



For Immediate Release

Attn: News, Business, Science, Health Editors

15 May 2020

Contact: Ram Charitra Sah, +977-9803047621

Affected community members and public interest advocates call on LG Chemical to take full responsibility for the Vizag tragedy

(Vizag, India): Community members affected by the poisonous Vizag gas leak and public interest advocates from India and South Korea called on LG Chemicals, the South Korean parent company of LG Polymers, to take full responsibility for the poisonous styrene gas leak early in the morning on 7 May that killed 12 and sickened hundreds of community members. The tragedy occurred in Vizag, Visakhapatnam in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. LG Polymers has been [operating illegally](#) and a government forensic laboratory has [concluded](#) that the styrene leak occurred due to company error. On 8 May, the National Green Tribunal [directed](#) LG Polymers to deposit an interim fine of ₹50 crore (~US\$6.6 million) and formed a committee to investigate the tragedy.

Community members, local doctors, and Indian occupational and environmental safety activists affiliated with the [ANROEV](#) network discussed the challenges faced by the community after the gas leak. They described how the people from communities surrounding the LG Polymer plant are experiencing a combination of fear and anger, and demanding support for all those affected by the poisonous gas leak.

They also noted concerns about repeating injustices that occurred after the 1984 [Bhopal gas tragedy](#) in 1984 when thousands were killed and more than 500,000 people were exposed to poisonous methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas, but Union Carbide and Dow Chemical were never fully held accountable. The UN Special Rapporteur for Toxics, Baskut Tuncak, noted the parallels between the Vizag LG tragedy and the Bhopal disaster and [urged](#) Indian and South Korea authorities and implicated businesses, “to avoid the same mistakes and abuse of judicial procedures that have denied justice to the victims of the Bhopal disaster, who are still suffering to this day.”

Community members and public interest advocates called on LG and relevant government agencies to take the following actions:

- Immediately provide relief and support to victim families and those injured
- Long-term health support for all the victims and exposed population
- Thorough and impartial investigation on the reason for the gas leak
- Include civil society and victims representatives to take part in the investigation and any settlement with the company
- Hold LG Chemicals and those responsible for the gas leak fully accountable
- Establish a bio-monitoring system for 3 years to provide health surveillance for all those affected
- Due diligence before re-opening workplaces under COVID-19 lockdowns
- Strengthen regulatory and workplace safety systems

LG Chemicals has a history of environmental and health and safety violations in South Korea:

2019: The Ministry of Environment caught LG Chemical [altering](#) and even fabricating pollution release data.

2018: LG Chemical polycarbonate factory [leaked](#) phosgene gas, injuring five workers

2015: LG Chemical fined 6 million won for [leaking](#) hydrogen chloride and violating the Industrial Safety and Health Act

2013: LG Chemical executives sent to [prison](#) over the 2012 explosion at their Cheongju OLED manufacturing plant. The judge noted that the company pursued profits over safety.

2013: In a government review of occupational accidents, LG Chemical's Cheongju Plant was noted as a workplace with many [deaths](#), including a 2012 explosion that killed eight workers.

LG Polymers uses styrene to make polystyrene plastic components for LG appliances sold in India. Styrene is a probable human [carcinogen](#), crosses the [placenta](#) and has a variety of [harmful](#) effects. Styrene is [explosive](#) and must be stored at low temperatures. However, LG failed to maintain the storage temperature below 20C during a COVID-19 lockdown period, leading to the harmful release.

###

Reporters and editors please contact Ram Charitra Sah at the [ANROEV](#) Secretariat anroev@gmail.com. Video footage and photos are available.