SASKATOON - Fighting arsenic poisoning in Bangladesh is among the projects being funded by a $39.6-million award to the University of Saskatchewan. The award, from the Canada Foundation for Innovation, will be used to help build new facilities. Some of that money could result in Saskatchewan lentils sold en masse to Bangladesh to help combat widespread arsenic poisoning, says Ingrid Pickering, an associate professor and Canada Research Chair in molecular environmental science at the U of S. Pickering and her husband Graham George, also a U of S professor, along with University of Calgary chemist Juergen Gailer, have spent years questioning how to help as many as 80 million people in Bangladesh combat arsenic poisoning in drinking water. Using a synchrotron in California, the team discovered that if arsenic and the element selenium are present in the body in equal amounts, they will bind with a naturally-occurring molecule and pass through the body harmlessly. It isn't that Bangladesh people are arsenic-rich, George said, but that they're lacking the essential selenium. Now, they're involved in a clinical trial where Bangladeshis with arsenic poisoning will take selenium supplements to see if it combats their illness. "We shall see if it helps them," George said. "I am totally convinced that it will." Now, Pickering's lab is experimenting to see if lentils grown in Saskatchewan's selenium-rich soil could be "the solution" to arsenic poisoning in Bangladesh. Saskatoon StarPhoenix