

Periyar a poisoned chalice: Report

Express News Service
The New Indian Express

KOCHI: Think twice before you dare to gulp down a drop from the Periyar.

For the river and its tributaries are filled with highly toxic Beta-Hexachloro Cyclohexane (BHC) and Endosulfan, says a report that focuses on the alarming level of pesticide content in the Periyar and its tributaries. The report calls for proper scientific treatment of the water to make it fit for drinking as all water samples show presence of pesticides except three. The frightening disclosure was made by the National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (NIIST) after analysing the water samples from the Periyar/Edayar.

In areas such as Kuzhikanadam canal, upstream of Pathalam bund near Edayar industrial site, Chalakkal Thodu joining the Periyar, riverside near FACT, near Binani Zinc Barg gate and near the Merchem Edayar Outlet discharge point, the water was Endosulfan-rich, reveals the report submitted before the Kerala High Court. In response to a writ petition, the NIIST, Thiruvananthapuram, stated that samples from 64 areas had been examined in detail.

Water in most of the target areas contained dangerous chemicals, and according to Indian water standards the presence of pesticides was not acceptable for domestic purpose without treatment, report said.

"If the court issued any order, specialists concerned were willing to come before the court and explain the technical details of the matter," it said. A Division Bench of the High Court had asked the NIIST to submit a report on the quality of drinking water from Periyar and its tributaries.

The court had earlier appointed an Advocate Commission to look into the issue of pollution in Periyar. The single-member commission consisting of advocate P A Jacob was appointed on the basis of a contempt of court petition filed by Eloor-based NGO Green Action Force.

The samples were taken by Kerala State Pollution Control Board in the presence of the commission. The samples were collected from Panachithode, Kunthithode and Kuzhikkandam creek - the tributaries of the Periyar. Complaints were rife about the rising pollution in the river owing to discharge of industrial waste from Eloor.
