

High pollution near SIPCOT complex

Air Samples Collected From The Industrial Estate Is Found To Contain Carcinogens

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Cuddalore: Residents living around the SIPCOT industrial estate in Cuddalore are having a daily dose of cancer-causing substances, says a study.

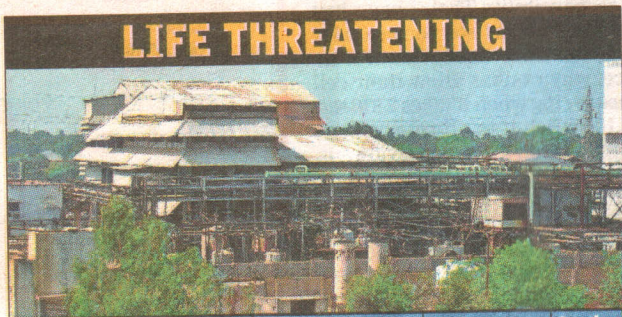
Air samples collected by an agency from the SIPCOT industrial estate in Cuddalore have been found to contain carcinogens way above the permissible limits, exposing thousands of residents to serious health hazards, alleged SIPCOT Area Community Environmental Monitors (SACEM).

SACEM is a forum of NGOs and environmental agencies fighting pollution brought about by industries. SACEM said that in seven out of the eight air samples taken from Shasun Chemicals in SIPCOT (State Industrial Promotion Council of Tamil Nadu), carcinogens like Chloroform, methylene chloride exceeded specified limits. Chloroform overshoot the limit by 45 to 100 times while methylene chloride was found 2.4 to 5.9 times more than the limit. Toluene, though not a carcinogen but what leads to other disorders, was also detected in five out of the eight samples.

Apart from being a trigger for cancer, chloroform and methylene chloride wreak the respiratory system and the central nervous system besides causing irritation to eyes and skin, weakness, nausea, headache and enlarged liver.

It was a report by the National Environmental Engineering Research Instituted (NEERI) in 2007 which revealed that the residents of villages near SIPCOT Industrial Estate were 2,000 times more prone to cancer than others.

This report forced the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) to ask industries to undertake a study to assess the level of pollution. Based on this directive, Shasun asked the



Name of the Chemical	Odour	Health Effects	Organs affected	Carcinogenic
Methylene Chloride	Faint sweet odour	Irritation of eyes, skin; nausea; drowsiness; dizziness	Eyes, respiratory system	Yes
Chloroform	Pleasant Odour	Irritation of eyes, skin; dizziness, mental dullness; enlarged liver	Liver, kidneys, heart, eyes, skin, Central	Yes
Toluene	Sweet pungent benzene like odour	Irritation of eyes, nose; weakness and exhaustion; confusion	Eyes, skin, respiratory system,	No

Chennai-based SGS Laboratory to undertake a study in June 2008, which was submitted to the Board. Though the results remained out of bounds for the public, SACEM prised open the mouth of TNPCB with the Right to Information Act.

SACEM has accused the pollution control board of whitewashing the findings — on the presence of carcinogens — and giving a clean chit to the company, with just an innocuous warning to monitor and maintain volatile organic compounds levels below the limits prescribed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA).

Chennai-based Community Environmental Monitoring coordinator Shweta Narayan said the Supreme Court Monitoring Committee on Hazardous Wastes directed the TNPCB in September 2004 to bring emission of airborne toxic volatile organic compounds (VOC) below the levels

laid down by the US Environmental Protection Agency.

“Even after four years, the industries are yet to bring down pollution to safe levels, and the TNPCB too have failed to taken any decisive action to enforce its own orders,” Shweta said. “The TNPCB is most lenient when it comes to industries and dealing with polluters. Unfortunately, this lenience has a direct negative bearing on the lives and health of SIPCOT residents,” she said.

District Collector Rajendra Ratnoo told The Times of India that the administration is taking steps to enforce the rules and bringing down the pollution level in the SIPCOT area. “We have formed a forum with representatives of the industries, environment organisations and the public. The forum has quarterly meetings on the measures to control pollution. There are visible improvements in the recent past,” Ratnoo said.