

Name:

Street: No.....

Cite EDC:

6 July, 2018

To: Prime Minister.

Dear Sir,

We write to you as Prime Minister, after the apparent collapse of the National Committee on Asbestos which had an array of Ministers on it. It was set up after the then Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Housing issued a communiqué announcing a “*grand projet d’envergure*” and stating clearly: “*L’amiante étant un matériau toxique, le Ministre du Logement a plaidé [with the then Minister of Finance] pour un plan de désamiantage. Le Ministre des Finances a agréé a cette demande et il déboursa le budget nécessaire pour enlever de l’amiante dans ces maisons EDC/Ex-CHA.*” (Official Communiqué 22 July 2015 – Annex I). The present Housing Minister has re-iterated an offer of “*assistance*” in a letter to our joint-committees (1 June 2018 – Annex II).

I, and the members of my family, listed below, are still residing in a house with asbestos external walls and partitions.

1. We write to you today to call on Government to begin work on *urgent and necessary assistance* in eliminating asbestos housing and rebuilding.
2. In particular we call for you to publish “regional contact details” for Sub-Units in charge of this work in each region, so that my family can register with it for *urgent and necessary assistance*.
3. We call for the National Committee on Asbestos to proceed with the phase-by-phase removal of asbestos and elimination of the waste, having assured the appropriate (i) training and (ii) equipping of a team of workers, organized to cover the 59 Cité EDC concerned, and for the reconstruction of a house for each family.
4. We call on you to publish a “time-frame” for the demolition-reconstruction work.

My family living in the unit includes:

Name	Relationship	Age
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.....		

Yours sincerely,

Brief History

As Government is aware, inhaling asbestos dust causes illness. It represents a risk to people living or working near the asbestos, and to untrained and poorly equipped people who might remove the asbestos, and to everyone nearby. Amongst the illnesses caused by exposure are mesothelioma, asbestosis, lung cancer, laryngeal cancer, ovarian cancer, testes cancer, pleural plaques, pleural thickening and pleural effusion. Deaths due to asbestos include those of Mr Gilbert Leong Son, who worked in a sugar estate office with asbestos walls and a unionized worker who handled asbestos piping, Mr Claude Marguerite.

The EDC houses made with asbestos were built in the 1960s when the dangers of asbestos were not widely known. By 1970, the dangers were acknowledged by States, which by then accepted responsibility for asbestos as a *known public health issue*.

It was over a decade later, starting in the 1980s, that the State began selling asbestos houses to occupants.

As Government is aware,

1) 12 years ago, Dr. R. Sibartie, then Head of the Health Ministry's Occupational Health Unit, concluded his Report on Asbestos as follows: *"The asbestos panels in the Housing Estates will have to be replaced by Government. This will be a very costly project, but the health of the inhabitants should be a major concern for the Government."* (10 May, 2006 – Annex III)

2) 5 years later the *Truth and Justice Commission Report* stated: *"Many housing estates have buildings constructed with asbestos, a toxic substance which is damaging to health. These houses should be pulled down on a phase to phase basis and other units constructed with proper material."* (Nov. 2011 -- Annex IV.) The Labour Government announced it would destroy and rebuild asbestos housing for all affected.

3) Another four years later, there was the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Housing's communiqué referred to overleaf which led directly to the setting up of a National Committee on Asbestos with 6 Ministers sitting on it. A time-frame was promised at a meeting of 30 July, 2015 (See Annex V). And demolition actually began. It started with houses that were unoccupied. However, the Committee seems to have broken down.

Problems were apparently encountered: (i) SMF officers doing the demolition refused to continue work, fearing that they had neither the requisite training nor the equipment necessary to ensure their safety. (ii) There were problems about disposal, initially planned for La Chaumière but as this was not safe, the asbestos was sent to Mare Chicose. However, the landfill is not big enough to take the asbestos from all the Cité. Other solutions, including implosion and sealing into concrete blocks that could later be used for artificial reefs at sea, were, we believe, studied. (iii) Many houses in Mauritius, including EDC houses, no longer have clearly defined owners once the original "buyer" has died and they are then occupied by some of the person's heirs, or heirs of heirs. The first two issues need to be addressed by the State in a general manner, and the third will have to be addressed on a case-by-case basis with "public health" as the ultimate issue at stake.

