, and experts alike as their voices resonated in unison

with a call for hazardous chemical regulation reform. *Posted on April 11, 2016* [Read More](#)

Check out this national inventory of federal buildings containing asbestos

CBC has produced a national inventory of federal buildings containing asbestos by contacting 24 federal departments and agencies that provided a list of properties containing the substance.

The federal government itself does not have a central inventory of this type.

That's despite the fact that for more than a decade, public health, political and labour groups have called for a national public registry of buildings that contain asbestos [Read More](#)

Pressure mounts for a ban on all asbestos

The Canadian Cancer Society has added its voice to several groups calling on the new Canadian government to ban all uses of asbestos in Canada. The World Health Organization warns that no form of asbestos is safe. It causes lung and other types of cancer and asbestosis.

Some 150,000 Canadian workers are exposed to asbestos at work and the fibrous mineral is said to be responsible for highest number of workplace deaths in Canada. While the asbestos mining industry was shut down four years ago, the mineral is still used by construction workers, shipbuilders, mechanics and engineers.

Illness increasing

Asbestos-related illness already puts a burden on Canada’s publicly-funded health care system, says Gabriel Miller of the Canadian Cancer Society. And that will get worse. “Many of the cancers and other illnesses caused by it only emerge much later and so we really haven’t reached the peak number of asbestos-related diagnosed illnesses and death in Canada.” Busy agenda may cause delay

The Society has written to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau asking him to ban asbestos and it is backed by several nurses’ groups, builders’ groups, union

and several cities. Miller thinks the governing Liberals agree in principle with a ban, but they were only elected in October 2015 and it may take some time before they deal with this particular issue. By Lynn Desjardins 3 April, 2016 [Read More](#)

Asbestos banned in construction, renovations at federal sites

CBC News has learned a federal government department has banned asbestos use in new construction and renovation projects at buildings it operates — the new policy took effect on April 1.

In February, CBC revealed that building products containing the toxic material were still being used in new construction of federal buildings in Canada.

The minister of public services and procurement said Monday the government is now taking steps to end the practice.

Judy Foote, minister of public services and procurement, says the ban on use of asbestos in construction projects in her department came into effect April 1. (Parl) [Read More](#)

Sweatshop art: Berlin artists join production line in capitalist protest

Berlin street artist Emess walks into the Schau Fenster project space in Kreuzberg with a box of water-soluble spray paint and stencils. Taking off his puffer jacket, he puts on a white T-shirt with a number two printed on its back before starting his shift at Sweat Shop.

This three day art project — part of Gallery Weekend Berlin— coincides with the three-year anniversary of the deadliest garment-factory accident in history, the Rana Plaza disaster in Bangladesh, when a building collapse killed 1,130 people and injured 2,500. A global day of action for safe factories is set for 3 May. In Kreuzberg, curator Jan Kage has invited professional artists who sell in commercial galleries across the city to produce art to order under “sweatshop conditions”.

Arriving in an old Mercedes-Benz, which he double parks, Kage strolls in flashing a salesman smile in a white-collared shirt, black slacks, Italian leather shoes and a navy knit sweater made by his mother-

in-law. Does he ever wear sweatshop clothes? “I am guilty if we talk guilt,” he says. “But don’t hate the player, hate the game. We’re playing with the sweatshop in an artistic way.”

His project responds to art-world economics as much as industrial production in east and west, Kage says. “In Berlin, we have 600 art galleries and only 30 sell. Some people are fascinated by the money side of the art world but don’t care about the art. We play with that in our performance — we concentrate purely on the price.” [Read More](#)

A glimpse of what could be: The NSW BLF, the most radical and innovative union the world has ever seen

Fifty years ago, a group of dedicated left-wing activists wrested control of the NSW Builders Labourers’ Federation (BLF) from the corrupt gangster types who had used it to feather their own nests. The militants, who included Jack Munday, Joe Owens and Bob Pringle, rebuilt the union into a radically democratic, socially progressive and environmentally-aware organisation the likes of which Australia—and the world—had never seen. Today, we live in dark times for trade unionism. Only around 7% of workers in private industry are organised and unionists face ruthless attacks by the bosses and the state. The achievements of the NSW BLF, however, give us a glimpse of the liberating potential of the working class and are a beacon for the future.

