



**NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS**

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17/6/2012

To

**Shri Navin Kumar,  
Chief Secretary,  
Government of Bihar,  
Patna**

Dear Shri Navin Kumarji,

I am writing this letter to bring to your immediate attention the grave issue of an asbestos plant of Utkal Asbestos Limited [UAL] in Vaishali, Bihar which is to pose serious, adverse health impacts on the local people living in the area as well as the workers to be employed in the factory. As you know, it is well established that asbestos fibres cause lung cancer, due to which as many as 55 countries have banned the use of the same in their home countries! The setting up of these hazardous asbestos plants is happening not only in Vaishali, but many other parts of Bihar like Muzzafarpur, West Champaran, Madhubani etc as well. Apart from the grave health impacts of white asbestos, there are a number of serious violations by the Utkal Asbestos Limited plant that must be taken into account. It has been falsely shown in its Environment Impact Assessment maps, that barren land has been acquired, when in reality, it is agricultural land that has been used to set up the plant. They have also conveniently left out of their maps, the presence of numerous villages and schools in the area, in order to get clearance! There was no public hearing with the villagers of the area, as is mandatory before the environmental clearance is given.

The Khet Bachao Jeevan Bachao Jan Sangarsh Committee [KBJBKC] has been organizing locally against the asbestos plant, highlighting the adverse health impacts of the same. Shri Jitendra Shrivastav, new DM had assured the villagers to look into the health impacts of the plant after it was brought to his notice. Several international resolutions such as the ones passed by ILO and WHO also call for the elimination of asbestos. Even in India, the carcinogenic substances in asbestos leading to incurable diseases has been recognized by environment and health experts as well as ministers of State and government officials. For instance, the former Union Health Minister, Sushma Swaraj has clearly stated in the Parliament that exposure to asbestos fibers cause mesothelioma, asbestosis and lung cancer on August 18, 2003. In March 2011, the New Delhi Declaration seeking elimination of all forms of asbestos including white asbestos from India was passed. The Government of India also committed to include asbestos amongst the hazardous chemicals to be phased out in the *UN's 5<sup>th</sup> conference of the Parties [COP5] to the UN's Rotterdam Convention on the prior informed consent procedure for certain hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade convention*, held in Geneva during June 20-24, 2011. Apart from these, the UN Railway Ministry has also started procuring asbestos free material for its use. All these

instances mentioned above show the growing apprehensions of the government of the disastrous health effects of asbestos use. Yet, in Bihar, Utkal Limited is being allowed to set up its plant with absolutely no regard for the health concerns of the local population! It is imperative for the government to step in at this point and demand accountability and responsibility from the asbestos plant in order to protect the fundamental right to life of the local people of Vaishali, guaranteed by the Constitution of India to all its citizens.

Taking into account all these serious issues, the villagers of Vaishali's Chaksultan, Rampur, Rajdhari near Panapur in Kanhauli Dhanraj Panchayat of Goraul block organized a peaceful Mahadharana on June 14<sup>th</sup> against the proposed white asbestos plant of Utkal Asbestos Limited [UAL]. During the peaceful protest, the villagers noticed fire and smoke emanating from the premises of the factory, following which fabricated cases were filed against them! It is quite clear that the factory owners in collusion with the administration officials had hatched this plan to cast aspersions on the protestors and to break peaceful resistance that was organized against them. In addition, to the fact that their lives are at stake due to the hazardous white asbestos from the plant, the local villagers have been further victimized due to the false charges of arson leveled against them. In this regard, fake cases have been registered against 8 villagers and 200 unknown persons.

I request you to look into this serious matter at the earliest, in order to prevent large scale loss of life and livelihood in the area. It is important that the government of Bihar takes note of international as well as national resolutions passed against the use of asbestos and implement it effectively at the state level as well. Having said that, I acknowledge that the DM , Mr Jitendra Srivastav has taken prompt action in stopping work at the factory until further orders and has asked that a 15 member committee from amongst the villagers to engage with the administration. The fabricated charges against the peaceful protestors must be condemned and dropped immediately and action be taken against the factory owners and the administrative officials who were responsible for framing false charges against the villagers. I hope you will look into this matter at the earliest and take necessary action in order to ensure that the plant does not violate the rights of local villagers any further, and that social justice accrues.

Yours Sincerely,  
Medha Patkar  
[09423965153]