KOPI AN KREOL PU ABITAN GARDE

Nom:

Lari: No.....

Site EDC:

6 Ziyet, 2018

Pu: Premye Minis.

Ser Premye Minis,

Nu pe ekrir u antan ki Premye Minis apre ki Komite Nasyonal lor Asbestos avek plizyer Minis lor la, paret finn kolaps. Anfet, ti met sa Komite la dibut apre ki Vis Premye Minis e Minis Lozman ti'nn tir enn Kominike formel lor enn *“grand projet d'envergure”* e kot li finn dir klerman ki: *“L'amiante étant un matériau toxique, le Ministre du Logement a plaidé [ar Minis Finans alepok] pour un plan de désamiantage. Le Ministre des Finances a agréé a cette demande et il déboursa le budget nécessaire pour enlever de l'amiante dans ces maisons EDC/Ex-CHA.”* (Kominike Ofisyel 22 July 2015 – Anex I). Minis Lozman aktyel finn re-vini ar enn lof *“assistance”* dan enn let adrese ar nu bann Komite Konzwin (1 Zin 2018 – Anex II).

Mo-mem, ansam ar manb mo fami liste anba, pe tuzur res dan lakaz lamyant.

1. Nu pe ekrir zordi pu fer apel a Guvernman pu kumans travay lor sa *lasistans irzan e nesaser* ki li finn anonse, setadir pu tir lamyant, re-ranz lakaz.
2. An partikilye, nu fer apel pu u fer pibliye *“plas onivo sak rezyon kot nu kapav pran detay”* depi bann Yunit ki pu pran sarz travay dan sak rezyon. Kumsa mo fami kapav anrezistre pu sa *lasistans irzan ek nesaser*.
3. Nu fer apel pu ki Komite Nasyonal lor Lamyant li al delavan avek tir lamyant, elimin li, faz-par-faz, atraver lekip travayer ki (i) antrene e (ii) byin ekipe, atraver sa 59 Sité EDC konserne, e asir *lasistans* pu rekonstrir lakaz pu sak fami.
4. Nu fer apel pu u pibliye enn *“kalandriye”* pu sa travay demoli-rekonstrir.

Manb lafami ki res dan lakaz ansam ar mwa:

Name

Relationship

Age

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Salitasyon sinser,

.....

cc. Minis Lasante, Local Governmennt, Lanvironnman, Finans, Lozman.
(Vir paz pu argimantasyon e listwar prepare par nu bann Komite Konzwin).

Listwar Bref

Kuma Guvernman kone, ena maladi ki vini kan respir lapusyer lamyant. Li enn risk pu dimunn ki viv dan ubyin travay ar asbestos, ubyin pu dimunn ki manye li san antrennman e san lekipman nesaser, e pu vwazinaz lamyant. Parmi maladi koze par lamyant ena mesothelioma, asbestosis, kanser pumon, kanser over, kanser testikil, plak pumon, dirsisman pumon, plerezi. Dan lepase finn ena de lamor aköz lamyant, M Gilbert Leong Son, ki ti travay dan enn biro tablisman ar pano lamyant ek M Claude Marguerite ki ti enn travayer sindike, e ki so travay sete pu kup tiyo lamyant.

Lakaz EDC ar pano lamyant (asbestos) ti konstrir dan bann lane 1960 kan pa ti kone ki asbestos danzere (apar enn-de akademik ti kone). Ariv bann lane 1970, bann Guvernman partu dan lemond kumans rekonet danze lamyant, e pran responsabilite pu lamyant antan ki enn *kestyon lasante piblik*.

Plis ki enn deseni plitar, kumanse dan bann lane 1980, Leta inn kumans vann lakaz lamyant ar okipan.

