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Holcim, cement makers to face Feb ruling on cartel damages

The claim was filed by Cartel Damage Claims SA of Brussels

Posted online: Friday, December 08, 2006 at 0231 hours IST

FEEDBACK EMAIL PRINT

DEC 7: HeidelbergCement AG, Holcim Ltd of Switzerland and four other cement makers face a February court ruling in Germany on whether a group of customers can claim damages to the tune of 100 million euros (\$133 million) if the companies are found guilty of price fixing.

The regional court heard arguments in the case on Wednesday and will make a decision on February 21, Ulrich Thole, a spokesperson for the Dusseldorf court, said on Thursday. The claim was filed by Cartel Damage Claims SA of Brussels, which is representing unidentified companies.

The claims stem from an investigation and subsequent fines handed to the cementmakers by the country's Federal Cartel Office in 2003 after it uncovered evidence of price fixing. After the cement companies appealed the fine, the cartel authority handed the case to the public prosecutor, which will hear it next year.

"We are sure that the Belgian claimants' theoretical arguments against us are absolutely without basis," Karl Gernandt, head of Holcim in Germany, said in a statement. Holcim is based in Jona, Switzerland.

Other companies involved in the case are Dyckerhoff AG and Schwenk Zement KG of Germany as well as Lafarge SA of France and Ireland's Readymix Plc, now owned by Cemex SA.

Brigitte Fickel, spokesperson for HeidelbergCement, Germany's biggest cement maker, said the lawsuit isn't valid and was brought without cause. Cemex spokesperson Tim

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Stokes declined to comment when contacted by Bloomberg.

Wiesbaden-based Dyckerhoff, Ulm-based Schwenk and Paris-based Lafarge didn't immediately return calls seeking comment.

—*Bloomberg*

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