

The Long Journey to a Total Ban on Asbestos in Hong Kong

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OUTLINE

- 30 years to achieve asbestos ban in Hong Kong
- Remaining issues to be tackled
- Other issues

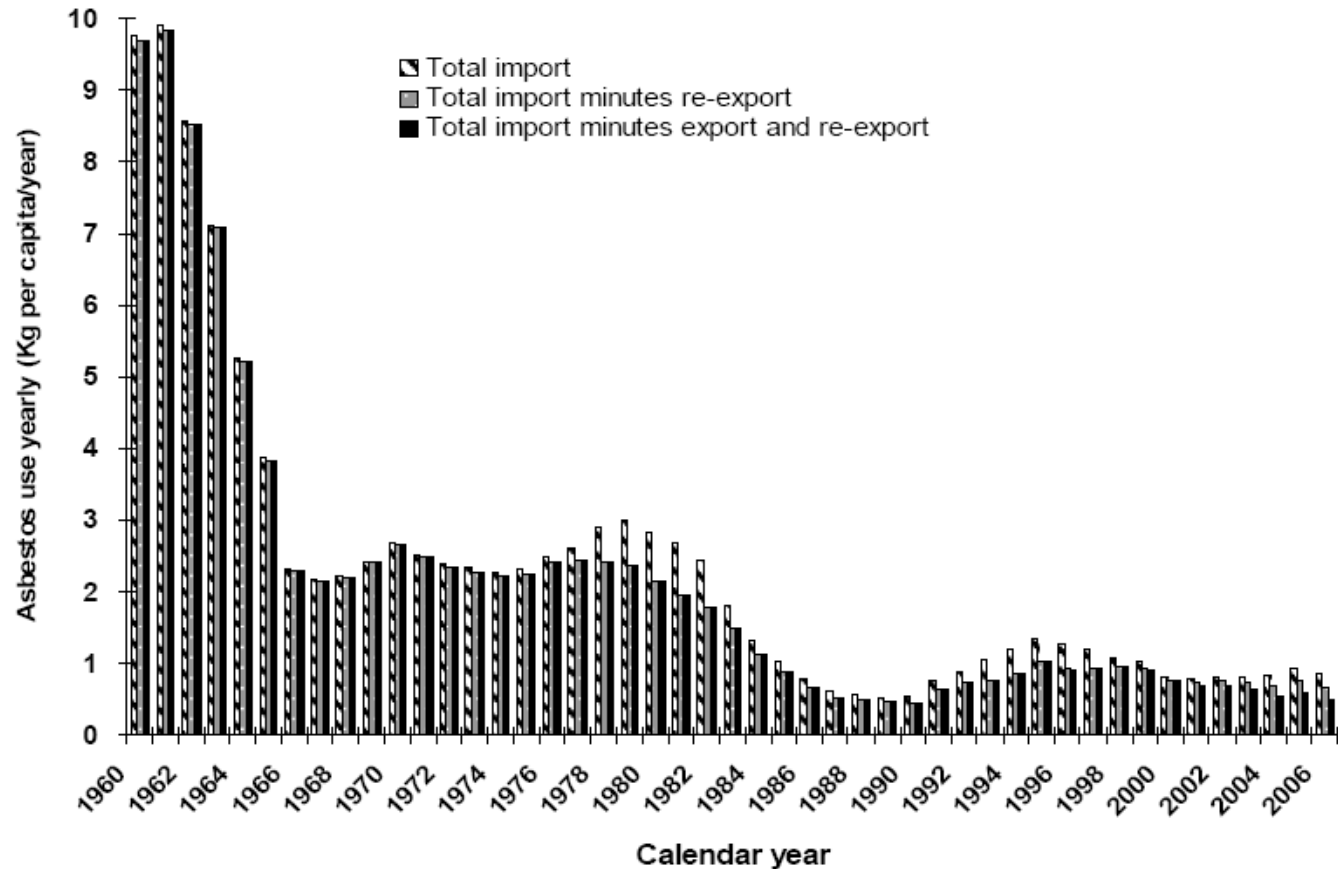
Once Upon a Time

- Being a seaport, Hong Kong has a very long history of using asbestos in ship building and maintenance.
- The massive public housing development projects that started in the mid-1950s sparked off the explosive increase use of asbestos in building materials and somewhat laid the time bomb.
- The peak local consumption of asbestos was in the early 1960s, with an average annual amount of over 30 million Kg or around 10 Kg per capita.

