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Water quality dips after two years of improvement

Contamination Can't Be Stopped Until Old Pipelines Replaced & Uninterrupted Supply Achieved: Officials

Shavika Jain | 158

Water samples tested by the BMC in 2012-2013 revealed that C ward, which includes areas such as Pydhonie and Bhamburda, received the dirtiest water of all 24 wards. Thirty-seven per cent of the samples taken there were detected as not potable.



Coming second worst in the BMC's muddy list was P South ward where Goregaon falls. Thirty-two per cent of the ward's samples were found contaminated.

Officials said the contaminants found in Mumbai's water are sand particles, sewage waste, E.coli, other bacterial content besides other foreign particles. Among the deadliest of these, E.coli can cause severe abdominal cramps, bloody diarrhoea and vomiting, said doctors.

The drop in the quality of Mumbai's water comes after two years of improvement. In 2009-2010, the municipal corporation had found 26.1% of samples contaminated.

The tally dropped in 2010-2011 to 21.6% and then in 2011-2012 to 16.4%. But the progress was squandered.

Additional municipal commissioner Rajiv Jakota said water contamination cannot be completely eliminated from the city's supply system unless all old pipelines are replaced and "cross-connections" between sewage and water lines detected and fixed. "We are working towards replacing old leaky pipelines. This year, we are going to change 72 km of

pipelines, which should provide significant relief to citizens," observed Jakota.

The additional commissioner added that total avoidance of water contamination will be possible only when the city gets round the clock supply. "Contamination occurs when a water line is not charged (does not have water). Once 24x7 water supply is achieved, pressure can be maintained in the line and contamination avoided."

Asserting that corroding, old pipelines are a key reason for water contamination, civic officials claimed the pipes are being changed on a "war footing"; many pipelines are in fact being replaced by tunnels to completely avoid ruptures leading to contamination, they added.

Times View: Clean water from tap is taxpayer's right
Municipality-supplied clean water should be a given in a metropolis of Mumbai's stature. But year-on-year data show we are getting even dirtier water from the tap. What is perhaps even more distressing is the BMC's refusal to - or inability to - rectify the problems that ensure we get our quota of germs every time we drink from the tap. Suppliers of bottled water would be the only gainers from this state of affairs.

name one, coliform organisms appear in the water due to non-adherence to scientific processes in the chlorination system at filtration and treatment plants. Also causing contamination are the old reservoirs where water is stored after being pumped from filtration plants.

Even the water testing process for quality control, officials admitted, is flawed. Throughout the year, samples are randomly collected by assistant engineers in charge of quality control, assistant engineers tasked with leak detection, and medical health officers. The samples are then sent for testing. But the results come only after 48 hours, ensuring that the water, even if dirty, is consumed for two more days before remedial steps are taken.

Factors other than pipelines contribute to contamination in the BMC's 4,000km distribution network. To

HARM BY E.COLI

E.coli, or Escherichia coli, bacteria normally live in the intestines of healthy people and animals. Most of its varieties are harmless, but a few variants can cause severe abdominal cramps, bloody diarrhoea and vomiting.

E.coli infection occurs on contact with faeces of humans or animals, food or water



contaminated by faeces is the most common reason for an outbreak. Raw vegetables and undercooked meat are other sources of infection

In most patients, the infection stays for a week. But in children and older adults, it can sometimes lead to kidney failure

PRECAUTIONS

- There are no vaccines or medication to protect from E.coli-based illness
- Drink boiled water
- Use pasteurised milk
- Avoid raw fruit and vegetables, except those with skin
- Wash hands often

COMMON CONTAMINANTS



Percentage Of Water Samples Found Unfit For Human Consumption By The Civic Body

Three Ward Wards
Wards Where % of unfit Samples Improved

| | 2011 | 2012 |
|-----|------|------|
| A | 18 | 17 |
| B | 17 | 19 |
| C | 25 | 37 |
| D | 18 | 20 |
| E | 21.5 | 26 |
| F/S | 20 | 22 |
| F/N | 10 | 16 |
| G/S | 14 | 18 |
| G/N | 17 | 19 |
| H/E | 19 | 22 |
| H/W | 15 | 19 |
| K/E | 14 | 16 |
| K/W | 14 | 19 |
| P/S | 26 | 32 |
| P/N | 16 | 15 |
| R/S | 13 | 21 |
| R/C | 14 | 21 |
| R/N | 14 | 19 |
| L | 21 | 23 |
| M/E | 12 | 14 |
| M/W | 16 | 15 |
| N | 14 | 14 |
| S | 17 | 20 |
| T | 16 | 15 |

