



*Cadmium & other workers in China*

## **A 28 April Candle Glow For China**

Paris: Wednesday 18 April, 2007

For PDF copy of this story: [http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpQ\\_9i.EN.pdf](http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpQ_9i.EN.pdf)

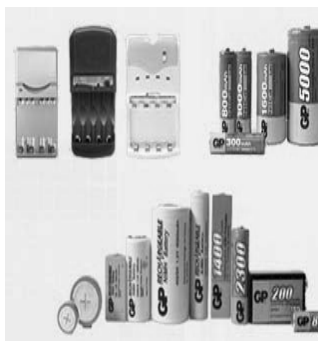
The candle that was first lit at the United Nations 12 years ago when Global Unions initiated the 28 April *International Commemoration Day (ICD)\** will glow for the first time within the borders of China. It will draw attention to the plight of workers exposed to cadmium cancer and other occupational health and safety hazards in that country's booming economy.

The 28 April candle has been lit each year since 1996 in different countries around the world as a symbol of the need to transform work practices that foster illness & disease, and those that kill or injure workers. This year the 28 April candle will be lit at a specific location in China (to be announced) and serve to highlight the plight of cadmium and other workers who remain at risk in China.

Three weeks ago, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) launched a global campaign with the NGO "Globalization Monitor –GM" targeting three Chinese subsidiaries of *Gold Peak Batteries International Limited* in connection with the poisoning of workers by cadmium. The company at the centre of attention is 53.4% owned by *Gold Peak (Holdings) of Hong Kong* [6]. For information about the company see [\[http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpQ\\_9h.EN.pdf\]](http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpQ_9h.EN.pdf).

Human lungs, kidneys and bone tissue are particularly vulnerable to long term exposures to cadmium, which is a known carcinogen for humans. This Gold Peak case is replete with reports of exposure abuses, deficient monitoring and suspicious risk analysis by company and local authorities, complicated by worker fatalities, sickness, unresolved disputes, strikes, court actions and non-reinstatement of workers to their jobs. Workers have also been denied full and fair compensation.

Gold Peak Industries produces and markets batteries, electronic components, cables, acoustical and light-fitting materials. In addition to its operations in China and Hong Kong, the company has a manufacturing network that extends to Singapore and Malaysia and a marketing network that reaches Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Philippines, Poland, South Korea, Sweden, Thailand, The Netherlands, Taiwan and the U.K.



Cadmium-related issues with this group of companies have received wide publicity. Fatalities have been reported, as have sixteen cases of confirmed cadmium poisonings and 400 more with excessive exposure. An additional 600, mostly young female workers have been denied annual medical check ups and continue to be at risk.

These poisonings are taking place in China, where the sheer volume of worker deaths, injury or illness defy the imagination. Ten workplace accident fatalities per 100,000 Chinese workers (compared to one fatality per 100 thousand in the U.K.) underline the need for international pressure. Over 80,000 workers die of asbestos exposure alone, every year. Last January, China ratified ILO Convention 155 for occupational health and safety, raising hopes that OHS may be getting on track. Yet most other ILO OHS-related Instruments remain ignored, as does the recognition of worker or trade union rights connected to Freedom of Association.

Three weeks ago, the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC) brought the *Gold*

*Peak* case to member states of the OECD Environment Policy Committee (EPOC) as a first step toward approaching member States of other U.N. bodies, as well as large buyers of Gold Peak products, such as Sony, Nikon, Panasonic, Canon and Toshiba that sell the company's camera batteries [8].

ITUC & GM have issued a call to the international community to recommend possible courses of action to remedy the crisis and for information about the operations of Gold Peak and its three Chinese subsidiaries - *Huizhou Power Pack Company Limited* (惠州超霸電池有限公司), *Huizhou Advance Battery Technology Company* (惠州先進電池有限公司) and *Shenzhen Jetpower Batteries Limited* (深圳捷霸電池有限公司). They have also requested information about the release by these companies of such carcinogenic agents as cadmium, as well as analysis of their likely impacts.

