

LOK SABHA QUESTIONS

ON

ASBESTOS

(2000 – 2009)

THE ASBESTOS CEMENT PRODUCTS
MANUFACTURERS' ASSOCIATION

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Preface

Of late asbestos and asbestos-based products have been generating lot of interest in the society. Certain NGOs, activists and various competitive interests both in the country and abroad have been campaigning against asbestos without caring to look at the truth and current facts.

There are several scientific studies concerning asbestos usage, its effects on health and the environment. These studies have generally come to the conclusion that use of asbestos (Chrysotile variety) in the manufacture of Asbestos-based products under controlled conditions is entirely safe for human health and environment. Likewise, studies have concluded that people residing under asbestos cement roofs are not subjected to any health risks. It is quite safe if asbestos products are processed and manufactured under controlled conditions. These studies have similarly arrived at same conclusions about usage of its products.

On these issues, questions are asked in Parliament in every session seeking answers from various Ministries/Departments. The Asbestos Cement Products Manufacturers' Association has compiled these questions which have been asked by MPs and their replies as given by the concerned Ministries in the form of a booklet. The booklet covers the period from year 2000 to 2009.

We hope this booklet will be helpful in understanding the current thinking and policies of the Government of India on asbestos and related issues.

New Delhi
February 2010

ACPMMA

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Lok Sabha Questions during 2000

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 4601 ANSWERED ON 25.04.2000

USE OF ASBESTOS PIPES

4601, SHRI RAJESH VERMA

- (a) Whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the news item captioned Life? Giving liquid in pipes of poison appearing in Pioneer dated February 5, 2000;
- (b) If so, the facts of the matter reported therein and
- (c) The remedial steps taken by the Government in this regard?

ANSWER

MINISTER FOR HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DR.MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI)

- (a) & (b): Yes sir. However, the statements attributed to Industrial Toxicology Research Centre (ITRC), Lucknow have not been made by this institution.

The information is being sought from the other Government Departments/Institutions dealing with the regulatory issues connected with asbestos.

Lok Sabha Questions during 2001

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 57 ANSWERED ON 23.07.2001

BAN ON ASBESTOS MINING

57. SHRI SUBODH MOHITE

- (a) Whether the Government are considering to ban all activities associated with asbestos including its mining, manufacturing, use and trade on account of the health hazards posed;
- (b) If not, the reasons therefore;
- (c) Whether, the Government have received a request for ban on asbestos from environmentalists and doctors;
- (d) If so, the details thereof; and
- (e) The reaction of the Government thereto?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R.BAALU)

- (a) & (b) No Sir. However, mining, manufacture of asbestos and asbestos-based products is regulated as per the provisions and procedures of EIA Notification, 1994. Crocidolite (Blue Asbestos) has been put in the restricted list of imports by Ministry of Commerce, Directorate General of Foreign Trade in October, 1994. Further, import of waste asbestos (dust and fibre) has been prohibited by Gazette Notification dated 13.10.1998.
- (c) to (e) As per the reports available, no such requests from environmentalists and doctors have been received.

CANCER FROM ASBESTOS

4401. SHRI P.R.KHUTE

- (a) whether the chances of cancer have increased on account of the use of asbestos in the capital and different parts of the country;
- (b) whether there is a ban on the use of asbestos in many counties of the world;
- (c) if so, whether the Government propose to take some special measures to restrict the use of asbestos in the country;
- (d) If so, the details thereof, and
- (e) If not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (Dr. C.P.THAKUR)

- (a) Asbestos is a well known carcinogen only when inhaled as part of the occupational exposure to people involved in manufacturing or use of Asbestos. There is no evidence to show that environmental exposure can lead to cancer. Data collected by Indian Council of Medical Research shows no change in prevalence of lung cancer in Mumbai, Bangalore, Bhopal and Barshi, while the cities of Chennai and Delhi have shown some increase in the number of cases.
- (b) Some of the countries in the world like France, UK, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Netherland, Finland, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Austria, Poland and Saudi Arabia have banned the use of Asbestos.

(c) to (e) under the Factories Act, the processes involving handling of asbestos have been considered hazardous. The workers handling asbestos are required to undergo pre-employment and periodic medical examination. The Factories also maintain the health records of the workers. Section 41 – B, 41 – C and 41-F of the Factories (Amendment) Act 1987, deal with the hazardous processes.

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 121 ANSWERED ON 19.11.2001

BAN ON MINING AND USE OF ASBESTOS

121. SHRI SUBODH MOHITE

- (a) whether the Government propose to ban mining, import and use of asbestos fibres and products in the country.
- (b) If so, the details thereof;
- (c) The details of the large scale and small scale industries involved in producing asbestos sheets and pipes;
- (d) The number of persons employed in these units;
- (e) Whether according to WHO there is no safe level of exposure of asbestos against cancer, and
- (f) If so, the measures to be undertaken by the Government to safeguard the health of employees.

