

Check on lamp ghee after suspected food poisoning

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It was alleged that lamp ghee was used for preparing prasadam at a temple

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is conducting checks across Coimbatore district on the label used for 'lamp ghee', a low quality ghee used for lighting lamps, following the death of two women near Mettupalayam, who allegedly died of food poisoning caused by temple prasadam made with the product.

B. Vijayalalithambigai, designated officer of FSSAI, said that lamp ghee sold in shops are checked to verify whether the labelling mentions that the product should only be used for lighting lamps and not of edible quality.

"Labels of lamp ghees checked during the inspections by the officials had labels mentioning that they are made for the use of lighting lamps. Ghee made for such non-edible purpose must bear the label, warning the buyers," said Ms. Vijayalalithambigai.

It was alleged that lamp ghee was used for preparing prasadam at Mariamman temple near Mahadevapuram in Mettupalayam on Tuesday.

While Loganayagi (60) and Savithri (60) of Nadar Colony near Mahadevapuram died of suspected food poisoning, more than 60 people underwent treatment with complaints of stomach pain and diarrhoea at Government Hospital, Mettupalayam.

Officials with the Health Department said that the two women did not come for treatment at the Government hospital.

When food safety officials checked with the persons who prepared the prasadam (made of aval - rice flakes), they informed them that lamp ghee was not used for the preparation.

However, it was found that lamp ghee was used for lighting lamps at the temple.

"They showed us a ghee bottle with a label which said that it should be used only for lighting lamps. We could not confirm if it was used in the prasadam as its samples were not available," said a food safety officer.

It has also been alleged that the prasadam was prepared previous day night for the ease of serving on Tuesday, which could lead to contamination and growth of micro organisms.

M. Chandhirasekaran, Joint Director of Health Services, said that condition of those who undergoing treatment at the Government hospital was stable.

He said that the reason for the death of the women could be ascertained based on the autopsy report.