It is to the great credit of militant building workers in Australia that almost 50 years ago they nailed their green colours to the mast and insisted that ecology was as much the concern of workers as wages and conditions. Jack Munday asked “What is the use of higher wages alone, if we have to live in cities devoid of parks, denuded of trees, in an atmosphere poisoned by pollution and vibrating with the noise of hundreds of thousands of units of private transport?”

The union did not claim to be perfect—it was a work-in-progress, inventing itself as it went—but it

showed that an alternative kind of unionism was possible. Its innovative radicalism shocked the bosses and conservative politicians, and confounded right-wing union bureaucrats by its daring larrikinism. It shook up Sydney in a way that had only been the stuff of dreams for socialists and surprised many who had written off the working class as a force for progressive change. Sadly, as the years go by, its achievements risk being forgotten under the crushing weight of neoliberal ideology. By John Tully [Read More](#)

Britain's modern slave trade

Al Jazeera's investigative unit has revealed that large companies in Britain may be failing to tackle slavery along their supply chains.

The findings prompted a warning from Britain's anti-slavery commissioner that companies all over the United Kingdom could unwittingly be using modern-day slaves. But Kevin Hyland, the UK's independent anti-slavery commissioner, said that new laws mean that ignorance is no longer an excuse.

Secret filming by Al Jazeera uncovered shocking conditions at a carwash in Kent, southeast England, used by dealerships for the auto giants, Volvo and Kia.

Workers living in squalid containers at the carwash in Canterbury say they are paid \$50 for 12-hour shifts, suffer verbal and physical abuse, and have wages withheld for causing minor damage. [Read More](#)

High tech toxic waste killing the poor in Ghana

Not many years ago, ten 40-footer containers were offloaded from a ship which docked at Tema harbour. For two months nobody had claimed the containers. The name and address of the supposed owner were incorrect. The custom officers became suspicious and decided to open the containers. They discovered to their utmost surprise and bewilderment that the ten containers were loaded with very dangerous toxic waste. Similar situations have occurred in other countries including Ivory Coast, Togo and Nigeria. It is believed that certain

rich African businessmen are involved. They are paid huge sums of money by Western countries to dump high-tech toxic waste in Africa. How can our own countrymen be so wicked, inconsiderate and heartless!

Many African countries have suffered the horrendous effect of toxic waste dumps from the West. Ghana has become the latest place where high-tech toxic waste has been discovered. Two electronic waste sites or scrapyards in Ghana were selected by the researchers. Samples taken from these e-waste sites were analysed. The analysis showed that dangerous chemicals have been contaminated. At the scrapyards in Ghana, what are mostly dumped there are worn-out tyres, spoiled computer units and several electronic trash. Throughout the world there is a growing demand for more advanced and fashionable mobile phones, flat screen televisions, super-fast computers, digital cameras and many latest and improved electronic gadgets. This technological advancement has created a situation whereby obsolete electronics are massively shipped to poorer countries including Ghana. [Read More](#)

Uranium Mine and Mill Workers are Dying, and Nobody Will Take Responsibility

To talk to former uranium miners and their families is to talk about the dead and the dying. Brothers and sisters, coworkers and friends: a litany of names and diseases. Many were, as one worker put it, "ate up with cancer," while others died from various lung and kidney diseases. When the former workers mention their own diseases, it's clear, though unspoken, that they're also dying. Some don't wait for the disease to take them: "Poor guy says he don't wanna be in a diaper," says one worker of his brother-in-law, a former miner with lung disease who was facing hospice. "He got a gun and shot himself."