ANSWER

MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R.BAALU)

- (a) & (b) No Sir. However, mining and manufacture of asbestos and asbestos based products are regulated as per the provisions and procedures of EIA Notification, 1994. Crocidolite (blue asbestos) has been placed on the restricted list of imports by Ministry of Commerce, Directorate General of Foreign Trade in October, 1994.
- (c) & (d) The information is being collected.
- (e) WHO had constituted a task force on Environmental Health Criteria (EHC) for Chrysotile Asbestos in July, 1996 and brought out its report namely, IPCS Environmental Health Criteria 203 in 1998. No threshold has been identified for carcinogenic risk.
- (f) The Government has put in place various measures to safeguard the health of employees which, inter alia, include mandatory environmental clearance for asbestos based industries (new and expansion/modernization) irrespective of investment as per the provisions and procedures under EIA Notification 1994. Strict adherence to medical health care, occupational health monitoring and compliance to various BIS standards are prescribed while granting clearance. Further, Government has amended the Factories Act, 1948 in April, 2001 to make stringent and permissible exposure limit for Chrysotile asbestos as 1.0 fibre/cc.

Lok Sabha Questions during 2002

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 5941 ANSWERED ON 06.05.2002

IMPACT OF ASBESTOS MINING ON WORKERS HEALTH

5941. SHRI S. SAIDUZZAMAN

- (a) Whether the Government are aware of the serious health consequences of mining of asbestos on workers/labours as brought out recently at workshops in capital;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government have failed to check the same because of heavy pressures from cement as well as asbestos lobby who are importing asbestos from Canada etc; and
- (d) if so, the remedial steps taken or proposed to be taken to protect the health of workers?

ANSWER

MINISTERR OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI MUNI LALL)

- (a) & (b): The Ministry of Labour is aware of the workshop conducted by Indian Association of Occupational Health on 12th and 13th April, 2002 on Health-effects of hazardous and harmful minerals that have become extremely dangerous to human life causing cancer. However, the outcome of the workshop is not known to us. The Government is aware of the possible effects on health of excessive exposure to airborne asbestos dust in mining

operations. The matter has been studied by various committees set up by the Government of India from time to time. The Directorate General of Mines Safety have also conducted medical and environmental survey in asbestos mines and mills. These studies have shown that the dust levels in mining operations are below the limit of 2 fibres per milliliter of air in Metalliferous Mines Regulations, 1961. A recent report on "Study on Pollution Level in Asbestos mines and Processing Plants of Rajasthan for lifting ban on expansion of asbestos mining by Indian Bureau of Mines also shows that asbestos dust levels in mining operations are well below Threshold Limit Value of 2 fibres per milliliter and the present dust levels are not likely to adversely effect the health of the workers.

(c) & (d): Government of India has taken effective administrative, legislative and enforcement measures to ensure that the health of the persons employed in the asbestos mines is not adversely effected. Thus the question of getting pressurized by cement/asbestos lobby or any other organization does not arise. The following steps have been taken to protect the health of the workers employed in the asbestos mines:-

- i) all persons to be employed in asbestos mines are required to undergo initial Medical Examination and Periodic Medical Examination once every three years including chest x-ray and lung function test under Rule 29-B of the Mines Rules 1955.
- ii) Occupational diseases which may occur due to exposure to asbestos dust such as asbestosis, cancer of lung, stomach, pleura and peritoneum are notified diseases under section 25 of the Mines Act, 1952.

- iii) Regulation 124 of Metalliferous Mines Regulations, 1961 provides for regular monitoring of asbestos dust levels in Mines, dust control measures and use of personal protective equipment. It also prescribes 2 fibres per milliliter of air as the permissible limit of asbestos fibre dust in the work environment.
- iv) Bureau of Indian Standards has also formulated Indian Standards on various aspects of safety in use of asbestos including on asbestos mines and mills.
- v) From time to time the Government agencies, such as Directorate General of Mines Safety, National Institute of Occupational Health. Directorate General Factory Advice Service and Labour Institutes, Indian Bureau of Mines, etc. have been conducting dust surveys in asbestos mines.

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 7828 ANSWERED ON 17.05.2002

CLOSURE OF ASBESTOS SHEET UNITS

7828. SHRI SURESH RAMRAO JADHAV (PATIL)

- (a) whether Government propose to shut down asbestos sheet manufacturing units in India as it can cause lung cancer to the workers exposed to it.
- (b) If so, the time by which the manufacturing of asbestos sheet is likely to be closed keeping in view the fact that it is already banned in most of the developed countries and
- (c) If not, the reasons therefore?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
(RAMAN SINGH)

(a) to (c); there is no conclusive scientific evidence on the harmful effects of asbestos. Further, the units manufacturing asbestos sheets have to follow various safety norms prescribed by Bureau of Indian Standards to protect workers employed in these units against the harmful effects of asbestos. Therefore, in the absence of any conclusive evidence to suggest that manufacture of asbestos sheets causes lung cancer amongst workers employed in these units, it is not desirable to ban production of these sheets.

