GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

MINISTRY OF JAL SHAKTI

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES, RIVER DEVELOPMENT & GANGA REJUVENATION

RAJYA SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2308

ANSWERED ON 16.12.2024

ARSENIC, MERCURY AND FLUORIDE IN GROUNDWATER

2308. SHRI R. GIRIRAJAN

Will the Minister of **JAL SHAKTI** be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware of the harmful effects on human and animals through high levels of contamination of Arsenic, Mercury and Fluoride in groundwater;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government has any new proposal or project for control of contamination of Arsenic, Mercury and Fluoride and if so, the details thereof and the total amount sanctioned in this regard?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR JAL SHAKTI

(SHRI RAJ BHUSHAN CHOUDHARY**)**

(a) & (b) Use of Ground Water for drinking purpose having Arsenic, Fluoride or Mercury above the permissible limits over a sustained period of time is known to cause several adverse health effects. As per the available research and literature, long-term consumption of water contaminated with Arsenic may lead to Arsenic poisoning or Arsenicosis, cancer of the skin, bladder, kidney, lung or diseases of the skin. Further, an excessive amount of Fluoride in drinking water may expose people to risks of crippling skeletal and/ or dental fluorosis. Similarly, high concentration of heavy metals like Mercury etc. in drinking water may lead to kidney diseases, poisoning and cancer.

(c) Water is a state subject and the responsibility of ground water management, including taking initiatives for improving ground water quality and mitigate the contamination issue, lies primarily with the state governments. The Central Government complements the efforts of the States by providing technical support and financial assistance through its various centrally sponsored schemes. However, several steps have been taken by the Central Government in this direction. Some of the important ones are mentioned below:-

i. Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) conducts ground water quality monitoring for several contaminants including Arsenic, Fluoride and heavy metals on a regular basis throughout the country and also generates ground water quality data on a regional scale during various scientific studies. These studies indicate the occurrence of Arsenic, Fluoride and heavy metals in ground water beyond permissible limits (as per BIS) for human consumption in isolated pockets in various States / UTs. The data on ground water quality generated by CGWB are made available in public domain through reports as well as through the web site (http://www.cgwb.gov.in) for use by various stakeholders. The data is also shared with concerned State Governments for taking necessary remedial measures.

ii. Government of India in partnership with States, is implementing Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) – Har Ghar Jal, since August 2019, to make provision of potable tap water supply in adequate quantity, of prescribed quality and on regular & long-term basis to every rural household in the country.

- Under JJM, Bureau of Indian Standards' BIS:10500 standards have been adopted as prescribed norms for quality of tap water service delivery.

- JJM guidelines stipulate that while allocating the funds to States/ UTs, 10% weightage is given to the population residing in habitations affected by chemical contaminants.

- JJM prescribes that while planning for potable water supply to household through tap water connection, priority should be given to quality-affected habitations. States/ UTs have been advised, as an interim measure, to install community water purification plants (CWPPs) in affected habitations to provide potable water to every household.

- Under JJM, a vast network of more than 2000 water quality testing laboratories have been set up in the country. Besides this, five persons, preferably women, are identified and trained from every village for testing the water samples through Field Test Kits (FTKs).

- To enable States/ UTs to test water samples for water quality, and for sample collection, reporting, monitoring and surveillance of drinking water sources, an online JJM – Water Quality Management Information System (WQMIS) portal has been developed.

Under JJM, funds are not released separately for eradication of individual contaminants like Arsenic, Fluoride or heavy metals in ground and drinking water. As per the information available on the JJM dashboard, it is seen that from the beginning of the Scheme in 2019 to 2024-25 (up to the month of November) funds to the tune of Rs. 4.3 lakh cr were allocated by the central government and an amount of Rs. 3.6 lakh cr. has been spent towards providing safe drinking water to more than 12.1 cr rural households in the country.

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