Women who worked in the mines and mills also bore the risk of reproductive disorders and babies with birth defects. "[Supervisors] told me ... as long as I could do the job, there was no reason to worry about my baby," says Linda Evers, 57. Both of her

children had birth defects. Her daughter was born without hips. [Read More](#)

The lost childhood of India's mica minors

Ranjit Kumar's voice is so soft you have to lean in to hear him. "I have this nightmare," he says. "I'm in a mine and I see this shining piece of mica. I try to grab it but it's out of reach. I walk towards it but it moves still further away. And then everything goes dark."

In 2010, eight-year-old Ranjit was working in an open-pit mine outside his village Chanako in Jharkhand's Koderma district when a part of the periphery collapsed. His nightmare stems from suffocating in the debris for a few minutes before being rescued.

Ranjit takes us to the spot, even posing for pictures while holding scraps of mica up for the camera. The quarry was shut down when the precious mineral ran out. Now, there's a deep crater with scraggly bushes growing along the edges. As we turn to leave, the shy 14-year-old points to an unremarkable patch of mud and stone. "When the mine collapsed," he says, "that's where my mom got buried."

Ranjit's village is in the heart of India's mica belt, which runs through the dense forests of northern Jharkhand and southern Bihar. The belt loops across seven districts -- Jharkhand's Koderma, Giridih and Hazaribag and Bihar's Nawada, Jamui, Gaya and Bhagalpur. [Read More](#)

Dusty mining conditions trap Indian workers with deadly lung disease

JUDY WOODRUFF: Yesterday, special correspondent Fred de Sam Lazaro brought us a report on how big city street vendors are being left behind in India's booming economy.

Today, we travel to stone quarries in the rural northern part of the country, where a deadly disease has trapped workers there in poverty for generations.

This report is part of our Agents for Change series.

FRED DE SAM LAZARO: Across the urban landscape rise majestic sandstone palaces, monuments and temples, built in India's timeless architectural traditions.

But what's also timeless is how the stone continues to be mined, far from the cities here in the Rajasthan Desert. Early each morning, you hear the sound of sandstone being pounded into a gravel that is used in construction. No one is spared the drudgery, it seems, nursing mother with infant, young children. [Read More](#)

Anglo American and AngloGold reach \$30m silicosis settlement with miners

Former gold miners and relatives of deceased ex-miners have reached a landmark settlement of their long-running legal battle against Anglo American South Africa Ltd and AngloGold Ashanti Ltd.

The 4,365 Claimants sued the mining companies for dust-related lung diseases, silicosis and silico-tuberculosis, which they claim were contracted from working in unsafe conditions in the mines.

The claimants are represented by Zanele Mbuyisa of Mbuyisa Neale attorneys (Johannesburg) assisted by human rights lawyers, Leigh Day (London).

The settlement was announced on 5 March 2016 at a press conference in Johannesburg by Zanele Mbuyisa, and Leigh Day partners, Richard Meeran and Shanta Martin.

Binyana Benson Qubeka, who was one of the lead claimants in the litigation attended the conference. Mr Qubeka worked at AngloGold mines for 15 years and at other Anglo American operations for 10 years. He was diagnosed with silicosis in 1998.

A trust to be set up under the settlement has been named Q(h)ubeka, meaning 'go forward' in Xhosa in honour of the thousands of claimants who have struggled for decades without proper compensation from the mining companies.

The overall value of the settlement is estimated to be more than R500 million (£23 million). A total of

R464 million (£21 million) will be paid into the Q(h)ubeka Trust for distribution, while a further amount will be paid to assist the Trust to enable payment of ODMWA compensation to Claimants who qualify for it.

In addition, Anglo American and AngloGold will fund the costs of the Trust and the medical evaluations. [Read More](#)

New Rules Aim to Reduce Silica Exposure at Work Sites

The Labor Department plans to announce on Thursday new rules that sharply reduce workplace exposure to silica, a potentially deadly mineral found in materials commonly used in construction and hydraulic fracturing, or fracking.

Safety experts have urged a tightening of silica exposure standards since the 1970s because research shows that particles of the mineral, when inhaled, can cause silicosis, a disabling and sometimes fatal lung disease. However, progress was stymied for decades by resistance from affected companies and regulatory inaction.