Asbestos Use in Hong Kong

➤ Large amounts of asbestos were consumed in Hong Kong during 1960-80s

➤ The highest level of asbestos consumption in Hong Kong was during 1960-63, with an average annual amount of over 30 million Kg.



Annual per capita asbestos use (kg/capita/year) in Hong Kong during 1960-2006 [total import; total import minus re-export; total import minus export and re-export], using centered moving average method by a 5-year interval

Tse LA, et al. EHP 2009

First report of asbestos-related diseases in Hong Kong - 1983

Trop Geogr Med. 1983 Sep;35(3):225-9.

First report of asbestos-related diseases in Hong Kong.

Lam WK, Kung TM, Ma PL, So SY, Mok CK.

Abstract

There has been no report of malignant mesothelioma or asbestosis in Hong Kong despite the rapid growth of industry in the past few decades. Three patients with malignant pleural mesothelioma and one patient with asbestosis and small cell carcinoma of the lung are reported. All four patients were Chinese in Hong Kong and had a history of occupational exposure to asbestos. Although there is no mining of asbestos in Hong Kong, her rapid industrialization in the past few decades has led to a large population of asbestos-exposed workers in industry. The average annual consumption of crude asbestos (import minus re-export) has grown ten-fold in the past decade to 1.090 tonnes in 1978-79, and the number of workers handling asbestos products was estimated to be 20.000 in 1979. The problem of asbestos related diseases has however been little considered and further epidemiologic studies are warranted.

1984 - 1989

NGO, Academia	Advocacies and Action
Association for the Promotion of Occupational Health (APOH, predecessor of Hong Kong Workers' Health Center)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Published a special issue of “Occupation and Health” focusing on asbestos being a hidden killer(1984)•Jointly organized a public forum with HKWHC – Asbestos and You•Published comments on the proposed asbestos control legislation (03-1986)
Hong Kong Workers Health Center (HKWHC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Published an Editorial commenting on the implementation of the new asbestos control legislation (12-1986)

1984 – 1989

Legislative and Administrative Changes

- The first piece of legislation related to asbestos was introduced in 1986
- Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Asbestos) Special Regulation [1986]
- Defining asbestos work and stipulated the related actions to be taken, including workplace assessment, personal protection and medical examinations.
- The 'Action Level' was defined by cumulative exposures to asbestos over a continuous 12-week period and set differently for chrysotile and other forms of asbestos, with the former being double that of the latter (96 fibre-hours vs. 48 fibre-hours per millilitre of air).
- Prohibitions (spraying, insulation, amphibole)

1984 – 1989

Legislative and Administrative Changes

- Unfortunately, the legislation enacted in 1986 did not protect workers dealing with asbestos, as a result of the cumbersome definitions adopted.
- An employer could simply defend by saying s/he had no knowledge of the presence of asbestos in the workplace and took no actions at all!
- It was also extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the law enforcers to prove that the regulatory exposures levels were exceeded due to the long cumulative exposure period defined in the law.

1984 - 1989

NGO, Academia	Advocacies and Action
<p>Medical doctors from United Christian Hospital</p>	<p><i>Journal of the Hong Kong Medical Association Vol. 39, No. 1, 1987</i></p> <p>Asbestosis Confirmed on Transbronchial Biopsy</p> <p><i>T.S. Yu, C.Y. Tse & M.T.P. Simon</i></p>
<p>Construction Industry Employees General Union (HKCIEGU)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Jointly organized with HKWHC a public forum on Asbestos Hazards, urging the Government to amend the asbestos control legislation (12-1989)

1990s

- The NGOs and unions continued their advocacies for better legislation and law enforcement.
- By mid 1990s, the harmful effects of exposures to asbestos were already quite widely known in Hong Kong and overall consumption had decreased substantially, thanks to the unceasing efforts of NGOs and unions.

