PRESS RELEASE
Protection of Public Health and Environment from Carcinogenic Asbestos Needs Effective Implementaton of Government Decision

October 21, 2016, Kathmandu, Center for Public Health and Environmental Development (CEPHED) stressed the needs of effective implementaton of Government’s decision of banning all form of asbestos except lining of brake shoe and clutch plates, effective since 20 June 2015 for the protection of Public Health, especially of workers health and environment.

Today, a research based document "National Asbestos Profile of Nepal" prepared by CEPHED under the project supported by Takagi Fund for Citizen Science, Asia Ban Asestos Network (ABAN) and International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS) has been released by the Chief Guest Mr. Narayan Raj Timalsina, Acting Secretary, Ministry of Population and Environment (MOPE) in an interaction program organized by CEPHED participated by some 50 personals from different concerned government agencies, development agencies, private agencies, cosumers, professional associations like FCAN, FGSFN, PABSON, GEFONT, Trade Unions, Health professional and media personnels. Other special remarks has been made by, ILO, WHO representatives, NHRC, Department of Custom and several other professionals organizations and OSH health professionals and experts. Program were held under the chairmanship of Mr. Mohan Katuwal, Advisor of CEPHED, President of Federation of Grill and Steel Fabricators Nepal and Vice President (Objective), Small and Cottage Industry, Nepal.

Chief Guests and other delegations from concerned government and private agencies strongly believed that this country National Asbestos Profile will be very useful and complement in many ways Government of Nepal, especially to the Ministry of Population and Environment (MOPE), Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), Ministry of Labour and Emploument (MOLE) and Ministry of Finance (MOF)’s work towards effective implementation of Government of Nepal’s Asbestos banning decision, market monitoring and equally useful for other concerned stakeholders towards protection of the public health, workers health and environment. This profile will be also very useful for Government of Nepal in realizing its national obligation under multiple chemicals Conventions such as Rotterdam Convention, Basel Convention and SAICM etc. to which Nepal is party since decade ago.

It is a matter of proud to state that 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 after 181 days of Gazette notification i.e. on 20 June 2015. Since then there has been continued efforts made by concerned ministries and their department especially the Department of Custom in coordination with all other related departments, stakeholder has achieved very noticiable result of about 50 % reduction in importation within a year of effective implementation, still more has to be done and hence called for effective implementation of banning decision and increased market monitorings. It has been believed and committed from concerned agencies especially Department of Custome and Department of Commerce that in coming years they will able to achieve 100 % import ban and regulate the market accordingly with the cooperation from all stakeholders and concerned other government agencies towards making the ZERO importation.

As Nepal have achieved legal ban of import, sale, distribution and uses of asbestos and asbestos containing products for protection of public health and environment from these deadly toxic substances, urgent need of developing the national action plant and elimination strategies has been felt. In this regard, this National Asbestos Profile prepared based on actual field condition by CEPHED was appreciated as best complement by Mr. Narayan Raj Timilsina, Acting Secretary at MOPE. This document serves as the base line for asbestos...
In coming days, along with our continued efforts towards effective implementation of the decision, all the concerned ministries and their respective departments has to take up the findings, conclusion and recommendations to the implementation level by making appropriate arrangement of legal, institutions, financial and coordination mechanism said Mr. Ram Charitra Sah, Environment Scientist and Executive Director of CEPHED.

There is a need of ensuring that no asbestos containing construction materials would be allowed to import and used for any new constructions especially post disaster reconstruction of Nepal. At the same time, all the concerned ministries would also take appropriate initiative towards developing national action plan, reduction of all possible and potential exposure as well as associated diseases to asbestos and most importantly environmentally sound management of all asbestos containing wastes going to be generated from the past and current uses.

The research and consultations which have been taken place in Nepal regarding asbestos consumption, geographical trends, workers’ exposures, incidences of asbestos-related diseases and levels of environmental contamination and the data which has been accumulated and included in this National Asbestos Profile (NAP) prepared by CEPHED as a result of these enquiries are extremely valuable for protecting occupational and public health with a focus for asbestos audits and enquiries. This National Asbestos Profile of Nepal marks a starting point in a national dialogue which will, if it is to succeed, provide the opportunity for all civil society stakeholders and concerned government agencies to become engaged in the battle for a safer world. An asbestos-free future is possible well said by Ms Laurie Kazan-Allen, Coordinator, International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS), UK.

Ram Charitra Sah,
Executive Director/ Environment Scientist
CEPHED
Tel; 01- 5201786, Mob: 9803047621
Email: ramcharitra@gmail.com
In exercise of the power conferred by Environment Protection Act 1997 (Section 7 and Sub-section 3), shall come into effects from 181 days from the date of publication of this notice by the Government of Nepal has banned the Import, Sale, Distribution and Use of all Asbestos and Asbestos containing products including Corrugated, Non-Corrugated Sheet, Tiles, Insulators etc. except the asbestos lining of automobile’s brake shoe and clutch plate.

With permission
Mahendra Man Gurung
Acting Secretary, Government of Nepal
Figure 1 Chief Guest, Mr. Narayan Raj timilsina, Acting Secretary, Ministry of Population and Environment address the National Asbestos Profile Launching Program

Figure 2. Mr. Janak Chaudhary, general Secretary, GEFONT addressing the OSH and ASBESTOS interaction program