

Bromine in Malwa waters prompts fresh concern

I P Singh, TNN Nov 19, 2011, 01:47AM IST

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JALANDHAR: A joint study by five researchers from three different institutions has held that Agro-chemical processes are responsible for uranium contamination in groundwater and questioned the linking of uranium to cancer cases. Meanwhile another study has found that there is high concentration of Bromine in the water samples in the southwest Punjab which if converts to Bromate is toxic for humans and is an established carcinogenic substance.

'This recent study which would be presented at International Conference to be held at University of Kerala on December 9-11 has found that concentration of Bromine was found to be from 200 to 1250 PPB (Parts per Billion) in the water samples. This is very high concentration. Bromine converts to Bromate in presence of UV light and chlorination and according to WHO specifications concentration of Bromate above 10 PPB is carcinogenic,' said Atul Bhalla, a Physics professor at DAV College Jalandhar. He said that the in the study Dr J S Shahi, Dr Devinder Mehta and Gurjit Singh of Punjab University and two other researchers Heena Duggal and M.Alrakabi were also involved.

In view of these findings it is clear that methods of purification have to be changed which do not involve UV purifiers or chlorination,' he said.

Meanwhile another study titled 'Elemental analysis of ground water from different regions of Panjab State (India) using EDXRF technique and sources of uranium contamination', which was presented at three day International Conference (ICECS 2011) at Singapore has dumped theories and perceptions regarding the source of uranium in groundwater in the Malwa region, namely fly ash from thermal power plants, toxic metals in Budha Nullah that flows into the Sutlej, weathering of granite rocks at Tosham hills in Haryana, pesticides and depleted uranium used in wars.

Bhalla said that Phosphate fertilizers (uranium content more than 50 microgram/g) used in the cotton cultivation belt further added to the contamination. The concentration of chemicals produced due to decay of agricultural matter and use of fertilizers, and dissolved salts in irrigation water were continuously increasing in the ground water due to the minimal use of the ground water.

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