The new rules are the second major action taken by the Obama administration in recent months to address a long-known workplace hazard. In August, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration proposed lowering exposure to beryllium, an industrial metal, to one-tenth their current levels. [Read More](#)

Deputies map out action plan on safety and health in the workplace

Việt Nam has set operational safety and health in the workplace as a top priority, creating more effective solutions and budgets for safe conditions in the workplace over past decade since the country signed an ASEAN – Occupational Safety Health Net (OSHNET) agreement in 1999.

Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), Doãn Mậu Diệp, spoke at the opening ceremony of the 17th ASEAN – Occupational Safety Health Net, or ASEAN-OSHNET, Coordinating Board Meeting in Đà Nẵng yesterday.

He said Việt Nam approved the law on operational safety and health as a strong commitment to promote a culture of labour safety among employers and employees as well as to prevent accidents in the workplace.

“The Government has continuously carried out National Labour Protection, Occupational Safety and Health Programmes over past decade as an action plan to raise awareness on labour safety,” Diệp said. [Read More](#)

Nestlé admits slave labour risk on Brazil coffee plantations

Two of the world’s biggest coffee companies, Nestlé and Jacobs Douwe Egberts, admit that beans from Brazilian plantations using slave labour may have ended up in their coffee because they do not know the names of all the plantations that supply them.

People trafficked to work for little or no pay, and forced to live on rubbish heaps and drink water alongside animals, may have worked on plantations that supply the two companies, according to the media and research centre DanWatch.

The Denmark-based group claims that human rights abuses are rampant across Brazil’s lucrative coffee industry, with hundreds of workers rescued from slavery-like conditions every year. [Read More](#)

Study points to factors behind bad health of garment workers

A recent study on garment workers, while highlighting several forms of workplace harassment they face, has pointed to the physical and mental health problems they invariably lead to.

The study titled “Production of Torture”, based on individual interviews and focus group discussions, was released earlier this month by members of seven civil society groups and academic institutions.

The women interviewed in the study spoke of how, often, even basic amenities could not be taken for granted in their workplace. For example, time provided to have lunch or drink water was limited and toilet visits monitored. “Many reported that if

they exceeded two minutes in a toilet, security officers ask the workers to hurry up.” Many drink little water to avoid the humiliation.

The workers complained of mental stress caused by unreasonable production targets, abuse (often sexually coloured) at the hands of supervisors, threats of dismissal and compulsion to work beyond scheduled hours.

Common among health issues reported were urinary infection, gastritis, headache, problems related to eyesight, dust allergies and postural-related problems. Besides, “many workers complained of being severely depressed, frustrated, edgy and having mood swings.” [Read More](#)

Pakistan province passes landmark law protecting women against violence

Lawmakers in Pakistan's largest province on Wednesday gave unprecedented protection to female victims of violence, in a bid to stem a rising tide of gender-related abuse in a country ranked as the world's third most dangerous place for women.

The new law criminalizes all forms of violence against women, whether domestic, psychological or sexual, and calls for the creation of a toll-free abuse reporting hot line and the establishment of shelters.

Muslim-majority Pakistan, home to roughly 190 million people, sees thousands of cases of violence against women every year, from rape and acid attacks to sexual assault, kidnappings and so-called “honor killings”.

“The instances of violence against women have been on the increase, primarily because the existing legal system does not effectively address the menace and violence by some is perpetrated with impunity,” said the text of the legislation passed by the Punjab assembly.

In 2013, more than 5,800 cases of violence against women were reported in Punjab alone, the province where Wednesday's law was passed,

according to the Aurat Foundation, a women's rights advocacy group. [Read More](#)

Bauxite mining's unhealthy effects on people, environment

Bauxite is a rock that is mainly composed of various minerals. Most importantly, bauxite is the primary ore for aluminum. Aluminum is a very crucial element as its uses are varied and diverse - such as its usage in transportation, household items, packaging, power lines, and construction.

In Malaysia, the active bauxite mine is located in Gebeng, Pahang. However, the mine - while strengthening the economy as well as serving as a lucrative source of income for many people - is also causing intense suffering to the locals.