Kuma Guvernman kone,

1) 12 banane desela, Dr. R. Sibartie, sef Occupational Health Unit dan Minister Lasante ti konklir so Rapor lor Lamyant kumsa: *“Pano lamyant dan Site pu oblize ranplase par Guvernman. Sa pu kut byin ser, me lasante okipan li bizin pli inportan pu Guvernman.”* (10 Me, 2006 – Anex III)

2) 5 banane plitar *Komisyon Laverite ek Lazistis* dir: *“Buku site ena lakaz konstrir ar lamyant, enn sibstans toxik ki fer ditor lasante. Sa bann lakaz la bizin kraze, faz par faz, e lezot lakaz konstrir ar bon materyo konstriksiyon.”* (Nov. 2011 -- Anex IV.) Guvernman Travayis ti anonse ki li pu kraze-refer lakaz lamyant.

3) 4 banane apre, Vis Premye Minis e Minis Lozman tir so Kominike (lot kote paz). Sa al direkteman lor enn Komite Nasyonal lor Lamyant avek 6 Minis syez lor la. Zot ti promet enn kalandriye (time-frame) dan reynion 30 Ziyet, 2015 (Anex V). Demolisyon ti anfet kumanse. Zot ti kumanse ar lakaz ki pa ti ena abitan ladan. Me, Komite la paret finn kolaps.

Aparaman, parmi problem ki ti gayne, ti ena: (i) Ofisye SMF ki ti pe fer travay demolisyon inn refiz travay, aköz zot ti per ki zot pena ni treyning ni lekipman nesaser pu fer li an sekirite. (ii) Ti ena problem kot pu zet li. Kumansman ti krwar La Chaumière, me laba li riske anvole, alor finn avoy li Mare Chicose. Me, laba pa ase gran pu tu lakaz site. Lezot solisyon, inklir enn sistem inplozyon e sel lamyant la dan blok beton, al kul dan lamer ti konsidere, nu finn aprann. (iii) Buku lakaz Moris, inklir lakaz EDC, nepli ena *proprieter kler* kan grandimunn ki finn aste lakaz la finn desede, e li vinn pu so zeritye, e zeritye sa bann zeritye la. Premye de pwin Leta kapav adrese dan enn fason zeneral, trwazyem la bizin gete ka-par-ka avek lasante piblik kuma fakter prinsipal.



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

Ministry of Housing and Lands

Office of the Vice-Prime Minister

Communiqué – Désamiantage des maisons EDC/Ex-CHA

Le Vice-Premier Ministre et Ministre du Logement et des Terres, Showkutally Soodhun a eu une réunion avec le Ministre des Finances, Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo, en présence du Secrétaire Financier, ce matin.

L'objectif de la réunion était de venir de l'avant avec des solutions pour des familles qui résident dans des maisons EDC/Ex-CHA, contaminées à l'amiante. Le Vice-Premier Ministre, Showkutally Soodhun a expliqué que 2137 maisons EDC/Ex-CHA, à travers 59 endroits du pays contiennent de l'amiante. Construites dans les années 60, ces maisons se trouvent principalement dans des cités ouvrières.

L'amiante étant un matériau toxique, le Ministre du Logement a plaidé pour un plan de désamiantage. Le Ministre des Finances a agréé à cette demande et il déboursa le budget nécessaire pour enlever de l'amiante dans ces maisons EDC/Ex-CHA.

Pour la bonne marche de ce grand projet d'envergure, un comité national a été mis sur pied. Une première réunion sous la présidence du Vice-Premier Ministre, Showkutally Soodhun aura lieu la semaine prochaine. Les Ministères de la Santé, de l'Environnement, des Finances, des Infrastructures Publiques, ainsi que des ONGs et d'autres associations participeront à cette réunion.