1990s

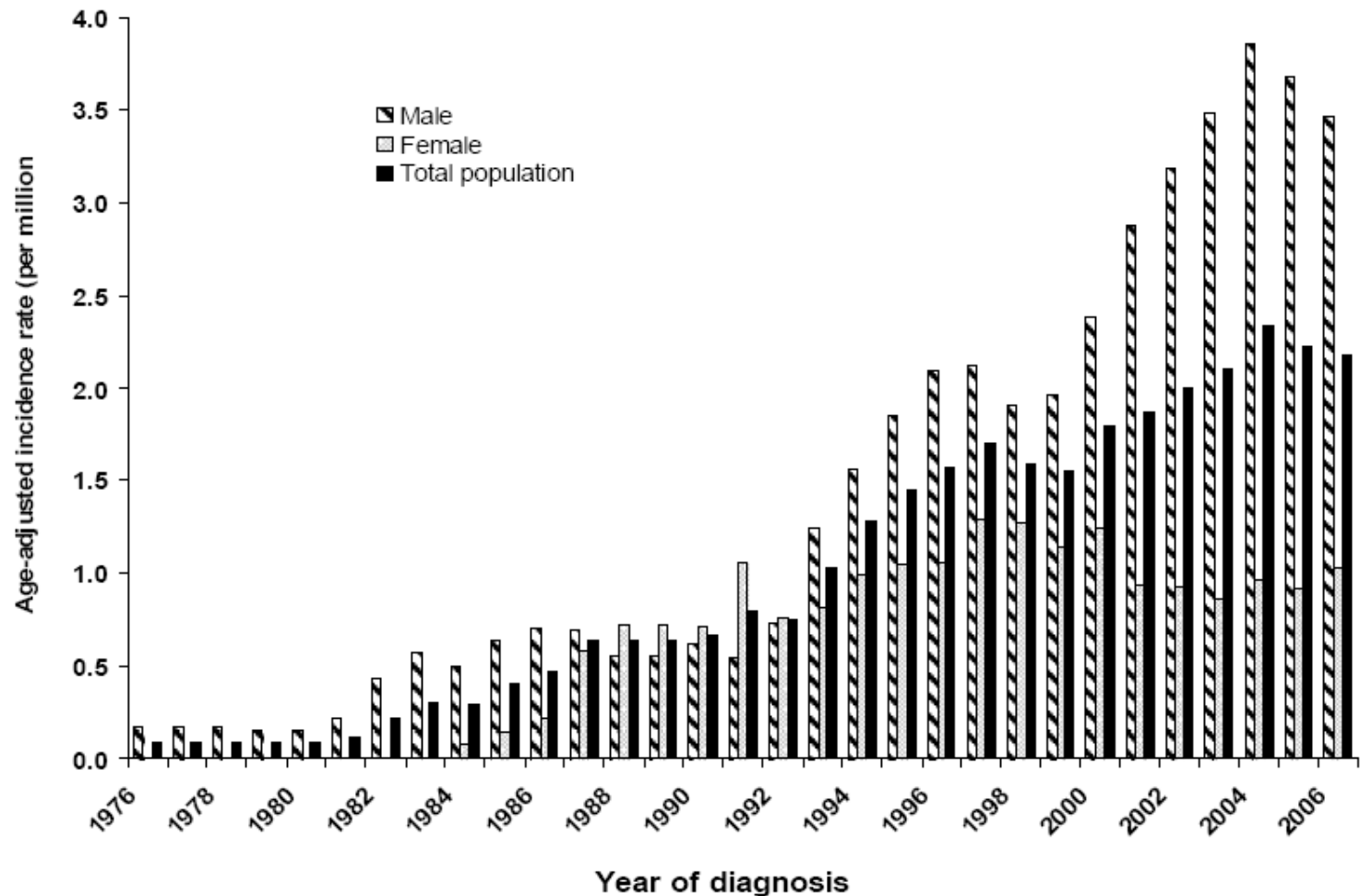
Legislative and Administrative Changes

- The second piece of legislation related to asbestos was introduced in **1996** under the **Air Pollution Control Ordinance** (Control of Environmental Asbestos)
- Ban on import and sale of amosite and crocidolite
- Chrysotile could continue to be imported and used!
- **Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Asbestos) Regulation [1997]**

2000s

- Understanding that all forms of asbestos were harmful and carcinogenic, NGOs and unions continued to advocate for a total ban of all forms of asbestos in the late 1990s and 2000s.
- More and more cases of mesothelioma were reported in the late 1990s and 2000s.
- **HKWHC** partnered with Pneumoconiosis Mutual Aid Association (**PMAA**) in pressuring the Government to provide compensation for workers with mesothelioma.