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 2936 ANSWERED ON 02.08.2002

EXPORT OF ASBESTOS

2936. PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT

- (a) the names of places where maximum number of asbestos sheets/ pipes are manufactured;
- (b) whether these asbestos products are exported;
- (c) if so, the details thereof alongwith the value of foreign currency earned through such exports;
- (d) whether according to the health experts, asbestos products manufacturing units causes lung diseases;

- (e) if so, whether the Government propose to close down these units;
- (f) if so, the details thereof; and
- (g) the steps taken to protect the interests of employees of these units?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
(SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY)

- (a) The names of places where maximum number of asbestos sheets/ pipes are manufactured are Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.
- (b) Yes, Sir.
- (c) Following are the value of Indian exports of asbestos sheets / pipes:

		(Rs.. in lakhs)	
S.No.	Item	2000-1 (Upto Feb 2002)	2001-02
1.	Asbestos cement Sheets (other than Corrugated sheets)	238.53	270.25
2.	Asbestos cement pipes Source: DGCI&S	7.17	5.08

- (d) to (g) There is no conclusive study conducted by Health experts to suggest that manufacturing of asbestos products cause lung diseases and as such there is no proposal before the Government to close down these units.

Lok Sabha Questions during 2003

UNSTARRED QUESTION No 2004 ANSWERED ON 04.03.2003

BAN ON MINING ON ASBESTOS

2004, SHRI VINAY KUMAR SORAKE

- (a) whether the mining of Asbestos is presently banned in the country on health grounds;
- (b) if so, whether many countries have lifted similar bans after recent research reports that Asbestos did not affect the health of the miners;
- (c) if so, whether the Asbestos mine holders especially from the State of Rajasthan have requested the Government to lift the ban in order to create more employment opportunities;
- (d) if so, the details thereof, State-wise; and
- (e) the reaction of the Union Government thereto?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS)

- (a) Grant of fresh mining leases and renewal of existing mining leases for asbestos are presently banned in India on health grounds.
- (b) No, the Central Government are not aware of some countries having lifted ban on asbestos mining.
- (c) to (e) Asbestos mines owners of Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh have represented before the Central Government to allow grant of

fresh/ renewal of asbestos mining leases in the country. Government have not lifted ban on grant of fresh/renewal of mining leases for asbestos in the country.

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 2973 ANSWERED ON 11.03.2003

RESEARCH ON SAFETY OF ASBESTOS

2973 SHRI S. SAIDUZZAMAN

- (a) whether it is a fact that ITRC Lucknow and several other public sector R & D Institutions such as NIOH, Nagpur have done pioneering work on the safety and health aspects of Asbestos;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether it is a fact that asbestos have been banned in many countries across the world; and
- (d) if so, the names those countries and the reasons therefore?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (BACHI SING RAWAT)

- (a) & (b) Yes Sir, ITRC and NIOH have carried out health and environmental monitoring related studies on asbestos. The efforts have led to working out mechanisms of toxicity of asbestos using in-vitro and in-vivo models; and highlighting populations that may be occupationally vulnerable.
- (b) (c) & (d) Some of the European Union countries have banned

asbestos as a preventive measure.

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 3634 ANSWERED ON 07.04.2003

WORKERS IN ASBESTOS CEMENT PRODUCTS

3634, SURESH RAMRAO JADHAV (PATIL)

- (a) whether the Government have taken note of a recent survey conducted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) wherein asbestos is believed to be responsible for death of a lakh workers annually across the world;
- (b) if so, the number of workers at present engaged in manufacture of asbestos based cement products; and
- (c) the steps taken by the Government to protect the workers?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI VIJAY GOEL)

- (a) The Government have not received any report from International Labour Organisation (ILO) relating to recent survey conducted by them wherein asbestos is believed to be responsible for death of a lakh workers annually across the world.
- (b) As per the details collected by Labour Bureau, Shimla about 8321 workers are engaged in the manufacture of asbestos cement and other cement products.
- (c) The manufacture, handling and processing of asbestos and its

product has been one of the industries involving hazardous processes as given in the First Schedule under the Factories Act, 1948. The provisions under Chapter IV-A of the Factories Act relating to hazardous processes therefore become applicable to this class of industry. The permissible threshold limit of asbestos has also been indicated in the second Schedule of the Factories Act.

Under Section 87 concerning dangerous operation, the State Governments are empowered to make rules applicable to any factory or class or description of factories on dangerous operations where the State Government is of the opinion that any manufacturing process or operation carried on in a factory exposes any person employed in it to a serious risk of bodily injury poisoning or disease. The State Governments have also framed rules under Section 87 and Schedule on Handling and Processing of Asbestos, Manufacture of any Article of Asbestos and any other process of manufacture or otherwise in which asbestos is used in any form has been notified by them on the basis of Model Rules prepared by Director General, Factory Advice Service & Labour Institutes (DGFASLI).

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 5650 ANSWERED ON 30.04.2003

USE OF ASBESTOS

5650, SHRI RAM NARESH TRIPATHI

- (a) whether the material which is used to manufacture drinking water pipe is injurious to human health;
- (b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether the Government propose to ban the use of asbestos; and

(d) if so, the steps taken/proposed to be taken in this regard?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SMT. SUSHMA SWARAJ)

- (a) & (b) Asbestos pipes are commonly used for supply of drinking water. As per IPCS (1986) Environmental Health Criteria, the studies conducted to date provide little convincing evidence of an association between asbestos in public water supplies and cancer induction. Ecological epidemiological studies conducted in areas having high concentration of asbestos fibres in the drinking water supply pipes have shown no evidence of association between levels of asbestos fibres from asbestos cement pipe and the incidence of digestive tract cancer.
- (c) At present, there is no proposal to ban the use of asbestos.
- (e) Does not arise.