Bauxite mining has indeed caused pollution around Bukit Goh, Gebeng and the Kuantan Port. For months, certain areas in the district - particularly Bukit Goh - have suffered serious air pollution from bauxite dust and residue that were released by the processing plants or leaked during transportation to the Kuantan Port. [Read More](#)

China Will Close 1,000 Coal Mines As Industry Continues to Sputter

China has announced plans to close more than 1,000 coal mines in 2016, cutting production by 60 million tonnes. The move is part of a larger mandate to eliminate as much as 500 million tonnes of surplus production over the next five years, the government says.

When it comes to coal, China is king: it is the world's largest producer and also its largest consumer. Last year, the country's 10,760 mines produced 3.7 million tonnes of coal. Yet, it's estimated that over half (2 million tonnes) that capacity does not get used, every year. According to a Reuters report, demand has waned due to the combination of a slowing economy and government policy to curb pollution by moving away from fossil fuels.

In addition to the air pollution from burning coal that plagues Chinese cities and exacts huge costs on society, the country's coal mining over-

production is a real problem. Recognizing one of its most important economic sectors is in trouble, China hopes to stimulate the industry through consolidation. The government has plans to eventually shut down all mines that produce less than 90,000 tonnes per year. Under this policy 5,600 mines will be shuttered. [Read More](#)

Illegal sand-miners flourish in unguarded coastal areas

Cashing in on scarcity and the high price of river sand in the open market, illegal sand-mining gangs have turned their attention to the interior coastal areas of Kozhikode to dig up salty sand and supply it to the construction industry. Though civil engineers attest that sea sand is highly unhealthy for the construction of buildings, the collected stock is distributed among the clients without specifying the source.

Beach areas close to Chorode, Meethalangadi and Azhiyoor have several such mining points now, where the gangs sell the stock at the price of at least Rs.200 a sack. Trenches have been formed in certain stretches of these beach areas due to regular illegal mining.

"The mining activity takes place mostly between 1 a.m. and 4 a.m. on almost all days. As all these beaches have direct access to vehicles, they can easily cart away the stock," said a resident of Vadakara. He claimed that the illegal sand-miners employed workers from outside Kerala to do the job offering heavy payment.

Local informers

According to sources, the sand-miners also maintain a gang of local informers who alert them about the presence of police in the mining and transportation area. "Police patrolling is a futile exercise as the gangs stop all their operations following a signal by their informers," they reveal.

"Sea sand-mining had been rampant in these areas when the district administration imposed a

temporary ban on river sand-mining. Though the trend had been stopped with tight police vigil, it was slowly making a comeback with declining security," said Ajith Myaliyil, another resident of Vadakara. He also complained that the police have failed to act on the petitions filed by various organisations to prevent the practice.

Meanwhile, police officials from Vadakara claimed there was no laxity on their part in conducting regular patrolling in the area. "Night patrolling had been strengthened in all these areas and the local people can pass the message to the police on noticing illegal mining activity for spot action," they pointed out.

[Read More](#)

'Miracle' rescue of four China miners after 36 days underground

Four miners trapped underground for 36 days in a collapsed Chinese gypsum mine were pulled out late Friday, a "miracle" rescue in a country with a poor track record on industrial accidents.

The final operation to save the men trapped more than 200 metres (660 feet) underground took two hours as they were hauled up to the surface one by one in a rescue "capsule", according to state broadcaster CCTV.

The four were among 29 trapped when the mine collapsed on December 25. But the rescue was marred as a local government official said there had been no contact with 13 other missing miners.

The incident drew comparisons to a 2010 mining accident in Chile, which saw 33 miners trapped underground for 69 days before their rescue.

"It is a miracle," said Zeng Kunyuan on microblog Weibo, China's equivalent of Twitter.

"I hope they can sit at the dinner table on the eve of Spring Festival!" the posting said, referring to the upcoming Chinese New Year when people return home to have a traditional meal with their families.

[Read More](#)

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