

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.3
TO BE ANSWERED ON 05.12.2013

TRACES OF URANIUM IN SOILS OF SOUTHERN PUNJAB

3. SHRI H.K. DUA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) after detailed studies in southern Punjab has confirmed traces of uranium in its soil;
- (b) whether BARC has agreed with the opinion of the researchers in the State that the source of uranium in Punjab's soil and in its water may be the fly ash thrown out by the Bhatinda Thermal Plant which uses coal brought from Dhanbad-Jharia mines; and;
- (c) the steps Government is taking to ensure that the presence of uranium traces in southern districts of the State does not cause any health hazard to the people?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES & PENSIONS AND PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY) :

- (a) Uranium is present in all environmental matrices such as air, water, soil, sediment, food materials and biota at trace or ultra trace levels.

Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) has carried out a detailed study on concentration of uranium in soil in Southern Punjab and reported the uranium levels in soils to vary from 1-3 parts per million (1-3 micro gm/gm) which is similar to its soil concentration in other parts of the country.

- (b) Atomic Minerals Directorate of Exploration and Research, Northern region, Department of Atomic Energy, has carried out study to find out the sources of uranium in ground water in Southern Punjab. They concluded that the source of high uranium content in ground water is not the flyash from thermal power plant but it is geogenic in nature.

Recently an expert committee was constituted by the Honorable High Court of Punjab and Haryana at Chandigarh, to establish the source of uranium in ground water in Punjab.

- (c) The Punjab government has initiated a programme to supply uranium free drinking water and has installed water purification systems based on Reverse Osmosis (RO) technology as recommended by BARC in the regions having high uranium content in drinking water.