Ministère du Logement et des Terres

22 Juillet 2015

In reply please quote :

My Ref: MHO/1001/CEH



Ministry of Housing and Lands
Ebène Tower, Plot 52
Ebène, Cybercity
Tel. No.: 401 6808 / 09
Fax No.: 454 6328
Email: mhou@govmu.org

01 June 2018

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Poor Housing Conditions in EDC/Ex-CHA estates in Mauritius

Please refer to your letter dated 25 April 2018 addressed to Honourable Purmanund (Mahen) Jhugroo, Minister of Housing and Lands, on the above subject.

2. I am directed to inform you that for owners of EDC/ex-CHA houses who either wish to upgrade or reconstruct their respective housing unit, the following facilities are already available:

- (i) assistance from the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Environment and Sustainable Development (Solid Waste Management Division) and the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands for the removal and carting away of asbestos wastes;
- (ii) the owner may benefit from grant for the casting of roof slabs or for the purchase of building materials through the NHDC Ltd, in cases of reconstruction of their housing units;
- (iii) subsidised loan facilities from the Mauritius Housing Company Ltd; and
- (iv) assistance from the National Empowerment Foundation (NEF) for the construction of a housing unit as these occupiers are also owners of the plot of land on which stands their houses.

3. I am also directed to inform you that you may wish to liaise with the Secretariat of the High Level Technical Committee set up at the level of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Environment and Sustainable Development (Solid Waste Management Division) for latest updates and more details on the safe removal and disposal of asbestos with regard to EDC house.

4. Thanking you for your kind understanding.

Yours faithfully,

N. Lutchmadoo
for Permanent Secretary

Komite Konzwin abitan EDC Cite La Chaux- LALIT (Sid)
(Attn: Marie Jane Paule)
125, Cité La Chaux
Mahebourg

HEALTH DIMENSION OF ASBESTOS IN MAURITIUS

Dr.R.Sibartie
Head, Occupational Health Unit
Ministry of Health, Mauritius

Following the death of a worker from lung cancer in May 2001, workers representatives suspected the cause to be linked to asbestos and lodged a complaint with the Ministry of Labour. The worker was from a group of 7 workers involved in laying and repairing asbestos cement pipes used for irrigation of sugar cane fields. The work consisted of sawing and adjusting the pipes and this caused the generation of large amount of dust. The workers were not provided with personal protective equipment and were not aware of the dangers.

An autopsy carried out on the dead worker confirmed the lung cancer and also established the presence of asbestos fibers in the lungs. However since the worker was a heavy smoker for many years, death could not be attributed directly to asbestos. Samples of the cement pipe sent for analysis confirmed the presence of chrysotile asbestos fibers in the cement pipe.

Officers of the Ministry of Labour and Health investigated the complaint and after assessing the health and environmental risks of exposure to dusts containing asbestos immediately directed worked to be stopped . All the workers were examined by an Occupational Health Physician, X-Ray showed that 2 workers had pleural thickenings and CT scans confirmed the presence of plural plaques. These workers were prevented from further work with asbestos cement pipes. The remaining workers were given training and education on preventive measures. They were finally allowed to complete the work after provision of appropriate personal protective equipment. Wet grinding was recommended. The area was kept out of bound for the public. All the dusts and contaminated earth and washings were removed and buried in a secluded place. The place was marked and no development is allowed on that land.

Subsequently union leaders voiced concern for the health of inhabitants of EDC Housing Estates where houses constructed for cyclone victims were made with asbestos cement panels. In August 2001, Government set up an Inter-Ministerial meeting with representatives of workers , representatives of employers, and other Ministries and Departments concerned. Government then decided to contact the Commonwealth Secretariat for the services of an expert in asbestos.

Mr John Addison, Expert from the Commonwealth Secretariat for Technical Cooperation came to Mauritius in November 2001 to assess the health risks posed by the presence of asbestos in housing estates, public buildings and at the workplace. Mr Addison made recommendations on protection of workers, on legislation to control the use of asbestos to protect the public, workers and the environment. He carried out training for officers of

the Ministry of Labour, Health and Environment. He also advised on the setting up of a dedicated laboratory. During his visit he took samples of suspected asbestos materials and confirmed the presence of different types of asbestos fibers in different places ie. Factories, public utilities, housing estates and public buildings. He also showed concern about the way asbestos materials were being removed from sugar factories. Following the report of the expert, Government set up a Technical Committee in May 2002, under the Ministry of Health to prepare an Action Plan to implement the recommendations of Mr Addison.

