

The adverse impact of mercury based technology on human health

Islamabad: The Minister for Environment, Hamidullah Jan Afridi said on Thursday “Mercury is a harmful chemical, having adverse impacts on human health particularly central nervous system, kidney and foetus.” The government is completely committed to replace the mercury-based technology into environment friendly technology to turn away its harmful impact. He said inaugurating the Inception Workshop of National Stakeholders on Management of Mercury and Mercury Containing Waste Project in Pakistan.

The seminar organized by the International Co-operation Wing of the Ministry of Environment, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)'s Chemical Branch, Geneva. The minister said, "The ministry is making all out efforts but due to technological constraints, it is not possible for Pakistan to address this gigantic challenge alone." He also required technical support and assistance from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and other relevant international agencies. Afridi said that keeping view the urgency of the issue, there is also terrible need to sensitize the people on the hazards of mercury. He further added the government is completely committed to contribute towards the global hard work for protection of environment to make sure continued life on Earth for our obtainable and future generations. He added, “Pakistan is a signatory to a number of international conventions and protocols on various environmental issues especially hazardous chemicals”. There is a dire need to clutch a sequence of awareness workshops and issue awareness material to sensitize the people on the hazards of mercury.

He advised the funding agencies, to discover possibility of the share of maximum funds for accumulation awareness on this toxic chemical and hoped. The seminar will make useful recommendations to devise a comprehensive policy on the Mercury Waste Project in Pakistan.

Mercury is highly toxic, especially to the developing nervous system. Some populations are especially susceptible, most notably the fetus and young children. Yet mercury continues to be using in many products and processes all over the world, including in small-scale gold mining; manometers and thermometers; electrical switches; fluorescent lamps; dental amalgams, batteries and VCM (vinyl-chloride-monomer) production and some pharmaceutical. The most important mercury releases to the environment are emanation to air, but mercury is also release from sources directly to water and land. Important emissions sources include coal-fired power generation, waste incineration, cement, steel and alkali production, gold and other metals mining, landfills and other sources such as secondary smelting operations and industrial inorganic chemical production. Once released, mercury persists in the environment where it circulates between air, water, soils and biota in a variety of forms. Most people primarily exposed to methyl-mercury through the diet, especially fish, and to elemental mercury due to dental amalgams and occupations such as small-scale mining.