

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Shasun Spews Poison; TNPCB looks the other way**

**CUDDALORE, 5 December, 2008** -- In a glaring example of inaction, the Tamilnadu Pollution Control Board has given a clean chit to SIPCOT, Cuddalore-based Shasun Chemicals and Drugs despite evidence in its possession that 7 out of 8 air samples taken by the company contained carcinogens above USEPA prescribed safe limits. The samples were taken in compliance with conditions laid down by TNPCB as part of the company's Consent to Operate. Interestingly, the TNPCB has marked as "Complied" the condition that states that the company should monitor and maintain VOC levels below the limits prescribed by the US Environmental Protection Agency. SIPCOT Area Community Environmental Monitors have said that they will write to the Chairman of the Board to initiate an enquiry into the friendly report given by the District Environmental Engineer to Shasun despite evidence to show that the company was operating in violation of Consent conditions.

Acting on a report by SIPCOT Area Community Environmental Monitors (SACEM) that highlighted the alarming air pollution in SIPCOT, the Supreme Court Monitoring Committee on Hazardous Wastes directed the TNPCB in September 2004 to bring emissions of airborne toxic volatile organic compounds to less than levels prescribed by the US Environmental Protection Agency. India has not developed regulatory standards for VOCs. The Committee also directed the TNPCB to shut down industries that failed to comply with the emission standards.

In four years, neither have industries brought down pollution to safe levels, nor has the TNPCB taken any decisive action to enforce its own orders. "When it comes to industries and dealing with polluters, the TNPCB is most lenient. Unfortunately, this lenience has a direct negative bearing on the lives and health of SIPCOT residents," said Shweta Narayan, coordinator of Chennai-based Community Environmental Monitoring. According to the sample results which were obtained through Right to Information by Narayan, 7 out of 8 air samples taken from various locations in Shasun's premises contained carcinogenic chloroform and methylene chloride. Chloroform exceeded USEPA prescribed levels by a factor of 45 to 100; methylene chloride was between 2.4 and 5.9 times in excess of USEPA levels. Toluene was detected in 5 out of 8 samples.

The samples were taken in June 2008.

Shasun is a notorious company as far as residents of SIPCOT are concerned. In 2008 alone, SACEM has recorded at least 36 complaints of air pollution where Shasun is named as a key polluter. The company has more than 4000 tons of hazardous wastes lying in its premises, and was recently caught red-handed for attempting to smuggle toxic wastes for illegal dumping. An August 2007 report by the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute into the air pollution in SIPCOT named Shasun as a key source of volatile organic compounds. The company is known for its characteristic rotten cabbage odour and the smell of rotting dead body and fruit. Air samples taken by SACEM have revealed the presence of chemicals like methylene chloride, trichloroethylene, chloroform, carbon tetra chloride and hydrogen sulphide.

SACEM has said that industries in SIPCOT operate without fear of action from the TNPCB, and that things will not improve as long as the PCB continues to treat SIPCOT villagers as dispensable.

**For more information, contact Shweta Narayan -- 9444024315**

**Background:**

On 27 June 2006, SGS Laboratories of Chennai took eight 2-hour samples from different locations inside Shasun Chemicals and Drugs Ltd. These samples were analysed for the presence of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) by the lab. The entire analysis was conducted as per the instruction of the TNPCB after the NEERI report on Cuddalore. According to the TNPCB consent condition to Shasun, the unit is expected to monitor and maintain VOC levels below the limits prescribed by the US EPA until the TNPCB and CPCB come up with its own standards.

The results of the sampling study were obtained through Right to Information Act from the TNPCB Chennai

**Overall findings:**

- Total of 8 samples were taken from various locations within the unit.
- Chloroform was found in 7 out of 8 samples. In all these samples Chloroform was detected in levels 45 to 100 times above the safe limits prescribed by the US EPA Region 6 Screening Levels.
- Methylene Chloride was found in 7 out of 8 samples. In all these samples Methylene Chloride was detected in levels 2.4 to 5.9 times above safe limits prescribed by the US EPA Region 6 Screening Levels.
- Toluene was detected in 5 out of 8 samples.
- Both Chloroform and Methylene Chloride are carcinogens.

**Sample results of Shasun by SGS Laboratories**

Analysis:

S No.	Name of the Chemical	EPA Region 6 Screening Levels (ug/m3)	Levels Detected at various sampling locations (ug/m3) (Number of times the levels exceed the EPA Region 6 Screening Levels)							
			L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8
1.	Choloroform	<b>0.0084</b>	7 (83.3)	4.9 (58.33)	6.2 (73.8)	8.6 (102.3)	3.8 (45.23)	6.4 (76.19)	4.8 (57.14)	ND
2.	Methylene Chloride	<b>4.09</b>	20.3 (4.96)	18.0 (4.40)	16.8 (4.10)	23.2 (5.67)	10.2 (2.49)	24.3 (5.94)	14.3 (3.49)	ND
3.	Toluene	<b>400</b>	ND	5.5 (--)	7.4 (--)	ND	8.8 (--)	2.4 (--)	ND	7.1 (--)

L1 – Near Security Gate

- L2 – Top of Electrical Plant
- L3 – Top of Admin Building
- L4 – Top of Chemix Plant
- L5 – Factory South East Side – Ice Factory
- L6 – Factory North West Side – Near Main Road
- L7 – Factory South West Side – TASMAK (sic) Godown
- L8 – North West Side – Shasun Dispensary

**Health Effects of the Chemicals found in the sample:**

<b>S No</b>	<b>Name of the Chemical</b>	<b>Odour</b>	<b>Health Effects</b>	<b>Target Organs</b>	<b>Carcinogen</b>
1.	Methylene Chloride	Faint sweet odour	Irritation of eyes, skin; weakness, exhaustion, drowsiness, dizziness; numbness, tingle limbs; nausea; [potential occupational carcinogen]	Eyes, respiratory system <b>Cancer Site:</b> [in animals: lung, liver, salivary & mammary gland tumors]	Yes
2.	Chloroform	Pleasant Odour	Irritation of eyes, skin; dizziness, mental dullness,	Liver, kidneys, heart, eyes, skin, Central nervous system	Yes

			nausea, confusion; headache, weakness, exhaustion; enlarged liver [potential carcinogen]	<b>Cancer Site:</b> [in animals: liver and kidney cancer]	
3.	Toluene	Sweet pungent benzene like odour	Irritation of eyes, nose, weakness and exhaustion, confusion, euphoria, dizziness, headache, dilated pupils and tears to eyes, anxiety, muscle fatigue, liver injury, kidney damage	Eyes, skin, respiratory system, Central nervous system, liver and kidney	No