

● 19 TOXIC ELEMENTS MIXED IN ATMOSPHERE

Cuddalore residents still inhale toxic gases: Report

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Dec. 3: Residents of Cuddalore continue to inhale toxic gases with samples of ambient air taken by Sipcot area community environmental monitors (SACEM) during July and August this year revealing high levels of at least 19 toxic elements, including six carcinogens far above the permissible limits in the Sipcot industrial estate.

The air in the estate is still not fit to breathe and the results are an indication of a man-made disaster in the making.

According to the SACEM report, 12 of 19 chemicals, including dimethyl sulphide, n-hexane, 1-2 dichloroethane, carbon tetrachloride, toluene and 1-2 dibromomethane, were found to be high above the United States Environmental Protection Agency's (USEPA's) safety levels.

Sipcot trouble

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A total of 18 chemicals affect the eyes and respiratory system, 17 affect the skin, 10 affect the liver while six were carcinogenic and known to cause cancer in humans and animals.

Also, 1-2 dichloroethane was found 3,243.2 times above the safety levels prescribed by the USEPA while 1-2 dibromomethane was found to be 17,241.1 times above safety limits.

SACEM submitted its report in 2005 to the Supreme Court monitoring

committee on hazardous waste.

However, the situation in the industrial estate had deteriorated due to lack of concrete action on the part of the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board officials, the report said.

"Though the Union ministry of environment and forests had imposed a moratorium in January 2010 on setting up new industries in the region, these results indicate that nothing much has changed since. Residents of Sipcot continue to be poisoned by the polluting industries," according to a SACEM representative.

"The government should take action against the polluting industries and make it mandatory for the units to disclose their nature of operation. An overall regional capacity study will give an idea of the extent of damage before concrete remedial measures could be taken," he added.