

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE  
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2578

ANSWERED ON:22.07.2009

ILL EFFECTS OF MERCURY USED IN MEDICAL INSTRUMENTS

Dharmshi Shri Babar Gajanan

**Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:**

- (a) whether mercury poses serious threat to medicos' health;
- (b) whether it is important to minimize the use of mercury and switch over to digital thermometer and BP measuring instruments, especially in hospitals;
- (c) if so, whether Ministry of Environment and Forests had instructed the All India Institute of Medical Sciences to conduct a survey to assess awareness about environmental pollution by mercury in the health care system;
- (d) if so, the details of the survey conducted in this regard;
- (e) whether the existing waste management system for disposal of mercury is adequate; and
- (f) if not, the fresh measures taken by the Union Government to generate the awareness among the people about the illeffects of mercury on health?

**Answer**

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI GHULAM NABIAZAD)

- (a) The harm to a person's health (including medicos) depends on the exposure of chemical form of mercury, the dose, the duration and route of exposure. Elemental mercury used in thermometers and blood pressure instruments primarily causes health effects when it is breathed as vappour. These exposures can occur when elemental mercury is spilled or instruments that contain mercury break and expose mercury to air.
- (b) A lot of attention has been focused on the environmental impacts of mercury since mercury is very difficult to be destroyed in the environment and persists and get amplified in the food chain. Therefore, there has been a movement to phase out mercury containing thermometers and blood pressure apparatus to other alternatives in some of the hospitals.
- (c) to (f): AIIMS has been asked by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Govt. of India to conduct a survey to assess the awareness of Environmental Mercury Pollution in Healthcare System. The project has been recently sanctioned for a duration of two years.