

Global study finds microplastic in 82% samples of Delhi's tap water

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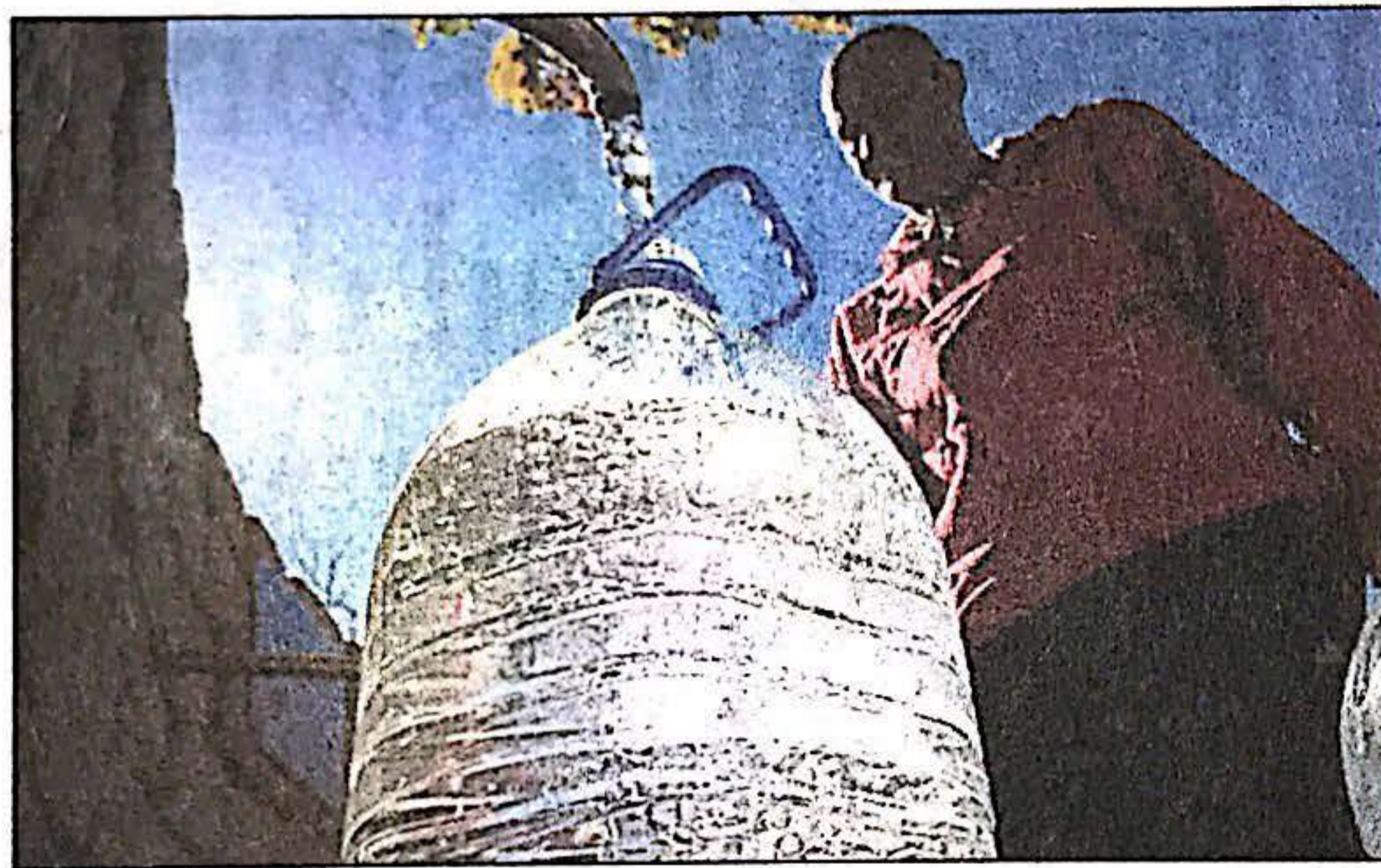
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NEW DELHI: Microplastic has penetrated tap water in countries across the world, with a study showing that 82% of the samples surveyed in New Delhi are contaminated with particles smaller than five millimeters in size.

The investigation by Orb Media, which collected samples from more than a dozen countries, said microplastics have been shown to absorb toxic chemicals linked to illnesses, and then release them when consumed by fish and mammals.

"Scientists say these microscopic fibers might originate in the everyday abrasion of clothes, upholstery, and carpets. They could reach your household tap by contaminating local water sources, or treatment and distribution systems. But no one knows, and no specific procedures yet exist for filtering or containing them," the investigation, based on the final report published on May 16, said.

Governments across the globe



■ **Lebanon and India have the second highest contamination rate after the United States.**

AFP

don't have any standards on safe threshold for plastic in water and food, according to the report. "The first studies into the health effects of microscopic plastics on humans are only just now beginning," it said.

Delhi Jal Board CEO Keshav Chandra said there was no valid study yet on what impact microplastic has on the human body.

"There are hardly few studies yet on this source. There are 90

parameters, which have been issued by the World Health Organization, for which water is checked by us. It doesn't mention microplastic yet," he told Hindustan Times.

"Gradually, as we realise the impact, the WHO will issue parameters and then all water utilities will follow it," he said.

The US has the highest contamination rate of 94%, according to the study. Lebanon and India

have the next highest rates of microplastic. European countries including France, Germany and the UK have the lowest contamination rate of 72%.

In India, more than 130 million people live in areas where groundwater supplies are contaminated, according to the World Resources Institute. More than 20 million people live in areas where supplies contain at least three pollutants exceeding safe limits, its analysis shows.

Adventure Scientists, a non-profit based in the US, says microplastic poses a significant environmental risk when it enters our waterways. Microplastics have several sources -- they're laundered from nylon clothing, they wash down the drain with many cosmetics and toothpastes, and they weather from debris like bottles and bags, it says.

According to a 2014 study published in a Public Library of Science journal, there are more than five trillion pieces of plastic floating in the world's oceans.

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