

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
WATER RESOURCES, RIVER DEVELOPMENT AND GANAGA REJUVENATION
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4742

ANSWERED ON:30.03.2017

Purification of Ground Water

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Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES, RIVER DEVELOPMENT AND GANAGA REJUVENATION be pleased to state:

- (a) whether long-term exposure to arsenic through ground/drinking water and food may cause cancer and skin lesions according to the World Health Organization website and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether there is an urgent need for a nationwide movement to make people aware about it and if so, the steps taken by the Government in this regard;
- (c) whether the Government is planning to come up with an exhaustive work plan to tackle the challenges posed by the presence of arsenic in ground water and if so, the details of the action plan prepared in this regard;
- (d) whether the Government is giving special attention to tap alternate aquifers for supplying arsenic-free groundwater under National Aquifer Mapping (NAQUIM) Programme of CGWB; and
- (e) if so, the names of the States where the said programme is being implemented along with the future course of action to purify the ground water?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR WATER RESOURCES, RIVER DEVELOPMENT AND GANGA REJUVENATION
(DR. SANJEEV KUMAR BALYAN)

(a) As per the report of the World Health Organization entitled "Arsenic in Drinking Water" published in 2011, there is overwhelming evidence that consumption of elevated levels of Arsenic through drinking water is causally related to the development of cancer at several sites particularly skin, bladder and lung. In several parts of the World, arsenic-induced disease, including cancer, is a significant public health problem.

(b) Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), through its Training Institute, under Human Resources Development & Capacity Building Scheme of Ministry of Water Resources RD & GR is organizing block level training courses (tier -III) in the entire Country, including Arsenic contaminated ground water blocks. These trainings are conducted at grass root level involving stakeholders to educate them on water conservation and pollution aspects. During 2017, CGWB has also conducted a workshop on Arsenic problem in ground water and its remediation in Ganga basin to discuss and evolve Arsenic mitigation strategy.

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(c) to (e) Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation has informed that the States are assisted technically and financially in providing safe drinking water through the centrally sponsored National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP). Upto 67% of funds provided to the States under NRDWP can be utilized for coverage and tackling water quality problems with priority to Arsenic and Fluoride affected habitations. In addition, the States also received certain funds under the 5% Water Quality earmarked funds.

The State Governments have been directed to ensure availability of safe drinking water through Piped Water Supply as a long term measures. Since tackling this problem is a long term measure, NITI Aayog, as a stop gap arrangement, is supporting the State Governments for installation of Community Water Purification Plants for providing safe drinking water in the rural habitations of the Country, where water is contaminated with Arsenic and Fluoride. To this end, over and above the regular allocation of funds under NRDWP, on the recommendations of NITI Aayog, Ministry of Finance has released Rs. 800.00 Crore during the financial year 2015-16 as a one-time 100% Central assistance to the States affected with water quality from Arsenic and Fluoride in the Country. In addition, based on the recommendations of NITI Aayog, Ministry of Finance has also released Rs. 100.00 crore to each of the State of Rajasthan and West Bengal during the financial year 2015-16 to ensure supply of safe drinking water through surface water based piped water supply schemes in quality affected habitations as last mile connectivity.

Since the problem of contamination of water by Arsenic and Fluoride has been serious in the rural habitations, Central Government has taken cognizance of this serious problem and decided to take short-term and long term measures with a ring fenced funding to tackle this problem in the remaining habitations of the Country. Over and above the normal release of funds to the States, during 2016-17, under NRDWP, the Centre share amounting to Rs. 746.23 crore has also been released to the States affected with Arsenic and Fluoride under Water Quality Sub-Mission in the ratio of 90:10 (Centre:State) for Northern-Eastern States and 50:50 (Centre:State) for other States focusing on mitigation of contamination of Fluoride and Arsenic in drinking water.

Under NAQUIM Programme, CGWB is giving special attention to map arsenic affected areas in the States of Assam, Bihar, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.
