

UAE: 28 Water Bottling Firms Shut Down

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Sharjah - As many as 28 drinking water bottling and distribution companies in Ajman have been ordered closed and several others warned by the **Ajman Municipality** for hiking prices and, ignoring international hygiene standards.

At present, there are 64 companies in the business in the emirate.

The **Ajman Municipality**, however, refused to release the names of the companies after consumers complained about the poor quality of water being distributed by many companies in the emirate.

The action was taken during the Eid days by the health and trade licence sections of the municipality against companies found violating health regulations after the expiry of the three-month grace period given to them to improve the situation.

Speaking to *Khaleej Times*, Khaled Al Houseny, head of the health and environment section at **Ajman Municipality** said the closed companies will now not be given permission to resume their business.

"If any company is found violating health rules, the company will be shut down and its licence withdrawn," warned Al Houseny

He said: "The water samples from the companies at fault were found unfit, because they were contaminated with bacteria and microbes, and the samples also contained salinity beyond the acceptable limits.

"The inspectors visit these companies which fill and pack water from well-treated sources every week and take samples for testing at the central laboratory of the municipality," he said.

Most of these companies follow the hygiene and health requirements. But some were banned from filling water in the streets, and were asked to install glass partitions to protect the water from being contaminated by polluted air," Al Hosueny added.

Al Houseny said: "The workers of the water filling and packing companies were issued health certificates and were ordered by the inspectors to wear the municipality recommended uniforms.

The inspectors visit the factories, check their compliance with rules and take samples for laboratory testing. They also ensure that the factories abide by the rules regarding labelling, caps and tamper-proof sleeve as per Bottled Water Association (IBWA) norms.

"The Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) standard also applies to the bottled water industry," Al Houseny said.

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