Mesothelioma



Age standardized incidence rate of mesothelioma among Hong Kong general population during 1976-2006, using centered moving average method by a 5-year interval (note: no female case was reported before 1986) [Tse LA, et al. EHP 2009](#)

2000s

NGO, Academia	Advocacies and Action
Hong Kong Workers Health Center (HKWHC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Published an Editorial in Occupational and Health advocating a total ban on asbestos, including import, transshipment, use and sale of all forms of asbestos and asbestos containing materials (12-2007)
Hong Kong Workers Health Center (HKWHC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Press conference on asbestos hazards associated with maintenance of old buildings – requesting the Government to do proper assessments before maintenance work, and prepare a list of all old buildings containing asbestos in Hong Kong for the Urban Renewal Plan (03-2009)

2000s

NGO, Academia	Advocacies and Action
Asia Monitor Research Center (AMRC), HKCTU, ARIAV and IBAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•The second Asian Asbestos Conference held in Hong Kong provided additional pressure on the Government to act towards a total ban (04-2009)•Hong Kong Declaration towards a Complete Ban on All forms of Asbestos•The Asian Ban Asbestos Network (A-BAN) was formed

2010 - 2014

- Academics in the Chinese University of Hong Kong have been doing research and publishing high quality papers that documented the important impact of the use of asbestos on mesothelioma in the population, as well as confirmed the carcinogenic property of Chrysotile.

Research

Are Current or Future Mesothelioma Epidemics in Hong Kong the Tragic Legacy of Uncontrolled Use of Asbestos in the Past?

Lap Ah Tse,¹ Ignatius Tak-sun Yu,¹ William Goggins,¹ Mark Clements,² Xiao Rong Wang,¹ Joseph Siu-kie Au,³ and Kai Shing Yu¹

¹School of Public Health and Primary Care, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China; ²National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia; ³Department of Clinical Oncology, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Kowloon, Hong Kong SAR, China

EHP 2010

A 37-Year Cohort Study on Mortality of Chrysotile Asbestos Workers in China

Xiaorong Wang¹, Hong Qiu¹, Ignatius Yu¹, LA Tse¹, Eiji Yano²

¹Division of Occupational and Environmental Health, School of Public Health and Primary Care, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong; ²Department of Hygiene and Public Health, Teikyo University School of Medicine, Tokyo, Japan

Thorax 2012

2010 - 2014

NGO, Academia	Advocacies and Action
Pneumoconiosis Compensation Fund Board (PCFB), HKWHC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Published a series of educational kits on asbestos hazards in different industries (2010)
Hong Kong Workers Health Center (HKWHC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Press conferences – asbestos hazards associated with maintenance and demolition of old buildings in Hong Kong (2010 – 2011)
No More Asbestos in Hong Kong Alliance , ARIAV	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Demonstration requesting the Government to have a total ban of asbestos (05-2011)

2010 - 2014

NGO, Academia	Advocacies and Action
HKCIEGU	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Press conference – advocating the set up of a special funding to support asbestos removal and demolition works (03-2012)
HKWHC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provided comments to legislators on the proposed legislation on banning asbestos and brought into attention the dumping of asbestos wastes in the rural areas (07-2012 – 02-2013)
No More Asbestos in Hong Kong Alliance , ARIAV	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organized a protest in a village advocating earlier implementation of total asbestos ban and compilation of list of buildings containing asbestos (08-2013)

2010 - 2014

NGO, Academia	Advocacies and Action
HKWHC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Raised concern over the proposed exemption of registered proprietary Chinese Medicine from asbestos ban (2013 - 2014)
PCFB	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Organized Conference on Joining Hands to Eliminate Asbestos Hazards•Invited relevant Government Bureaus, employers, unions, NGOs and professional organizations to sign the Asbestos Risk Abatement Charter (11-2013)

主辦機構 Organizer



肺塵埃沉着病補償基金委員會
PNEUMOCONIOSIS COMPENSATION FUND BOARD



攜手杜絕石棉危害研討會

Conference on Joining Hands to
Eliminate Asbestos Hazards

日期：2013.11.07
時間：上午九時至下午五時
(上午8:30開始登記)

Date: 2013.11.07
Time: 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
(Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.)

