

July 12 morning analysis on fish ‘not a validated’ test: Govt

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Report by

TEAM HERALD

Health Secretary says Schiff Test is not being utilised in State; Trucks involved in importing fish given till Oct 15 to register with FDA

PANJIM: Maintaining that the fish available in Goa’s market is safe for consumption, the State government on Monday said that the test conducted on July 12 to determine the presence of formaldehyde in the fish was “not a validated” test and hence ordered an inquiry into the entire episode.

On July 12 morning, a team of Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) led by designated officer Iva Fernandes conducted a raid at the wholesale fish market in Margao to check the presence of formalin in fish. Fish samples tested randomly from 17 trucks using the Schiff Reagent Test were found positive for having been laced by the chemical. However, in the evening FDA, in a fresh report said that formalin presence was within ‘permissible limit’.

Addressing media persons on Monday, Health Secretary Ashok Kumar said the test was conducted using Schiff-Reagent Test, which is not being utilised and all tests were conducted in proper methodology in the FDA laboratory which is as per Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

“On that day, the test was done using the Schiff Test, which was not allowed. We have now ordered an inquiry to know as why the Schiff Test was done and who ordered to conduct a Schiff Test,” Kumar said. “Of the samples tested from all 17 trucks, which included four trucks from Goa itself, all were reported to be positive for formaldehyde concentration. This cannot happen. How can all the trucks test positive?” he said.

“The test conducted that day was not a validated test,” the Secretary said, adding, “Schiff Reagent Test are not meant to check only the added formaldehyde but all types of aldehydes.” The Secretary said that the samples should have been sent to the FDA laboratory for testing, which is the currently methodology adopted.

An inquiry under Additional Secretary Health is been ordered into the incident. The inquiry will also include probing the report submitted by Iva Fernandes, who had claimed that the second test on the samples were mere eye wash.

Health Minister Vishwajit Rane said that strict action will be taken against whoever is involved in the malpractice. “We are investigating the matter. Let the probe reveal everything. Necessary action will be taken. The incident has created panic amongst the people,” he said.

The Minister said that fish in Goa is free of chemicals and there is nothing to be worried about. "We are ensuring that the food safety standards are maintained and no compromise will be made with the health of the people of Goa," he said.

Meanwhile, the government has decided to come down heavily on vehicles importing fish to Goa, if they fail to register with FDA before October 15. "We are granting them more relaxation. But after October 15, strict action will be taken," Rane said.