An action plan was prepared in October 2002 and each stakeholder came up with immediate, short term and long term actions to be taken concerning management of asbestos materials falling under their responsibilities. The technical committee under the Ministry of Health has been meeting regularly to monitor progress made by each stakeholder in the implementation of the Action Plan.

The following actions have been taken so far:

1. The import and use of all types of asbestos fibers have been prohibited under the Dangerous Chemicals Control Act 2004.
2. Products containing asbestos is controlled, Products containing blue asbestos have been banned.
3. The following Regulations have been made: 'Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations'; 'Prohibition of Asbestos at Work Regulations' and 'Asbestos Licensing Regulations'.
4. Training programs for workers, employers and union representatives, Health & Safety Officers have been carried out.
5. Medical Surveillance for workers handling asbestos products and materials have been started.
6. A Protocol on Measures to protect workers at work with asbestos has been prepared
7. Disposal of asbestos wastes is being regulated.
8. Inhabitants of housing estates have been screened for health problems related to asbestos exposure. Sensitization campaigns have been carried out for workers
9. Surveys have been carried out in Health and Educational Institutions and actions have already been taken to replace asbestos materials according to plans.
10. A survey of public buildings has been launched to identify asbestos materials, assess risks to users and propose remedial measures.
11. The Central Electricity Board has completed replacements of asbestos materials in their boilers. Old engines and boilers have been scrapped and asbestos removed under supervision
12. The Central Water Authority has stopped using asbestos cement pipes for potable water.
13. A project has been launched to dispose of a large amount of old asbestos cement pipes either in a dedicated landfill or at high seas.
14. Contacts have been established with overseas laboratories for help to set up a laboratory in Mauritius

Problems

There are still many private buildings with asbestos materials. The asbestos panels in the Housing Estates will have to be replaced by Government. This will be a very costly project, but the health of the inhabitants should be a major concern for the Government. Identification of disposal site is another problem. The present cell for hazardous waste in the landfill site is reaching saturation point and the authorities will have to look for alternative sites.

Training of personnel is very important to carry out the policies of Government concerning protection of health of workers, the public and the environment.

Dr.R.Sibartie
Head, Occupational Health Unit
Ministry of Health, Mauritius

10 May 2006

News

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National Committee on removal of asbestos recommends immediate destruction of 18 unoccupied EDC houses

Average Rating



Date: July 31, 2015
 Domain: Environment
 Persona: Business; Government; Citizen; Non-Citizen

GIS - 31 July 2015: The National Committee on the removal of asbestos in EDC/Ex-CHA houses has decided the immediate destruction of some 18 unoccupied houses constructed with materials containing asbestos. The houses are located in Verdun, Triolet, Telfair, St Julien, Olivia, L'Embrasure, La Chaux, Camp Diable, Bel Ombre, Benares, Argy and Amaury.

The destruction of these unoccupied houses is among a series of measures taken by the National Committee on the removal of asbestos who had its first meeting yesterday at the Lunch Room of

the National Assembly.

Chaired by the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands, Mr Showkutally Soodhun, the meeting brought together the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport, Mr Nandcoomar Bodha, the Minister of Health and Quality of Life, Mr Anil Gayan, the Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development, Disaster and Beach Management, Mr Raj Dayal, the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, Mr Prithvirajsing Roopun, the Minister of Local Government, Dr Anwar Husnood, representatives of the Parliamentary opposition, several ministries and public agencies, civil societies, Non-Governmental Organisations, and trade unions. Its objective is to find suitable solutions for these families living in EDC/Ex-CHA houses built with materials containing asbestos.