地址：九龍尖沙咀梳士巴利道41號北座4樓
香港基督教青年會禮堂
(港鐵尖沙咀站L4或L6出口)

Address: Assembly Hall, 4/F., North Tower, YMCA,
41 Salisbury Road, Tsimshatsui, Kowloon,
Hong Kong
(MTR Tsimshatsui Station Exit L4 or L6)



支持機構 Supporting Organizations



工業傷亡權益會
Association for the Rights of Industrial Accidents Victims



香港建造商會
Hong Kong Construction Association



香港建造業勞工會
HKCIEGU



香港工人健康中心
Hong Kong Workers' Health Centre



環境互助會
Environmental Mutual Aid Association

消滅石棉危害約章

承諾宣言

我們理解並同意—

一直以來石棉的使用，已對環境、建造業工人及公眾健康造成重大影響。
停止使用石棉建築物料，確保有關法規及工作守則的穩定性和落實性，
是減少石棉危害及預防疾病發生的關鍵。
因此減少石棉危害及預防疾病的發生。

我們可以積極參與，消滅石棉危害的行動。

執行

為消滅石棉的危害，我們承諾致力—
全面禁止石棉建築物料的使用，並支持香港全面禁用石棉。

確保有關法規及工作守則的穩定性和落實性，
特別是採取有效的健康措施，以營造健康的工人及生活環境，
從而減少石棉危害及預防疾病的發生。

與社會上各持份者攜手合作，身體力行，推動對石棉危害的關注，
並向有關管理人員、管理層和市民大眾宣揚有關訊息。

ASBESTOS RISK ABATEMENT CHARTER

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

We understand and agree that —

The on-going use of asbestos has caused substantial impacts on the environment,
the health of the construction workers and the general public.

A ban on asbestos containing construction materials and compliance with the relevant legislation and codes of
practice in removing and disposing of asbestos containing construction materials will be conducive to maintaining a
healthy working and living environment, and reducing the incidence of asbestosis and mesotheliomas.

We can play an active role in working to abate the hazards of asbestos.

IMPLEMENTATION

To abate the hazards of asbestos, we are committed to —

Discontinuing completely the use of asbestos containing construction materials and supporting a total ban on
asbestos in Hong Kong.

Removing and disposing of asbestos containing construction materials according to the relevant legislative
requirements and codes of practice, and in particular, adopting effective protective measures to create a healthy
working and living environment, thereby reducing cases of asbestosis and mesotheliomas.

Working in partnership with stakeholders in the community and setting an example in promoting the awareness of
asbestos risks, and widely publicizing preventive messages to practitioners in the construction industry, the
management, and the general public.