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 6069 ANSWERED ON 05.05.2003

BAN ON IMPORT OF ASBESTOS

6069, SHRI S. SAIDUZZAMAN

- (a) the salient findings of the work done on asbestos at ITRC, Lucknow and NIOH, Ahmedabad and other bodies like Toxics Links, New Delhi;
- (b) whether asbestos has been banned in many countries across the world;

- (c) if so, names of these countries and reasons for such a ban; and
- (d) the steps proposed by the Government to ban the import of asbestos and safeguard the public health from the ill effects of asbestos?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
(SHRI DILIP SINGH JU DEV)

- (a) Studies conducted by ITRC, Lucknow, NIOH, Ahmedabad, Toxics Link, New Delhi have indicated, inter alia, incidences of Asbestosis (fibrosis of the lungs) among workers due to exposure to asbestos.
- (b) & (c) As per the available information, countries such as Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Austria, Netherlands, Finland, Italy, Germany, France, Poland, Belgium, U.K. have introduced partial ban/restrictions in the use and manufacture of asbestos fibre-based products due to its potential health impacts.
- (d) Import of asbestos waste (dust & fibre) is banned by the Government of India vide Notification S.O. No.899(E) dated 13.10.1998. Further, Blue Asbestos (crocidolite), which is the most harmful form of asbestos fibres, has been placed in the negative list of imports under the EXIM Policy.

BAN ON USE OF ASBESTOS

608, SHRI AKBOR ALI KHANDOKER

- (a) whether the Government had set up an Inter-Departmental Committee on banning the use of asbestos in various products;
- (b) If so, the number of meetings held by the Committee so far and when it is likely to submit its report?
- (c) whether the Government are aware that UNEP/WHO/ILO in their reports from time to time considered all forms of asbestos as carcinogenic; and
- (d) If so, the steps the Government propose to take to create public awareness in this regard?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU)

(a),(b),(c) & (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a),(b),(c) &(d) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 608 TO BE ANSWERED ON 05.05.2003 REGARDING BAN ON USE OF ASBESTOS RAISED BY SHRI AKBOR ALI KHANDOKER.

(a) & (b) No, Sir. However, an Expert Committee consisting of Director, National Institute of Occupational Health, Director, Industrial Toxicology Research Centre , Director General of Mine Safety, Member Secretary, Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and

others was constituted to formulate a strategy on Indian asbestos industry from environmental angle. The Committee held one meeting and subsequently the matter was referred to CPCB for examining the issues comprehensively. CPCB has submitted its report in August 2002.

- (c) The UNEP/ILO/WHO in its report on Chrysotile Asbestos (1998) has, inter alia, concluded that exposure to chrysotile asbestos poses increased risks for asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma in a dose-dependent manner and no threshold has been identified for carcinogenic risks.
- (d) Steps taken for prevention and control of pollution of asbestos and creation of public awareness include the following:
 - Public hearing has been made mandatory for all new/expansion/modernization projects in asbestos sector, prior to environmental clearance under the provisions of Environmental Impact Assessment Notification, 1994 and its subsequent amendments;
 - A Comprehensive Industry Document On Asbestos Products Manufacturing Industry including guidelines for environmental management has been prepared and widely disseminated for creating awareness; and,
 - Emission limits have been stipulated for all types of asbestos manufacturing units (including all processes involving the use of Asbestos) under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
 - The Bureau of Indian Standards has published several documents on guidelines relating to asbestos sector.

ASBESTOS CEMENT PLANTS IN THE COUNTRY

685, SHRI SURESH RAMRAO JADHAV (PATIL)

- (a) the number of Asbestos Cement plant in the country, State-wise;
- (b) the number of cases of lung cancer among workers of these Asbestos Cement plant detected during the last three years, State-wise; and
- (c) the steps taken by the Government to check issuance of fresh licences to the manufacturing units of asbestos related industries in future?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY (SHRI ARUN JAITLEY)

- (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.685 FOR ANSWER ON 9th MAY, 2003 REGARDING ASBESTOS CEMENT PLANTS IN THE COUNTRY.

- (a) The number of Asbestos Cement Plants in the Country, State-wise is given in Annexure-I.
- (b) No separate information is collected and maintained on the incidence of lung cancer in asbestos industries centrally.
- (c) Asbestos and asbestos products manufacturing industries have been delicensed with effect from 11.3.1998.

However, asbestos based industries require prior environmental

clearance, irrespective of the size of the plant and level of investment. The provisions of Environmental Impact Assessment Notification 1994 relating to medical health care of the workers, occupational health & hygiene have to be adhered to all by all asbestos based units. Further, these units have to comply with various BIS safety and health related standards for use of asbestos and asbestos products.