According to a recent survey submitted to the Committee, in some 2,137 EDC housing units located in 59 sites across the country which have been extended by their owners, only parts of the dwellings contain asbestos. There are, however, 280 houses in fair condition built with materials containing asbestos. Another 45 houses with asbestos are in very poor conditions though occupied while 18 other derelict houses are unoccupied.

The Special Mobile Force and officers from the Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development, Disaster and Beach Management have been tasked with the destruction of the unoccupied houses and removal of asbestos in the other dwellings. They will first conduct site visits to take stock of the situation and devise actions which have to be taken. It will be followed by an inventory of necessary/existing equipment at the Special Mobile Force to determine that the agency is adequately equipped to undertake the assign task safely and without prejudice. The Ministry of Health and Quality of Life will be providing any required technical support. Afterwards, a report will be submitted to the Committee for necessary actions and funding.

For their part, the Ministry of Housing and Lands and the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment will be working on the provision of temporary accommodations and/or housing facilities to the residents of those EDC houses. Meanwhile, the Committee will establish a time frame regarding actions that need to be taken for close monitoring.

It is to be recalled that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has agreed to disburse the required fund regarding the removal of remove asbestos in the EDC/Ex-CHA houses.

Government Information Service, Prime Minister's Office, Level 6, New Government Centre, Port Louis, Mauritius. Email: gis@govmu.org Website: <http://gis.govmu.org>

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5. The Commission is aware that part of the reason for the non-employment of Creoles is that many lack the necessary qualifications. Therefore, the Commission urges Government to embark on establishing enhanced Technical Colleges which will enable those who do not complete High School to be trained as artisans in different fields.
6. Working-class families are at a distinct disadvantage in terms of the language medium of instruction presently practised in schools. It is strongly recommended that Creole be introduced as a medium of instruction at all levels as a matter of urgency (see Further Recommendations under Education Project).

It further recommends that all National Examinations before Form V be abolished. This causes undue stress on children, parents and teachers and has no pedagogical value whatsoever.

7. Race Discrimination

However, the Commission has no doubt that race discrimination against Creoles, in particular, is a further reason for Creole people to feel “left behind”. Therefore, the Commission recommends that discrimination, at any level, on the basis of race, colour, gender, caste and religion should be outlawed. Anti-Discrimination legislation should be introduced to give teeth to the rooting out of discrimination which exists in Mauritius.

8. Land

One of the most vexing and complex challenges faced by the Commission was to try and be of material assistance to deponents who believe they have been unjustly dispossessed of their land. Many of those who have come before us have inadequate documentation and, in most cases, our search of the archives has not produced the missing documentation. In some instances, we have discovered that the land has been sold or prescribed. The Commission has also noted, with alarm and dismay, that some land consultants, some Notaries, some Lawyers and some Land Surveyors have misled, or have made promises on payment of money to, some of those who appeared before the Commission, and have never delivered.

The Commission is strongly of the opinion that a Land Monitoring and Research Unit be established as a matter of urgency. This Unit should be a permanent body whose main task will be to assist citizens to establish the facts concerning their search for land which they believe is rightly theirs. Unnecessary bureaucracy should be avoided at all costs.

The Commission recommends that the State considers granting small parcels of land to deserving cases. It further recommends that legislation be introduced which will give greater protection against those Land Consultants, Notaries and Lawyers who are a disgrace to their profession and unscrupulous in their dealings with those who seek their assistance.

9. Housing

The Commission recognises that successive administrations have provided low-cost housing to those who need it most. However, it is clear that many of the citizens of Mauritius are living in degrading circumstances. Some well-intentioned schemes have failed and some families are living in overcrowded, unkempt housing, and many in absolute squalor.

The Commission recommends that immediate plans be introduced to audit existing housing estates with a view to upgrading and, where necessary, to embarking on new decent (not low-cost) housing projects.

Many housing estates have buildings constructed with asbestos, a toxic substance which is damaging to health. These houses should be pulled down on a phase to phase basis and other units constructed with proper material. Many housing estates, now known as residences, are devoid of kindergarten, playgrounds and some are without community centres. These shortcomings should be addressed.