2014 - 04

Legislative and Administrative Changes

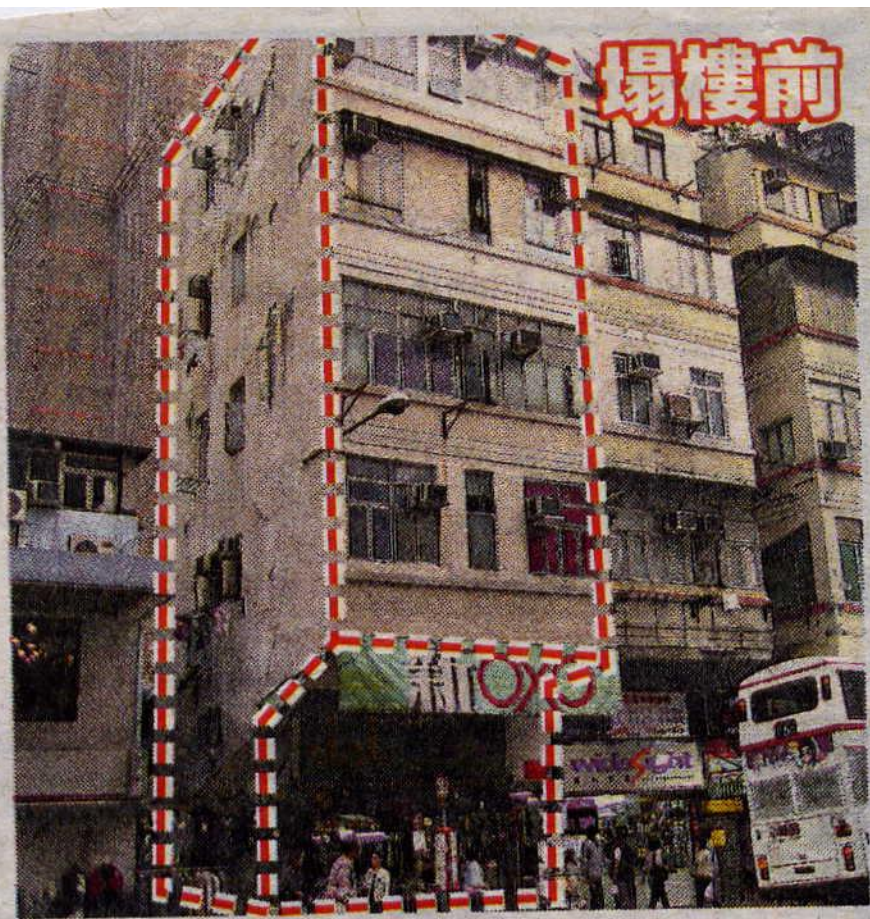
- Amendment of the Air Pollution Control Ordinance
- Banning all forms of asbestos and asbestos containing materials
- Corresponding changes to be made in the Factories and Industrial Undertakings (asbestos) Regulations

But the story does not end here

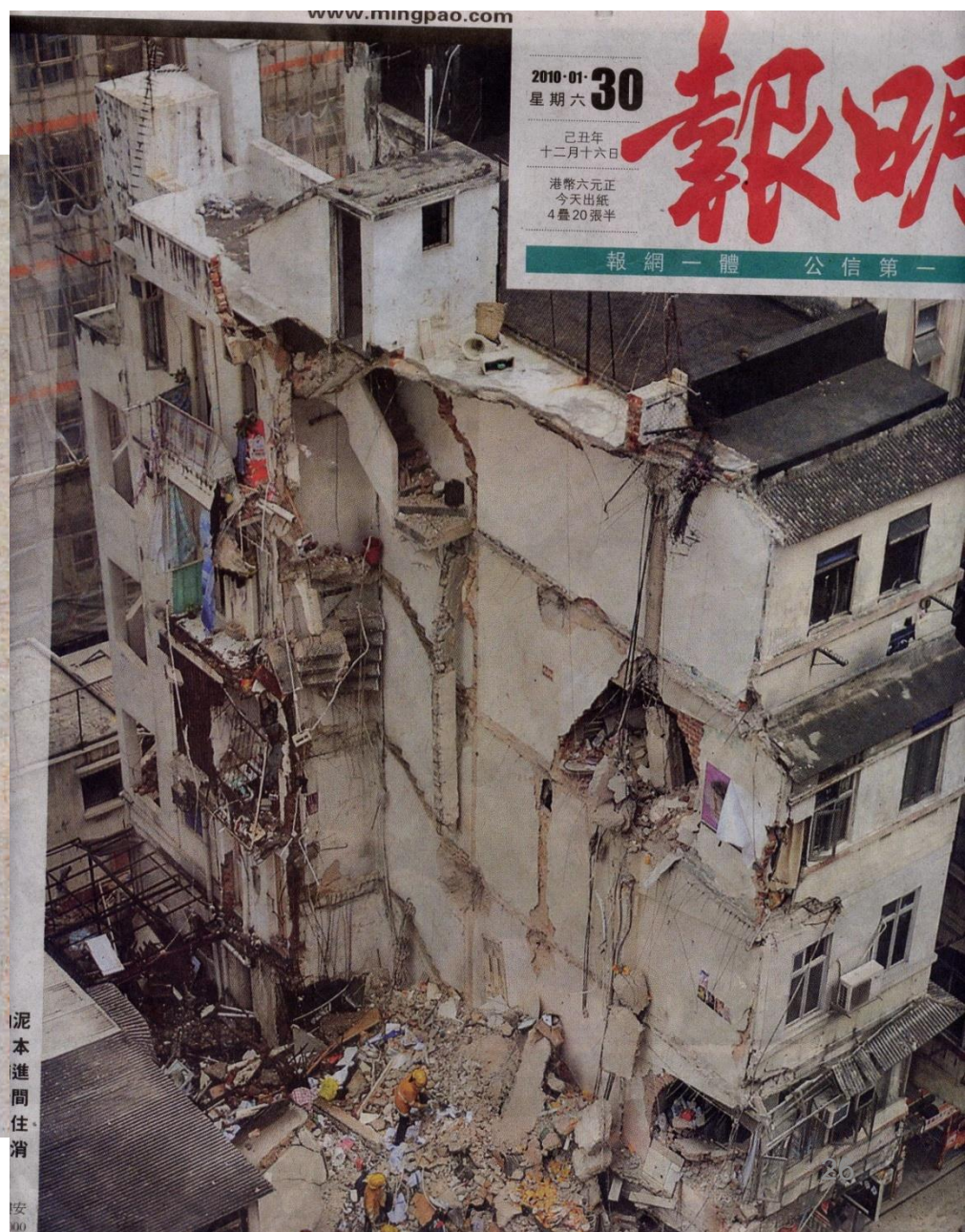
- The huge amounts of asbestos used (and locked) in the older buildings have laid time bombs for the present and future.
- Buildings in Hong Kong have relatively short life spans and the Government have a very aggressive urban renewal plan in order to provide more housing units to the residents by pulling down old buildings and replacing them by taller ones.
- According to the Hong Kong Urban Renewal Authority, most buildings aged 30 years or more were in unsatisfactory conditions, with 8,500 buildings aged 30 years or above in the Metro Area in 1998.