Annexure referred to in reply to part (a) of the Lok Sabha Starred Question No.685 for answer on 9.5.2003 regarding Asbestos Cement Plants in the Country.

State-wise distribution of number of Asbestos Cement Plants in the Country.

S.No.	Name of States	No. of chrysotile plants
1	Assam	1
2	Andhra Pradesh	3
3	Gujarat	1
4	Jharkhand	1
5	Haryana	1
6	Karnataka	1
7	Kerala	1
8	Madhya Pradesh	2
9	Maharashtra	9
10	Orissa	1
11	Tamil Nadu	6
12	Uttar Pradesh	1

13	West Bengal	2
14	Rajasthan	1
15	Union Territory of Dadar & Nagar Haveli	1
Total		32

Source: The Asbestos Cement Products Manufacturers` Association.

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 3089 ANSWERED ON 13.08.2003

ASBESTOS CEMENT PLANTS IN THE COUNTRY

3089 SHRI PRAKASH V. PATIL

- (a) whether W.H.O. Agency on cancer Research has declared Asbestos mining as cancer creating hazards;
- (b) whether the Institute of Occupational Health at Ahmedabad has stated that the cause of untimely deaths of the Asbestos miner is Asbestos;
- (c) whether the Supreme Court has issued some guidelines in this regard;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the action taken or contemplated by the Government in this regard?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SMT. SUSHMA SWARAJ)

(a) to (e) The information received from the World Health Organisation (WHO) indicates that the persons engage in asbestos mining are at risk of having cancer. While the National Institute of Occupational Health (NIOH), Ahmedabad has not done any specific study on the mortality rate of miners, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is of the view that long term exposure to any type of asbestos can lead to development of asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma.

The Supreme Court in a Judgement on Asbestosis in response to the Writ Petition filed by Consumer Education and Research Centre & others have inter-alia stated:-

- (i) Health record of every worker to be maintained up to 40 years from beginning of employment or 15 days after retirement/cessation whichever is later
- (ii) Membrane filter test to be adopted by industries to detect asbestos fibre.
- (iii) All the factories were directed to compulsorily insure health coverage to every worker.
- (iv) Union and State Governments were directed to review the standards of permissible exposure limit value of fibres after every 10 years and also when International Labour Organisation (ILO) gives directions
- (v) Union and State Governments were directed to consider

inclusion of small-scale factories also to protect health hazards of the workers.

Various standards have been prescribed by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) to ensure safety in handling & use of asbestos and asbestos products. In addition there are provisions under the Factories (Amendment) Act 1987, Mines Act 1952 and Environment Protection Act 1986 to reduce/control the hazards produced due to asbestos exposure.

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 3151 ANSWERED ON 23.12.2003

BAN ON ASBESTOS MINING

3151 SMT. JAYABEN B. THAKKAR

- (a) whether the Government has lifted ban on mining of Asbestos after ruling by the Supreme Court; and
- (b) if not, the reasons for importing the same from other countries?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS)

- (a) Asbestos is being mined in the areas already held under mining lease. However, in view of the hazardous effect of asbestos mining on health of all concerned, the Government had decided not to grant any new lease for mining of asbestos and minerals found alongwith asbestos and renewal of existing mining leases of asbestos. No changes have been made in this policy.

(b) The import of asbestos is mainly being allowed as domestic production of asbestos, particularly chrysotile asbestos is meagre to meet demand of manufacturing units of asbestos cement sheets, asbestos pressure pipes, asbestos cloth, brake lining etc. Domestically available amphibolite asbestos is not suitable for the above said purposes and it finds application mostly in thermal insulation and treatment of acids.

Lok Sabha Questions during 2004

UNSTARRED QUESTION No.1537 ANSWERED ON 19.07.2004

BAN ON WHITE ASBESTOS

1537 SHRI KINJARAPU YERRANNAIDU

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether many organisations have demanded for a ban on white asbestos which is causing lung cancer in the country; and
- (b) if so, the action taken / proposed to be taken to ban use of white asbestos to make environment pollution free?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STASTE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
(SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA)

- (a) Yes, Sir. Some of the non-governmental organisations have been campaigning for total ban on asbestos in the country causing lung cancer.
- (b) As no scientific study establishing that the use of white asbestos causing lung cancer is available, it is not considered as desirable to ban the use of white asbestos.

BAN ON WHITE ASBESTOS

3125 SHRI SURENDRA PRAKASH GOEL

MADHUSUDAN DEVRAM MISTRY

VIRJIBHAI THUMMAR

RAJESH KUMAR MISHRA

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether some Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have been campaigning for a total ban on white asbestos in the country claiming that it causes lung cancer;
- (b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;
- (c) whether the Government has conducted any scientific study to verify the above claim of NGOs; and
- (d) if so, the result thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
(SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA)

- (a) & (b) Yes, Sir. The Government has received representations from a few Non-Governmental Organisations for a total ban on white asbestos in the country. However, as no scientific study establishing that the use of white asbestos causing lung cancer

is available, it is not considered as desirable to ban the use of white asbestos.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise

Lok Sabha Questions during 2005

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 5323 ANSWERED ON 29.04.2005

HEALTH STUDY OF WORKERS OF ASBESTOS MINING

5323 SHRI JASWANT SINGH BISHNOI

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether Indian Mines Bureau has conducted study regarding the impact on the health of labourers engaged in asbestos mining;
- (b) if so, the findings of the study;
- (c) whether any recommendation has been made in the study to remove the ban imposed on mining of asbestos;
- (d) whether the Government proposes to implement these recommendations and remove the ban on leases of asbestos mining; and
- (e) if so, the time by which these recommendations are proposed to be implemented?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO)

- (a) to (c) In 1998, Ministry of Mines had approved a S&T Project titled ` Study of Pollution Level in Asbestos Mines and processing plants in Rajasthan ` to be undertaken by Indian Bureau of Mines(IBM),

a subordinate office of the Ministry to assess the feasibility of lifting the ban on expansion of asbestos mining through a scientific study of pollution level in asbestos mines and processing plants in Rajasthan and in Andhra Pradesh and to suggest appropriate mitigation measures. The Study recommended that the ban imposed on grant and renewal of mining leases and expansion of mining may be lifted subject to control of pollution level in work environment of various operations and other remedial measures.

- (d) & (e) Recommendations of the Study have been examined in consultation with all Stake holders. Some stake holders have suggested that asbestos mining can be permitted with appropriate safeguards. IBM in consultation with Central Pollution Control Board has been asked to work out these safeguards. At present the ban on mining of asbestos has not been lifted.

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 6768 ANSWERED ON 11.05.2005

HARMFUL EFFECTS OF ASBESTOS EXPOSURE

6786 SMT. JAYABEN B. THAKKAR

Will the Minister of Health and Family Welfare be pleased to state :

- (a) whether the Government is aware that Dr. T.K. Joshi of the Lok Nayak Jayaprakash Hospital has given detailed account of the dangers of Asbestos;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and

- (c) the measures being taken to save the construction workers from Asbestos exposure?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
(SMT. PANABAKA LAKSHMI)

- (a) & (b) Dr. T.K. Joshi of Lok Nayak Jaiprakash Narayan Hospital has expressed his view in an article published in 'Indian Journal of Occupational and Environmental medicine' that asbestos used in any form and in any manner is carcinogenic with no safe levels of exposure as evidenced by the position taken by a number of international agencies. However, according to Indian Council of Medical Research, there is no convincing evidence that the consumers of asbestos products face any significant risk of cancer.
- (c) Various standards have been prescribed by Bureau of Indian Standards to ensure safety in handling and use of asbestos and asbestos products. In addition, there are provisions under the Factories Act, 1947, Mines Act 1952 and Environment Protection Act 1986 to reduce/control the hazards produced due to asbestos exposure.

Lok Sabha Questions during 2006

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 1027 ANSWERED ON 27.02.2006

BAN ON ASBESTOS

1027 SHRI K. SUBBARAYAN

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether India is signatory to any convention regarding use/production or export/ import of asbestos;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether complaints have been received regarding its carcinogenic content and its hazard to health and environment; and (
- (d) if so, the action taken/proposed to be taken in this regard?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
(SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA)

- (a) & (b) Yes, Sir. India is a signatory and party since May, 2005 to the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade. The convention seeks to establish a prior informed consent procedure for imports and exports of chemicals listed in Annex HI. All varieties of asbestos, excluding chrysotile, is listed in Annex III of the convention and is subject to the Prior

Informed Consent procedure. India imports and uses only Chrysotile (white) Asbestos. Chrysotile is under consideration in the Chemical Review Committee of the Convention for inclusion in Annex III.

- (c) No complaints have so far been received regarding carcinogenic content of Chrysotile Asbestos and its hazard to health and environment.
- (d) Does not arise.

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 1690 ANSWERED ON 7.03.2006

CHRYSOTILE ASBESTOS MINING

1690, SHRI SAI PRATHAP ANNAYYAGARI

RASA SINGH RAWAT
BHANWAR SINGH DANGAWAS

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether the Chrysotile Asbestos Mining has come to a standstill on account of ban imposed on expansion of asbestos mining and renewal of mining lease;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether thousands of poor rural people have become unemployed as a result of this ban;
- (d) if so, the action taken in this regard;

- (e) whether the Government proposes to lift the ban imposed on asbestos mining;
- (f) if so, the details thereof;
- (g) whether a huge amount in foreign exchange is being spent for importing Chrysotile Asbestos;
- (h) if so, the details thereof; and
- (i) if so, the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY)

- (a) to (b) In view of the deleterious effect of asbestos mining on the health of the workers, the government have ordered the State governments in 1986 not to grant any new mining lease for asbestos (including chrysotile variety) in the country. In June 1993, government stopped the renewal of existing mining leases of asbestos in the country.
- (e) & (f) In 1998, Ministry of Mines approved a S&T Project titled `Study of Pollution Level in Asbestos Mines and processing plants in Rajasthan` to be undertaken by Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) to assess the feasibility of lifting the ban on expansion of asbestos mining through a scientific study of pollution level in asbestos mines and processing plants in Rajasthan and in Andhra Pradesh and to suggest appropriate mitigation measures. The Study recommended that the ban imposed on grant and renewal of mining leases and expansion of mining may be lifted subject to control of pollution level in work environment of various

operations and other remedial measures. IBM has been asked to work out necessary safeguards/measures in consultation with Central Pollution Control Board subject to which chrysotile asbestos mining can be permitted so as to ensure worker's safety. The guidelines have not been finalized yet.

