

## **Arsenic in bottled water**

Pakistan Council for Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) has revealed that arsenic, a major cause of cancer and kidney diseases was found in seven brands of bottled water. Safe limit of arsenic in water is 10ppb, but some brands of bottled water like Nadiq Water contained 52ppb arsenic, Nation contained 20ppb arsenic, National contained 11ppb, Naimat contained 22ppb, Premier contained 16ppb, New Everest contained 31ppb arsenic and Pineo showed 13ppb arsenic. The report further revealed that 21 out of 75 brands of bottled water are unsafe while 59 brands were declared safe.

The number of chemically safe brands is 62 and chemically unsafe brands is 13. Furthermore, number of microbiologically safe brands is 72 and microbiologically unsafe brands is 3 in number. 75 brands were collected from 14 cities including Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Bahawalpur, Faisalabad, D.G Khan, D.I.Khan, Sialkot, Sahiwal, Peshawar, Quetta, Karachi, Nawabshah and Hyderabad. Furthermore, Sodium, Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) and bacterial contamination was also found in some brands. According to the report issued by PCRWR, number of consistent brands in market is 50, number of brands disappeared from market is 27 while number of new brands is 25.

Drinking water quality is deteriorating continually due to biological contamination from human waste, chemical pollutants from industries and agricultural inputs. Piped water also gets contaminated because pipes are laid very close to sewerage lines or open drains and cause many serious water borne diseases. It was found that 45 percent of infant deaths have been attributed to diarrhoea and about 60 percent to overall infectious waterborne diseases in Pakistan.

According to World Health Organisation, 25-30 percent of the diseases is gastrointestinal in nature. The poor quality of drinking water has forced a large cross-section of citizens to buy bottled water. As a consequence of this expanding market, a mushroom growth of bottled water industry in the country is witnessed during the last few years. However, many of the mineral water companies were found selling contaminated water (Business Recorder, 17-12-11).