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சுற்றாடல் நீதிக்கான கேந்திர நிலையம் உத்தரவாதத்தால் (வரையறுக்கப்பட்ட)
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PRESS RELEASE

HIGH LEVELS OF TOXIC MERCURY FOUND IN SKIN WHITENING CREAM AVAILABLE IN SRI LANKA

January 21st 2013, Colombo, It was decided to ban use of mercury in soap and cosmetics, CFL bulbs and phase out range of items such as Mercury Thermometers, blood pressure apparatus etc., by 2020. This is possible under the Minamata' Convention Agreed by Nations during the International Mercury negotiation's just ended in Geneva. Meanwhile, Centre for Environmental Justice found very high levels of mercury in skin whitening creams widely available in the Sri Lanka Market.

Out of 46 samples tested 25 creams contains dangerous levels of Mercury as high as 30,167 ppm. Unfortunately some of these killer whitening creams have approved under the Cosmetics, Devices and Drugs regulatory Authority in Sri Lanka.

Skin whitening refers to the practice of using natural or synthetic chemical substances in order to lighten the skin tone or even the skin complexion by lessening the concentration of melanin.

Mercury is one of the primary toxic metals of concern in cosmetics. The toxicity depends on the type of mercury exposed. The most hazardous form is the organic or the Methyl mercury. But all forms of mercury are absorbed through skin and tend to accumulate in the body due to lipophilic property of the chemicals. Contamination of mercury in blood can cause allergic reactions, skin irritation, or adverse effects on the nervous system. Clinical symptoms of over exposure to mercury include tremors, weakness, memory loss, dermatitis and impaired kidney function.

Despite of all these health issues mercury is used in whitening treatments such as whitening creams, soaps and ointments. The mercury in whitening creams function as the inhibitor of melanin formation and the products are popular among the people with a dark complexion disregard of the gender or the country they live. Whitening cosmetic products are popular all over the world including Sri Lanka. Some survey has highlighted that some of these whitening products are available in populated as well as very rural areas of Sri Lanka.

According to the US food and Drug Administration (FDA), the concentration of mercury compounds as cosmetic ingredients is limited to eye area and not allowed to increase concentrations of mercury more than 65ppm [parts per million (0.0065 percent)] and their metal (about 100 ppm or 0.01 percent phenyl mercuric acetate or nitrate) is permitted only if no other effect. All other cosmetics containing mercury is contaminated and subject to regulatory action unless it occurs in less than 1 ppm (0.0001 percent) as metal and its presence is unavoidable under conditions of good manufacturing practice.

Long term use of any skin whiteners can cause increase pigmentation in joints of the fingers, toes, buttocks and ears. Also the skin of the face can become thinned and the area around the eyes can have increased pigmentation leading to bleach panda effect.

The highest level of mercury was found in Thailand and Chinese produced skin whitening creams i.e. XIN JIAOLI 10 WHITENING SP. RE2, CAIKE GINSENGWHITEN CREAM, THAI ROSE WHITENING CREAM, FAIREVER FAIRNESS CREAM, EVE FAIRNESS, PAI MEI WHITENING SPOT

CRM, POP POPULAR FACIAL CREAM, AICHUN BEAUTY WHIT FRE. CRM (night cream), ANGELS FAIRNESS CREAM IN 7DAYS, LANOLAN WHITE COMPLEX, AICHUN BEAUTY ANTI WHIT. CR., VENUS FAIRNESS DAY CREAM,PRIME LIGHTENING CREAM, SEVEN HERBAL - UBTAN PONDS, WHITE BEAUTY FEM FAIRNESS CRÈME, BLEACH (CREAM BLEACH) LADY DIANA WHITENING CREAM- cucumber (5015100), POP POPULAR FOR MEN F. CREAM, FAIR n LOVELY C.FAIRNESS C. ,CLEAR FAIRNESS MEN CREAM.

Few local brands also found in very small amount of Mercury.

For more information

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