

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:593
ANSWERED ON:26.11.2012
CHECK THE RISING LEVEL OF MERCURY
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Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the level of mercury is rising dangerously in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has any policy to check the rising mercury levels in the country;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the steps taken by the Government to check the rising level of mercury in the country?

Answer

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

(a) to (e): Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), with State Pollution Control Boards, is monitoring ambient air quality in the country. Mercury is not included in the notified ambient air quality standards.

CPCB has prepared draft Guidelines on "Environmentally Sound Management of Mercury Waste in Health Care Facilities" which specify mercury spill collection procedure, storage and disposal options as well as alternatives to mercury based medical instruments. These guidelines have been widely circulated and also placed on CPCB's website for general public. Central Pollution Control Board has asked all State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs)/ Pollution Control Committees (PCCs) to take necessary action for safe management of mercury spillages/losses in healthcare facilities, collection of spilled mercury, its storage and sending it back to the manufacturers. They have been asked to ensure that the spilled mercury does not become part of bio-medical or other solid wastes generated from the healthcare facilities. Further, mercury bearing waste containing equal to or greater than 50 mg/kg of mercury is required to be disposed of as per the Hazardous Waste (Management, Handling and Transboundary Movement) Rules, 2008. CPCB has also organized awareness workshops for various stakeholders on bio-medical waste management in general and specifically on mercury spill collection, handling and disposal by Health Care Facilities (HCFs).

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare have issued guidelines in March 2010 to reduce environmental pollution due to mercury in Central Government Hospitals and Health Centres. Under these Guidelines, all Central Government Hospitals and health centers have been asked to gradually phase out mercury containing equipments (thermometer, BP Instruments etc.) and replace them with good quality non-mercury equipments. The guidelines also require that a mercury phase-out plan be developed and procurement of mercury-free equipment may be started. The hospitals have also been given detailed guidelines regarding proper management of mercury waste and mercury spills. Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) has directed hospitals in Delhi having 50 beds or more to phase out mercury based equipments. DPCC has directed all Health Care Facilities (HCFs) to dispose of mercury waste only through agencies notified by DPCC.