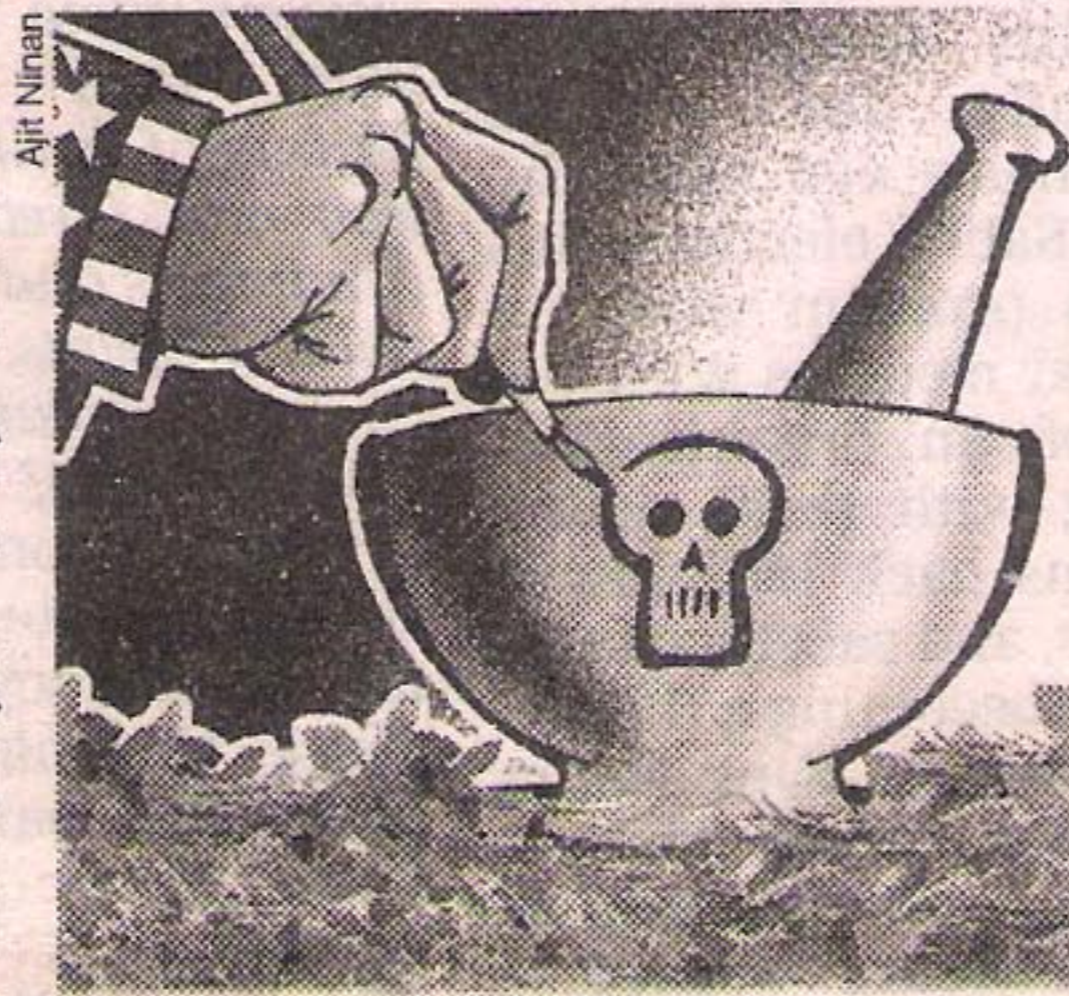


# 'Some ayurvedic drugs are toxic'

By Chidanand Rajghatta/TNN

**Washington:** The American medical research community has sounded a heavy metal warning against Ayurvedic cures. Herbal products from the Indian system of medicine sold in the US contain dangerous levels of lead, mercury and arsenic, researchers have cautioned.

In a study published in the latest issue of the prestigious Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA), researchers from the Harvard Medical School reported that Herbal Medical Products (HMPs) sold as remedies for treatment of ailments, such as, arthritis and diabetes contained toxic levels high enough to cause poisoning. "Users of Ayurvedic medicine may be at risk for heavy metal toxicity, and testing of Ayurvedic HMPs for toxic heavy metals should be mandatory," the study by Dr Robert Saper and his colleagues warned.



The research team scoured outlets selling Ayurvedic remedies within 20 miles of Boston, including American vendors and Indian grocery stores, and bought 70 HMPs. Fourteen of the 70 contained heavy metals, they said. If taken as recommended by the manufacturers, each of these 14 could result in heavy metal intakes above pub-

lished regulatory standards, they reported.

The study comes amid Ayurveda's creeping recognition in the US in the face of steep increases in medical care and drug costs. A US health survey in 2000 estimated that 750,000 American adults also had Ayurvedic cures, the Saper study said. There is a full-fledged Ayurveda Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico headed by Dr Vasant Lad which offers courses and seminars in the Indian medicinal science. Dr Lad did not return calls for comments on the JAMA report, but it was received with dismay by the growing tribe of Ayurvedic practitioners in the US.

"It is very disappointing to hear this just when Ayurveda is catching on here... This country needs alternative systems of medicine," said Dr Pratima Raichur, a New York-based skin care specialist and author of the book "Absolute Beauty" who is known for her fervent backing of Ayurveda.