

Press Release

The Human Rights Forum (HRF) demands that the Environment Clearance (EC) for the Krebs Biochemicals and Industries Ltd (Krebs) located in Kasimkota mandal of Visakhapatnam district be rescinded immediately because of its open contempt of statutory environmental laws and regulations. The toxic effluents that Krebs is discharging into the local water bodies and the environment has already resulted in damage to the health of people resident in several villages around the unit.

A three-member HRF team visited the area on Sunday and spoke with local residents from the villages of Gantavanipalem (Munagapaka mandal), Perantalapalem (Kasimkota mandal) and Tegada (Kasimkota mandal). They narrated how the industry was releasing effluents since many years and all their appeals to stop the damage were of no avail. All three villages are close to the factory and it was evident to our team that discharges have contaminated water resources in the area to the detriment of people's health. They are having to bear intense air pollution, extreme stench and water pollution because of discharges from the Krebs. The industry is clearly non-compliant with environmental standards.

Residents of Gantavanipalem, which is adjacent to the Krebs, said that lethal effluents from the industry has, over the years, contaminated groundwater. They said the firm was using pipes and pumping pollutants into the local water bodies and complained of a large number of them being afflicted with thyroid and orthopaedic ailments resulting in high medical bills. Over the years the groundwater in the area has been poisoned and become totally unfit for consumption. The borewells in the region are coughing up coloured water and locals complained of various ailments including skin rashes. Water from the few bores in the village is used only for washing clothes and for obtaining potable water, they have to trek several kms. Many cattle have also died from exposure to the pollutants. We were also told that in the near past, the industry had transported effluents by pipe to the Sarada river which flows nearby.

What are monitoring authorities like the AP Pollution Control Board (APPCB) and regional office of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC) doing in the face of this brazen criminality? Why are they silent when Krebs is in open contempt of environmental standards and various consent conditions? Are these not serious violations that are liable for prosecution under several environmental laws? It is not that the authorities are unaware of the

environmental vandalism that this industry is indulging in and the consequent health hazard to people. The manner in which the firm was openly flouting environmental protection norms was brought to the notice of these regulatory authorities several times, both by local people and concerned citizens and was also reported in the media, yet no action has so far been initiated. Are APPCB and MOEFCC authorities in collusion with Krebs? If so, penal action ought to be initiated against officials responsible.

We reiterate that the statutory environment clearance accorded to the industry must be cancelled and a thorough independent investigation must be conducted without further delay. The firm must be made to adhere to environmental norms. The Krebs should also be made to pay penalties for the damage to people's health and environment because of its wanton disregard of the law. The district administration should immediately ensure that clean water is provided to the people resident in the vicinity of the industry and health camps organized in the villages.

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