But the story does not end here

- Many buildings will require substantial maintenance and renovation works, some will be demolished.
- According to the Environmental Protection Department, there are 15,600 buildings over 20 years old in Hong Kong and 60% of such buildings likely contain asbestos.
- How can the workers and public be properly protected?



■ 馬頭圍道45號J的唐樓倒塌，觸發公眾關注本港舊樓維修的逼切性。





Other issues

- The current asbestos ban provides two exemptions: 1) goods in transit; 2) the use of Actinolite in registered proprietary Chinese Medicine!



80粒

註冊編號: HKP-00934

GMP
優質保證

多鞭 鹿尾丸

增強版

總代理：永康醫藥公司
製造：GMP成都永康制藥有
產地：中國成都

www.winghongmedicine.com



金鷗牌
多鞭鹿尾丸

用法用量：每日2次，每次1粒，
開水送服

規格：0.45克 x 10粒/板

總代理：永康醫藥公司

製造：GMP 成都永康制藥有限公司

產地：中國成都

批號：20111230

失效期：30日12月2015年

中成藥註冊編號 HKP-00934

Composition:

Tail Of Fur-Seal	3%(13.5mg)	Stegodonorien Talis Owen
Semen Allii Tuberosi	3%(13.5mg)	Polygonum Multi Florum Thunb
Deer Tail Bone	3%(13.5mg)	Bombyx Mori L
Cervus Sika Temn	5%(22.5mg)	A. Henryl Oliv
Panax Ginseng	5%(22.5mg)	Achyranthes Bidentalata Bl
Gekko Gecko	5%(22.5mg)	Paratendfra Sinensis
Cinnamomom Cassia P. Epimedian	3%(13.5mg)	Raw Et. Dry Glutinosa Libosch
Actinolite	8%(36mg)	Discorea Batalus Desue
Morinda Officinalis How	5%(22.5mg)	Capsicum
Rublis	5%(22.5mg)	

Direction And Dosage:

For general health:

Take 1 capsules each time, 2 times daily or as directed by physio

Reflections

- Unions, NGOs and academics all contributed to the successful total legislative ban of asbestos in Hong Kong.
- Future problems associated with the secondary release of asbestos during building maintenance and demolition, and the exemptions provided by the current legislative will required further collaborations among all the stakeholders.

Hope you have enough food for thought ...



Thank you for your kind attention!