
Many kids affected by lead poisoning in Shaanxi province

Sunday, 16 Aug, 2009

Times of India reported that 6 out of 7 children in a Chinese town adjacent to a smelting company are suffering from different levels of lead poisoning. The condition of 166 children with more than 250 milligrams of lead in their blood is so bad they have been hospitalized for immediate treatment.

A local official said that the Changqing township of Fengxiang County in northwest China's Shaanxi province has 731 children under the age of 14. Medical tests have shown that 615 of them have abnormal levels of lead in their blood.

Mr He Hongnian executive deputy head of Fengxiang County said that health authorities have now begun testing the blood of 300 more children living in other parts of the Country as the effect of lead pollution may be much larger than earlier expected.

The plant was ordered to close down on August 6 after the first serious case of lead poisoning emerged with a 6 year old girl becoming very sick.

Sources said that the smelting plant, which belongs to the Dongling industrial Group, has been operating since 2006 producing 100,000 tones of lead and zinc and 700,000 tones of coke every year. It has escaped close scrutiny on the environmental front because the plant accounted for 17% of the County's GDP and was vastly influential. Local environment authorities have never publicized results of studies on emission from the plant.

They said that it would be possible to expel the excessive lead from the bodies of children having less than 250 milligram of lead in blood through non medical treatments at home. The government will send milk, dried vegetables and dried fruits to them.

Mr He said that "Their medical expenses will be covered by the County government." The local government is clearly worried about public protests over the issue, which is why He invited 10 representatives of the residents from local villages of Madaokou and Sunjianantou at his press conference in the County.

On its part, the company has blamed the local government for failing to relocate the people within a radius of 500 meters from the plant. The local government had pledged to do so within three years of the opening of the plant in 2006, the Mr Sun Hong Gm of plant complained.

Mr Pu Yiming chief of Changqing Township said that "But the relocation is way behind schedule. Of all the 581 families that should have been relocated by now, only 156 have moved to new homes. The local Country has now promised to relocate the remaining people in the next 2 years."

(Sourced from Times of India)

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