

FDA to test fish for formalin from today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI, JULY 19, 2018 00:37 IST

Samples to be collected from outlets

After the Goa government banned fish imported from other States as a precaution, the Maharashtra Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) will start testing fish for formalin on Thursday.

FDA commissioner Pallavi Darade said inspectors will randomly visit retail outlets, fish markets, and suppliers to collect samples. "During monsoon, a majority of fish supply comes from other States. After Goa has found formalin-laced fish in several consignments, we have to start our precautionary tests too," Ms. Darade told *The Hindu*.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on Wednesday released a document for general public on dos and don'ts before eating sea food. According to the FSSAI, consumers should thoroughly wash fish with running tap water as formaldehyde is soluble in water and fish should be cooked to an internal temperature of 75 degrees centigrade and above as heat can help remove the chemical.

The food safety authority said ingesting a large amount of formaldehyde can cause abdominal pain, vomiting, coma, renal injury, and possible death.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer of the World Health Organisation classifies formaldehyde as 'carcinogenic to humans' with sufficient evidence for causing nasopharyngeal cancer in humans with occupational exposure, although no carcinogenicity has so far been established through ingestion route.

Traders use formalin to extend the storage life of the fish. The chemical also helps give an appearance of freshness. According to the FSSAI, as the formalin solution is easily available in the market, fish traders and suppliers have easy access to the chemical. Often, unavailability of good quality ice harvest centres and lack of warehousing facility for bulk storage are some of the reasons for rampant use of formaldehyde.