- (g) to (i) As per information available, Rs.125.82 crores, Rs.182.74 crores and Rs.198.81 crores (provisional) were spent on import of chrysotile asbestos, during the years 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05 respectively.

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 1940 ANSWERED ON 08.03.2006

COMBATING ASBESTOS

1940 SHRI M. APPADURAI

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether medical facilities and medicines are available for 'Asbestosis' disease in all Government Hospitals and Medical Centres in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof
- (c) the number of people died so far by 'Asbestosis' in the country; and
- (d) the steps being taken by the Government to safeguard the people from the said disease?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
(SMT. PANABAKA LAKSHMI)

- (a) & (b) There is no curative treatment for asbestosis disease. However, supportive treatment is available in all Central Government Hospitals.
- (c) As per the study conducted by ICMR's National Institute of Occupational Health, Ahmedabad in different mining and milling units of Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan showed that the prevalence of asbestosis in mining was 3% and in milling was 5% in Rajasthan and 21% in Andhra Pradesh. So far as asbestos cement industry is concerned the prevalence of asbestosis was 5% at Ahmedabad, 4.5% at Hyderabad, 3.9% at Coimbatore and 3% at Mumbai. In case of non-cement asbestos product manufacturing industry also, the prevalence was 9% for asbestosis. The information in regard to deaths due to asbestosis disease is not available.
- (d) Asbestos handling industry is included in the list of industries involving hazardous processes under the first schedule of the Factories Act, 1948. Under the said Act there are sufficient provisions described in detail to safeguard safety and health of the workers. These provisions include measures such as guarding of machinery, personal protection, warning against eminent danger, monitoring of work environment, pre-employment and periodic medical checkup and maintenance of health records. This Act is enforced by the Chief Inspector of Factories under the Labour Department of the concerned State Governments. Apart from this, relevant provisions of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, and Air Prevention & Control

of Pollution) Act, 1981 are also important so far as the health and safety of workers of asbestos industries and surrounding population is concerned.

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 768 ANSWERED ON 31.07.2006

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF ASBESTOS

768 SHRI MOHAN PONUSWAMY

Will the Minister of Environment and Forests be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether any epidemiological study on Asbestos related diseases has been conducted recently;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the total number of Asbestos manufacturing units in the country, State-wise?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
(SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA)

- (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be placed on the Table of the House.

ASBESTOS MINING

1725 PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:-

- (a) Whether the Government of Rajasthan has made any request to the Union Government to lift the ban imposed on Asbestos mining;
- (b) If so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the action being taken by the Government in this regard?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY)

- (a) & (b) Yes, Sir. Government of Rajasthan has requested the Central Government to lift the ban on grant/renewal of mining leases of asbestos.
- (c) Indian Bureau of Mines in consultation with Central Pollution Control Board(CPCB) and Directorate General of Mines Safety is considering guidelines for safe mining of asbestos by way of reducing permissible limit of airborne respirable asbestos fibre dust. The guidelines have not yet been finalized.

Lok Sabha Questions during 2007

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 935 ANSWERED ON 06.03.2007

ASBESTOS MINING

935 SMT. SUSHEEL LAXMAN BANGARU

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether India Bureau of Mines has conducted any study on the health hazards of asbestos mine workers in Rajasthan;
- (b) if so, the details of the recommendations made in this regard;
- (c) the details of action taken by the Government on such recommendations; and
- (d) the time by which ban on leasing and renewal of lease of asbestos mine is likely to be lifted?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI SIS RAM OLA).

- (a) to (d) An S&T Project titled ` Study of Pollution Level in Asbestos Mines and processing plants in Rajasthan` was undertaken by Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM), a subordinate office of the Ministry. The Study recommended that subject to imposition of safeguards on pollution level in work environment, the ban imposed on grant and renewal of mining leases and expansion of mining may be lifted.

Recommendations of the Study have been examined in consultation with all stake holders. Some stake holders have suggested that asbestos mining can be permitted with appropriate safeguards. IBM in consultation with Central Pollution Control Board and Directorate General of Mines Safety has been asked to work out these safeguards. At present the ban on mining of asbestos has not been lifted.

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1506 ANSWERED ON 27.11.2007

STUDY OF INDIAN BUREAU OF MINES ON ASBESTOS

1506 SHRI SRICHAND KRIPLANI

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether any study has been conducted by the Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) regarding the likely effects on the health of the labourers engaged in the mining of asbestos;
- (b) if so, whether the Government has received the study report from the IBM;
- (c) if so, the details of recommendations made by IBM thereof;
- (d) whether the Government has considered these recommendations so far;
- (e) if so, the details thereof; and
- (f) the time by when the ban on asbestos mining is likely to be lifted?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY)

(a) & (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The Study recommended imposition of safeguards on pollution level in work environment and other remedial measures.

