

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4310
ANSWERED ON:29.08.2011
WATER POLLUTION
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Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether rising nitrate pollution in water is causing cancer in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise;
- (c) whether use of nitrate fertilizers by farmers and industrial sector are responsible for this problem;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the action plan of the Government to address this issue?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN)

(a) & (b) The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) is monitoring the surface and ground water quality under their National Water Quality Monitoring Programme (NWQMP). As informed by the CPCB, the water quality assessment of surface water carried out under NWQMP indicates that by and large the level of nitrate does not exceed the desirable limit (45 mg/l) for drinking water. The CPCB is also conducting monitoring of ground water quality at 595 locations in the country. The samples collected are analyzed as per notified protocol. The State-wise details of ground water quality monitored under NWQMS are given at annexure. The CPCB has not undertaken any study on nitrate pollution causing cancer.

(c) & (d) As informed by CPCB, the use of nitrogenous fertilizers is one of the causes for build up of nitrates in water. The States with large scale use of nitrogen fertilizers for agriculture have higher concentration of nitrates in water. The run-off from catchment area brings significant amount of nitrate. The cause of nitrate in water bodies is also on account of disposal of sewage and nitrogenous bearing effluents from industry.

(e) The options for reducing the level of nitrate in water bodies include optimal utilization of fertilizers, organic farming and crop rotation, regarding which farmers are being educated. Other measures taken to check pollution from municipal sewage and industries are:

(i) Implementation of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 by the Central and the State Pollution Control Boards to restore the water quality.

(ii) Special Drive under Environment Surveillance Scheme for 17 categories of industries discharging into rivers and lakes.

(iii) Identification of 41 problem areas as per Comprehensive Environmental Pollution Index (CEPI).

(iv) Common Effluent Treatment Plants for clusters of small scale industries.

(v) Identified urban centres are being considered under various River Action Plans for interception, diversion and development of treatment facilities.

(vi) The depletion of flow in the rivers is one of the major factors for water quality degradation. Steps are being taken to augment flow in rivers for ecological consideration and the respective ministries concerned such as Water Resources and Power are being persuaded to provide adequate flow in the rivers so that rivers can attain its ecological balance including desired water quality for various beneficial uses.

(vii) Health impacts from industrial pollution are considered while fixing the emission and effluent standards. MINAS (Minimal National Standards) for water bodies are fixed with due consideration to see the effects of industrial pollution on water, human health and environment.