

“Workers in Asia should not need to go through the same painful experience as workers in industrialized countries before a complete ban on asbestos is introduced.”

ANROAV is working to raise awareness of asbestos issues throughout Asia and has played a major part in the asbestos campaign mounted by NGOs such as BANJAN and JOSHR in Japan. Recognizing the need for practical support from medical and legal professionals and collaboration with trade union, environmental and health activists, ANROAV cultivates links through its attendance of meetings such as the GAC 2004 and the AAC 2006 and its outreach programs. To counter industry’s propaganda, it has launched an information campaign in major Asian languages about occupational and environmental asbestos hazards.

Throughout the 20th century, countries with the highest incomes were the biggest asbestos consumers; in the 21st century, the biggest consumers are middle income countries. This shifting pattern of consumption should be ringing warning bells throughout Asia. As history has shown that a national ban by one country merely relocates the problem to its neighbors, a coordinated strategy such as once proposed by Professor Ken Takahashi, from the University of Occupational and Environmental Health (Japan), is needed. To be effective, an Asian Asbestos Action Plan should include: measures for prevention of all types of asbestos exposure, simultaneous national bans to prevent the transfer of hazardous technologies and systems for monitoring actions taken and progress made.

Victims

The year 2006 was dubbed the Year of Action on Asbestos by the global ban asbestos network. During that time, the asbestos debate started in earnest in Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Egypt, Greece, India, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines and engaged with new social partners, groups and individuals in Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, France, Italy, Ja-



pan, Korea, Poland, Italy, South Africa, the UK and the U.S. In support of calls for a global ban made by trade unions in 2006, asbestos victims’ associations, community groups, international bodies and politicians from 42 countries issued a petition stating:

“we declare that each human being has the right to live and work in a healthy environment. It is not acceptable that a substance which is too harmful to be used in the European Union is used in Asia, Africa and Latin America; it is not acceptable for an industrialized country to dump asbestos-contaminated ships in a developing country... The time for action is now!”

Emphasizing the ever-expanding links of the virtual ban asbestos campaign was the agenda of a meeting held on December 3, 2006 in New Delhi by Dr. TK Joshi, Head of the (Indian) Center for Occupational & Environmental Health. The well-attended event featured presentations by key scientific and medical experts from Asia, North America and the Middle East and campaigners representing Asian asbestos victims and community groups. On May 18-19, 2007, a Korean-Japanese Symposium: *Solutions on Asbestos Issues* was held in Seoul, Korea; this event was supported by a broad range of groups representing civil society in both countries.

