

Ayurvedic medicines

5494. SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a study in the United States has found that many packaged Ayurvedic products being sold there and produced in India contained high levels of heavy metals such as lead mercury and arsenic;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government had set up any Committee to look into this report;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the details of the findings of the Committee's report?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) and (b) A research article published in journal of American Medical Association (JAMA) dated 15th December, 2004 vol. 292, No. 23, Pages 2869-2873 reported that 14 samples out of 70 samples of Ayurvedic/Herbal Medicinal Products manufactured by 27 companies contained lead, mercury & arsenic. It was stated in the report that the presence of metals in these products was more than permissible limits in food items etc. in USA. The study was conducted through X-ray Fluorescence Spectroscopy. The study was not carried out either on animals or involving human participants. It was only an analysis of the drugs through a specific equipment.

Some of the medicines reported by JAMA contained metals as ingredients. As per Rasashastra speciality of Ayurveda metals are used in Ayurvedic medicines in small quantities. These metals are in the form of compounds of metals triturated in the form of Bhasmas which are rendered safe after purification with herbs and burning in fire for a number of times.

(c) to (e) Government have initiated action to look into this report and the Central Council for Research in Ayurveda and Siddha has undertaken a study to look into the toxicity/safety profile of metal based bhasmas. A study is being carried out in industrial toxicology Research Centre, (ITRC), CSIR, Lucknow. Government have also started a project to estimate the presence of heavy metals, pesticides and microbial load in raw drugs and

classical Ayurvedic formulations. The manufacturing companies have been asked to sent safety profile of their products including presence of heavy metals etc.

If is stated that classical Ayurvedic drugs are prepared according to the Ayurvedic Formulary of India and books mentioned in the 1st Schedule to the Drugs and Cosmetics Act. Use of metals, mercury etc. in the compound form is permissible in some of the medicines. They cannot be said to be unsafe without specific evidence to that effect.

Central assistance for blindness treatment

†5495. SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) the amount of assistance provided by Government for the treatment of blindness in the country during the last three years, State-wise;

(b) the programmes being run with the help of this assistance in these States;

(c) the number of people who have been provided eye sight through eye donation in these States; and

(d) the details of the action taken to encourage eye donation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) State-wise detail of funds released to States/UTs under National Programme for Control of Blindness during last three years is given in the enclosed Statements (See below)

(b) The funds released under National Programme for Control of Blindness are utilized on the following components:

1. Strengthening of Regional Institutes of Ophthalmology.
2. Strengthening of Eye Department in Medical Colleges, District Hospitals, Primary Health Centres etc.
3. Financial support to Eye Banks and Eye Donation Centres.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.