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### **Background information: Gold Peak of Hong Kong & cadmium campaign background:**

- ☞ [1] PDF Copy of this 18 April release:  
☞ [1] PDF Copy of the 1st Wednesday 21 March, 2007 release about the trade union cadmium campaign: [http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpQ\\_9h.EN.pdf](http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpQ_9h.EN.pdf).
- ☞ [2] PDF Copy of the 1st Wednesday 21 March, 2007 release about the trade union cadmium campaign: [http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpQ\\_9h.EN.pdf](http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpQ_9h.EN.pdf).
- ☞ [3] Copy of a 28 April 'company' profile of Gold Peak Industries: [http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpQ\\_9d.EN.pdf](http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpQ_9d.EN.pdf)
- ☞ [4] Globalisation Monitor (GM): <http://www.globalmon.org.hk/en/index.html>, PO box 72797, Kowloon Central Post Office, Hong Kong, Tel (852) 6448 3943.
- ☞ [5] GM' "Report on the Gold Peak Cadmium Poisoning Case", March 2007: [http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpQ\\_9f.EN.pdf](http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpQ_9f.EN.pdf).
- ☞ [6] SOMO – The Netherlands: Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations: <http://www.vbdo.nl/index.php> or contact Francis Weyzig [[f.weyzig@somo.nl](mailto:f.weyzig@somo.nl)].
- ☞ [7] SOMO's Gold Peak corporate structure: [http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpQ\\_9e.EN.pdf](http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpQ_9e.EN.pdf).
- ☞ [8] SOMO's background of GP's functioning and operations in China and its related activities in Hong Kong, Taiwan, The Netherlands and other countries: [http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpQ\\_9g.EN.pdf](http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpQ_9g.EN.pdf).
- ☞ [9] Some corporate buyers of GP batteries: Canon, Casia, Fuji, JVC, Kodak, Konica Minolta, Nikon, Olympus, Panasonic, Pentax, Ricoh, Sony and Toshiba <http://www.microbattery.com/tech-gp-digicam.htm>.

### **Other Sources of Information about the Gold Peak case:**

- ☞ [10] IHLO Hong Kong Office and campaign Page: [http://www.ihlo.org/C/GP%20Workers/GPWorkers\\_index.html](http://www.ihlo.org/C/GP%20Workers/GPWorkers_index.html)
- ☞ [11] International Metalworkers Federations: <http://www.imfmetal.org/main/china/index.cfm?n=544&l=2&c=14248>
- ☞ [12] International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine & General Workers Unions <http://www.icem.org/en/7-Asia-Pacific/2032-Gold-Peak-Battery-Workers-Have-Their-Day-in-Court-in-China>

### **\* Information about 28 April ICD**

The 28 April International Commemoration Day (ICD) For Dead and Injured Workers is recognized by workers, trade unions and many governments as a day to highlight the plight that workers face due to unsustainable work and workplaces.

A main theme for 2007 calls attention to the causes of occupational cancers at the workplace. 28 April

became an “International Day” when in 1996 at the United Nations in New York a Global Union delegation lit a Commemoration Candle and Incense to highlight the plight of workers who die, are injured or become ill due to unsustainable forms of work and production and to promote Decent Work and Sustainable Workplaces.

Inspired by the events surrounding the 1993 Kader toy factory fire in Thailand, the trade union delegation lit a commemoration candle and incense on the occasion of a special “Day of the Workplace” organised by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) with the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD).

Since the 1<sup>st</sup> commemoration ceremony, the international labour movement has promoted 28 April as a global observance day. 28 April is now formally recognised by national governments in 15 countries or Territories: Argentina, Belgium, Bermuda, Brazil, Canada, Dominican Republic, Greece, Luxembourg, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Taiwan and Ukraine. In addition, the Andean Community of countries have agreed to also adopt 28 April: Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and their associate member Venezuela, eventually bringing the total to 19 countries.

The ITUC has begun steps for the eventual recognition of 28 April by the U.N. General Assembly and a trade union delegation in New York will this 3 May, 2007 update the UN Secretary General's Office on the progress of work toward sustainable workplaces and on the day's recognition.

☞ [12] **28 April most recent activity summary: *18 April***  
[http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpH\\_5Ad.EN.pdf](http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpH_5Ad.EN.pdf)

☞ [13] **What is 28 April about?**

English: [http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpH\\_5Ag.EN.pdf](http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpH_5Ag.EN.pdf)

Français: [http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpH\\_5Ag.FR.pdf](http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpH_5Ag.FR.pdf)

Español: [http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpH\\_5Ag.SP.pdf](http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpH_5Ag.SP.pdf)