

FILE NAME: Shree Digvijay (SDV)

DATE: 1984 May 26

DOC#: SDV030

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Letter from India Consumer Education Centre to Barry Castleman RE Status of Asbestos Inquiry into Shree Digvijay Cement



**CONSUMER
EDUCATION AND
RESEARCH CENTRE**

Thakorebhai Desai Smarak Bhavan, Near Law College, Ellisbridge, Ahmedabad-380 006. (India)

May 26, 1984

Gram : **CONSUMER**
Ph. No. 448833

Mr. Barry Castleman
Environmental Consultant
1722, Linden Avenue
Baltimore
MARYLAND - 21217.

Dear Mr. Castleman :

Sub: Recent status of Asbestos enquiry
with regard to Shri Digvijay Cement
Company, Ahmedabad.

I received both your enquiries regarding the current status of Shri Digvijay Cement Company, Ahmedabad.

As you know, earlier the Company was receptive to taking remedial measures to minimise Asbestos hazards to the workers. However, later on when we wanted them to sign a document detailing the appointment of an independent Committee comprising of representatives from among the management, labourers, trade union, consumers etc. they backed out. The ostensible reason they gave was that the Central Government of India had appointed a Committee to investigate the occupational hazards etc. with regard to asbestos, and so the appointment of this Committee in Ahmedabad would be infructuous. We insisted that this was not so: because whereas the national committee was only to formulate proposals for investigating into the occupational hazards in working with asbestos and to suggest legislative amendments etc. on general lines for the whole country, we were only concerned with Shri Digvijay Cement Company in particular and the gross violations we had witnessed therein.

For the time being the matter seemed to be stuck at that. We were also not very keen to go to the Courts because of the inordinately long time it might have taken. So we approached the Minister concerned at the State Government level, who agreed to examine the issues and then take a decision as to whether a Committee should be appointed or not. We have had a series of meetings now with the Minister for Labour and Employment, and Chief Inspector of Factories, the last one being on this 21st May 1984.

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TRUSTEES	Prof. Manubhai Shah,	Ahmedabad.	Tel. O. : 371371	R. : 441138	Telex : 0121-214
	Mr. Bhaskar Tanna,	Ahmedabad.	Tel. O. : 447744	R. : 447744	
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That was the reason why I had withheld my reply to you because I wanted to be able to report to you the final outcome.

The final agreement now is as follows :-

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- A) All statutory violations which CERC has observed will be identified and submitted separately to the Minister for Labour and Employment and the Chief Inspector of Factories. They will immediately act on these to ensure enforcement of the law.

The issues that would be covered under this category would be supplying of clothing, respirators, headgear etc. to the workers by the Company, a thorough medical check up before employment followed by a regular 6 months check up and a radiological scan every three years; provision of wash rooms, change rooms etc.

- B) Other related issues like Water and Air Pollution will be taken up by the Minister for Labour and Employment along with the State Board for Water and Air Pollution.
- C) Any other issues not covered under A & B will also be examined and if ultimately found to be necessary, will be entrusted to a Committee to be appointed for especially for this reason.

I think probably this is the final culmination of our efforts, provided of course action is taken speedily. We have also made it very clear that there must be a time-bound frame within which all these remedial measures have to be taken, or else they would become meaningless for a great number of the workers.

Government also appears to be in a co-operative mood and wishes to probably avoid any kind of unnecessary strictures being passed against them.

All our efforts now are being concentrated on trying to get as much as possible without standing on too many technicalities, so long as the relief is effective. This issues has dragged on for too long now.

I hope this information will serve your purpose.

Thank you for your prompt and ready endorsement of my application. I am grateful to you for all the good words you had to say about me.

Here is wishing you good luck and success for your World Resource Conference in June.

Sincerely


Rani Advani

Legal Researcher (Hon.)

P.S.: At the time of this despatch, the note detailing the statutory violations & the action to be taken thereon has already been despatched to the Minister for Labour & the Chief Inspector of Factories.

After the situation has been remedied the final report of the Chief Inspector to be submitted to the Minister will also be given to us for us to satisfy ourselves that the law is complied with & the occupational hazard is minimised.