

Uranium content in drinking water in Punjab

2175. SARDAR SUKHDEV SINGH DHINDSA: Will the Minister of DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether a panel of experts has found recently that drinking water in Punjab's Malwa region has high uranium content which far exceeds the limit set by the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board of India (AERBI);

(b) whether Government has sent any team of experts to that region to find out the causes of uranium in water and had suggested remedial measures; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) A team of scientists from Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) visited uranium affected areas in Punjab in the year 2009 and found 3 samples exceeding the Atomic Energy Regulation Board (AERB) limit of 60 ppb in drinking water sources. Subsequently, in a detailed survey conducted by the Department of Physics, Guru Nank Dev University, Amritsar and analyzed in Health Physics Centre laboratory of BARC, 42% of the 235 water samples collected and analyzed were found to contain uranium levels in excess of AERB limit. The Team of experts had observed that the uranium levels in surface water sources and filtered water from Reverse Osmosis plants were found within safe limit. In Bhatinda and Mansa districts, uranium content in water decreases with increase in depth.

Government of Punjab has informed that it has requested Baba Farid Medical University of Health Sciences, Faridkot, to carry out a detailed survey regarding uranium levels in drinking water supplied in the rural areas from surface water (canal based) and underground water (tubewell) based water supply schemes and the possibility of percolation of uranium into deeper aquifer sources.

Government of Punjab also informed that rural water supply schemes in this region are primarily based upon water drawn from canals or deep tubewells of depth more than 500 feet and there are no reports of uranium contamination in canal and deep tubewell based drinking water supply schemes.

The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation released a special grant of Rs 3.80 crore to the Government of Punjab in the year 2010-11 for testing the uranium concentration in drinking water sources in all affected districts of Punjab utilizing the services of BARC approved laboratories/CSIR laboratories.

Sanitation facilities in the country

2176. SHRI A.W. RABI BERNARD: Will the Minister of DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of households in India which do not have toilets and the percentage having access to toilet facilities;

(b) whether Government has any plan to ban open defecation in the country; and

(c) the number of Indian cities which have sewage systems and in the absence of a sewage system how things are done/managed?

THE MINISTER OF DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) Government of India administers the Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC), a comprehensive programme started in the year 1999 to facilitate States to ensure sanitation facilities in rural areas with the main objective of eradicating the practice of open defecation and ensuring clean environment. TSC is a demand driven project based programme taking district as a unit. TSC, at present, is being implemented in 607 rural districts of the country. The main components under the programme are incentives for Individual Household Latrines (IHHL), School Sanitation and Hygiene Education (SSHE), assistance for Community Sanitary Complex (CSC), Anganwadi toilets and Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM). The total project objectives for IHHL identified under TSC are 12.57 crore, out of which 8.30 crore have been reported to be constructed as of November 2011 as per progress provided by the States through online monitoring system maintained by the Ministry. The sanitation coverage in rural areas of the country was 21.9% as per census, 2001. With the effective implementation of TSC, the sanitation coverage in rural areas of the country has increased to approximately 74% as of November, 2011. As far as urban areas are concerned, as per 65th report 2008-09 published by National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), 88.7% of urban population has access to sanitation facilities.

(b) There is no such proposal at present.

(c) TSC covers only the rural areas of the country and promotes only low cost decentralised onsite sanitation systems. Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) is however, an integral component of TSC with a provision for expenditure upto 10% of the project outlay. Under this component activities like common compost pits, low cost drainage, soakage channels/pits, reuse of waste water, system for collection, segregation and disposal of household garbage etc. may be taken up.

Drinking water and sanitation facilities in educational institutions

2177. SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA: Will the Minister of DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has taken any step to provide pure drinking water in Government schools and Anganwadi centres as well as proper sanitation facilities specially for girls in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof including number of schools covered in this regard, State-wise;