



## Greater Manchester Asbestos Victims Support Group

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### Japanese asbestos victims solidarity visit with asbestos campaigners in Manchester for commemoration event in city

On Friday 7<sup>th</sup> July a delegation of asbestos campaigners from Japan will join campaigners, asbestos victims, bereaved family members and MPs at the annual commemorative event Action Mesothelioma Day. They will attend a dove release at 12.30 in Sackville Gardens in memory of all those who have lost their lives to mesothelioma.

A delegation of 20 arrived from Japan last Tuesday. In addition to Manchester, other members of their party will be visiting Liverpool, Birmingham, Sheffield and Derby to attend events held in these cities.

Many cases of mesothelioma, an incurable cancer caused by asbestos exposure, are appearing in Japan. Many of these victims have been exposed because they live near to factories that have used asbestos in the past and polluted the residential areas around them.

The full delegation of 20, along with campaigners from France, Belgium, Italy, Spain and the UK attended a study day organised by Greater Manchester Asbestos Victims Support Group and later visited the site of the old Turner & Newall factory in Rochdale on Wednesday.

Turner & Newall were one of the first and the biggest asbestos companies, who also opened factories in other countries. Their activities have been responsible for thousands of deaths from mesothelioma and other asbestos diseases, not only in the UK, but in other countries where their businesses operated.

Sugio Furuya, organiser of the Japanese delegation said:

*“As a result of the widespread and uncontrolled use of asbestos, citizens in the UK and Japan have endured extreme suffering with so much ill health, so many premature deaths and so much environmental contamination. The members of our delegation are eager to show solidarity with UK victims and to share experiences in order to progress the campaigns for asbestos justice at home and abroad.”*

Graham Dring of Greater Manchester Asbestos Victims Support Group agreed:

*We welcome the visit of our Japanese friends. We are delighted they will be able to take part in activities in Manchester and four other cities and know that their presence will underline the ties that bind asbestos victims the world over. For decades, global asbestos interests have exploited workers and the public; now the time has come for all of those affected to make a stand together. The participation of so many Japanese victims marks a turning point in the global campaign for asbestos justice.”*

Following the dove release, a public meeting in the Mechanics Institute on Princess Street will hear a talk from Professor Sir Anthony-Newman-Taylor, the first Chair of the new National Mesothelioma Research Centre.

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Notes to editors

**For further information or photos, please contact: Graham Dring, Greater Manchester Asbestos Victims Support Group: 0161 636 7555/07887 871501**

**Mr. Sugio FURUYA** is the advisor for the Japan Association of Mesothelioma, Asbestos-related Disease Victims and Their Families. He is Secretary General of the Japanese Occupational Safety and Health Resource (JOSHRC), national network of Local OSH Centres. He also works as the co-ordinator for Ban Asbestos Network Japan (BANJAN) and Asian Ban Asbestos Network (A-BAN).

**Mrs. Chizuko HIRACHI**

Mrs Hirachi and her husband were musicians and played in a band together in Japan. Her husband was diagnosed with mesothelioma and died in 2007 at the age of 60. He was exposed to asbestos because he lived near to the big Kubota asbestos plant. She has been an active campaigner in the Amagasaki asbestos victims group in Japan since her husband was diagnosed and is a Board member of the national asbestos victims group in Japan. She has negotiated directly with the Kubota company on behalf of other asbestos victims.

**Mr. Tadao HIRATA**

Mr Hirata's brother died of mesothelioma in 1989 at the age of 41. He was also exposed to asbestos because he lived close to the Kubota factory from 1950-1968. He has also lost 4 childhood friends from the same apartment block to mesothelioma. He is an active member of the Japanese network of asbestos victims groups.

**Mr. Hiroshi IIDA**

Mr Iida was a member of Amagasaki local council from 1991 - 2005. He was an active trade unionist involved with fighting on occupational health and safety concerns. He is now involved with the Amagasaki Occupational Safety and Health Centre and was one of the people who identified the high incidence of asbestos diseases close to the Kubota asbestos factory. He is now responsible for negotiating with the Kubota Corporation as a representative of asbestos victims and has helped achieve settlement on over 300 cases so far.

**About the Greater Manchester Asbestos Victims Support Group**

Greater Manchester Asbestos Victims Support Group (GMAVSG) is a registered charity (Reg. Charity No. 1113201). It provides advice and support to sufferers of asbestos diseases and campaigns for more research into asbestos diseases and improved compensation for asbestos victims. We were formed in 1994 by asbestos disease victims.