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The Bureau of Indian Standards in Chennai has increased the inspection of packaged water to ensure that clean and safe water reaches out to its consumers.

The market surveillance has been on the rise, and the authorities have increased the sample size to 374 in Chennai and adjoining districts. The figure has doubled since the year 2018-19. While steps are being taken to enforce the quality standard, the sellers have stated there is a sharp decrease in demand for 25 litre-bubble top cans.

The officials had planned to increase the selection of market and factory samples in which they would cover all the 361 certified units of the state twice in a fiscal year. Of the samples tested, about 62 units failed to meet the standards. This figure will rise as the testing has increased. The main reasons for the samples failing the test were due to the presence of yeast, mould and aerobic microbial count.

As most of the packagers use the ISI standard bottles, there has not been much contamination from them. However, consumers must check the containers that are 85% opaque. Officials have also advised the consumers to check the shelf life of the packaged drinking water. The bubble top cans, which are frequently used, have a shelf life of about 30 days.

"We have directed units to maintain hygienic conditions and regularly change filters/membranes. Six licences were cancelled last year either due to misuse of the ISI mark or during testing of samples brought from the factory," - said a BIS official.

BIS paid attention to the processing and filling points and gave time to the units to take proper measures for units that failed to meet the quality tests. The unit's license is cancelled only when the standards are not adhered to continuously.

Further, Manufacturers have requested the BIS to change the yeast, mould and aerobic microbial count parameters from critical to non-critical quality parameters. The manufacturers have claimed that the parameters are non-hazardous.

There has been a sharp decline in the sale of daily packaged drinking water, which has fallen from 1.5 crore litres to 1.1 crore litres post-pandemic.

On the contrary, there has been a sharp rise in demand for water bottles of different sizes, and their consumption has increased from 40 lakh litres in 2019.

Association founder A. Shakespeare said: "We expect the consumption to go up by 20 lakh litres. Several units near Alamathi, Red Hills are on the verge of closure. The number of new units applying for licences has also dropped."

The manufacturers have urged that the government must take steps to stop illegal water tankers from distributing water on the streets without any license.

Officials have stated that consumers must verify the details of BIS manufacturers and register their complaints through BIS mobile applications.



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