

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF JAL SHAKTI
DEPARTMENT OF DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 687
TO BE ANSWERED ON 22.07.2021

PROBLEMS DUE TO ARSENIC CONTAMINATION OF WATER

†687. SHRIMATI RATHVA GITABEN VAJESING BHAI:

Will the Minister of JAL SHAKTI be pleased to state:

- (a) the steps taken by the Government to resolve the problem of drinking water in States where Arsenic level is more than the limit set by Bureau of Indian Standard (BIS);
- (b) whether these Arsenic elements affect local crops and their quality when it enters the food chain and if so, the manner in which the Government is committed to resolve this problem; and
- (c) whether local residents and cattle are afflicted with various kinds of diseases due to consumption of Arsenic water and if so, the measures being taken by the Government to resolve this problem?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR JAL SHAKTI
(SHRI PRAHLAD SINGH PATEL)

(a) To provide potable tap water supply to every rural household in the country by 2024, Government of India in partnership with States is implementing Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM). Under JJM, while planning water supply schemes to provide tap water to rural households, priority is given to quality-affected habitations including habitations with Arsenic contamination in drinking water sources.

While allocating the funds to States/ UTs in a particular financial year, 10% weightage is given to the population residing in habitations affected by chemical contaminants as on 31st March of the preceding financial year.

Since, planning, implementation and commissioning of piped water supply schemes based on a safe water source may take time, purely as an interim measure, States/ UTs have been advised to install community water purification plants (CWPPs) in such habitations, to provide potable water to every household at the rate of 8–10 litre per capita per day (lpcd) to meet drinking and cooking requirements.

In March, 2017, in the whole country, 27,544 habitations were identified with Arsenic and Fluoride contamination in drinking water sources and to make provision of potable piped water supply in these habitations on priority, National Water Quality Sub-Mission (NWQSM) was launched. As reported by States, except 928, in all of these habitations, potable drinking water has become available.

(b) & (c) The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), an organization under the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, has stated that distribution of Arsenic content in plant parts generally followed the order: root> stem>leaf >economic produce. In general, fruit/grain of plants showed less accumulation of Arsenic compared to root, stem and leaf.

To minimize the effect of Arsenic in soil-plant system, some of remedial measures *inter alia* includes use of less water demanding crops, growing of Arsenic tolerant rice varieties, preference to growing non-edible and leguminous crops during dry season, conjunctive use of ground & surface water and recharge of ground water with rain water harvesting, etc.

Arsenic poisoning may occur in domestic animals especially those cattle consuming Arsenic contaminated water and feed on fodder, which is usually sprayed with herbicides, pesticides and defoliant containing Arsenic in highly soluble form.

As informed by Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), an organization under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, long-term exposure to Arsenic can lead to Arsenicosis in humans. With regard to Arsenic mitigation, a number of steps have been taken *inter alia* which includes the following:

- i.) Guidelines on Detection, Prevention and Management of Arsenicosis in India have been prepared and shared with affected States;
- ii.) Efforts have been made to spread awareness among the affected community regarding problem due to water contamination through IEC material such as radio spots and printed materials sent to the seven Arsenic affected States; and
- iii.) The Diagnosis and Treatment of Arsenicosis is being done in the existing Health infrastructure in the States such as Sub-centres, PHC, CHC, District. Hospital, Medical Colleges etc.