(d) to (f) Recommendations of the Study have been examined in consultation with all stake holders. Some stake holders have suggested that asbestos mining can be permitted with appropriate safeguards. At present the ban on mining of asbestos has not been lifted.

Lok Sabha Questions during 2008

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 2395 ANSWERED ON 17.03.2008

WORKING CONDITIONS IN ASBESTOS FACTORIES

2395 SHRI GIRDHARI LAL BHARGAV

Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether the Government has recently conducted a study through National Institute of Occupational Health to assess the extent of improvement in working conditions in the asbestos factories in the country;
- (b) if so, the details and outcome thereof, State-wise; and
- (c) the funds contributed by the private sector for conducting the said study alongwith the allocation made by the government?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF THE STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI OSCAR FERNANDES)

- (a) & (b) A project titled: "A study of health hazards/environmental hazards resulting from the use of chrysotile asbestos in the country" is under way with National Institute of Occupational Health, Ahmedabad.
- (c) The total cost of the project is Rs. 59.66 lakhs. Out of this, Government of India (Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers) is

contributing Rs.43.66 lakhs and the balance of Rs. 16 lakhs is contributed by the Asbestos Cement Product Manufacturer Association to ensure cooperation and involvement of the industry.

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 4166 ANSWERED ON 22.04.2008

IMPORT OF ASBESTOS

4166 SHRI KISHANBHAI VESTABHAI PATEL

SUGRIB SINGH
NAND KUMAR SAI

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether asbestos is being imported into the country; and
- (b) if so, the details thereof during the last three years and in the current year, till date alongwith its value, country-wise?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY(SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH)

- (a) & (b) A Statement indicating the details of Asbestos imported during the last three years and during April – August, 2007 of the last financial year, i.e. 2007-08, value-wise, country-wise is Annexed

ANNEXURE

ANNEXURE REFERRED TO LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.4166

52400 ASBESTOS

S. No	COUNTRY	Value in Rs. Lacs			
		2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08 (Apr.-Aug) 2007)
1	AFGHANISTAN TIS		11.86		
2	AUSTRALIA			50.89	
3	BELGIUM			117.47	
4	BRAZIL	4681.58	6236.62	9486.18	6653.6
5	CANADA	7881.93	6406.91	10689.75	5045.1
6	CHINA P RP	12.76	0.1	57.55	7.83
7	DOMINICA	8.56			
8	GREECE	218.36			
9	ITALY	50.83			
10	JAPAN		0.04		
11	JORDAN			22.26	
12	KAZAKHSTAN	2663.51	2538.78	4597.78	1127.7
13	KENYA	15.92			
14	MALAYSIA	3.23			
15	MOZAMBIQUE		17.74	70.57	48.72
16	POLAND	73.51	41.68	422.92	80.06
17	RUSSIA	9567.34	18175.29	18107.03	10113.77
18	SAUDI ARAB	2.39			
19	SOUTH AFRICA	424.44	519.67	971.62	300.55
20	SWITZERLAND	5.51			
21	SRI LANKA DSR		52.49		
22	U ARAB EMTS			2.71	
23	U K		30.41	10.22	
24	UKRAINE	65.96			83.12
25	U S A		9.34	79.97	
26	ZAMBIA		149.14	49.16	
27	ZIMBABWE	1313.6	7361.7	7122.72	2621.9
28	UNSPECIFIED	184.12			65.84
	TOTAL	27173.54	41499.27	51911.29	26148

MINING OF ASBESTOS

457 . SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether any study has been conducted by the Indian Bureau of Mines regarding the adverse effects of mining asbestos on the health of workers;
- (b) if so, the findings of the study;
- (c) whether the study group has suggested to lift the ban imposed on asbestos mining;
- (d) if so, whether the Government proposes to implement the same; and
- (e) the time by which the ban on asbestos mining and grant of new mining lease is likely to be lifted?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS & FERTILIZERS AND MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI B.K. HANDIQUE)

- (a) Yes, Sir.
- (b) & (c) The Study recommended imposition of safeguards on pollution level in work environment and other remedial measures subject to which the ban imposed on grant and renewal of mining leases and expansion of mining may be lifted.

(d) & (e) Recommendations of the Study have been examined in consultation with all stake holders. Some stake holders have suggested that asbestos mining can be permitted with appropriate safeguards. At present the ban on mining of asbestos has not been lifted.

Lok Sabha Questions during 2009

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 1505 ANSWERED ON 15.07.2009

USE OF ASBESTOS CEMENTED PIPES IN DRINKING WATER PROJECTS

1505 . SHRI RAJEN GOHAIN

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether the Asbestos Cemented (AC) pipes used for Drinking water projects is a health hazard;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and
- (c) the corrective action taken by the Government in this regard?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD)

- (a) & (b) From the available literature, there does not appear to be any health hazard from asbestos cemented pipes used for drinking water.
- (c) Does not arise

