

Oh fish! They have formalin?

Food Safety Department officials collected 18 fish samples from four fish markets — Kasimedu, Saidapet, Nochikuppam and a super market — in the city on Tuesday after a scare that formalin, a chemical which can lead to cancer, is added to the fish to increase shelf life.

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By Express News Service

CHENNAI: Food Safety Department officials collected 18 fish samples from four fish markets — Kasimedu, Saidapet, Nochikuppam and a super market — in the city on Tuesday after a scare that formalin, a chemical which can lead to cancer, is added to the fish to increase shelf life.

“We have sent the samples to Guindy Food Analysis Lab. Results are expected in one or three days. We are looking for formalin,” said R Kathiravan, designated officer, food safety department in Chennai. The scare was triggered after Kerala refused to buy fish that were from Tamil Nadu recently.

Meanwhile, Dr V Arun Ramanan, consultant medical oncologist, Government Multi Super-Speciality Hospital, Omandurar Estate, said, “Formalin is probable human carcinogen under conditions of unusually high or prolonged exposure. The International Agency for Research on

Cancer classifies formalin as a human carcinogen. Formalin can also cause renal, liver, cardiac problems and age-related problems and also anaemia in some people. Formalin will affect normal process of the cells and it is used to preserve dead bodies to protect from decaying.”

However, fishermen blamed the private dealers. “The business wasn’t good after Ennore oil spill incident. Also, after the annual ban, only now have fishermen ventured into the sea. There is no chance of the local fishermen adding formalin to the fish, as they are sold the same day. Recently, private dealers in fish have increased in the city. They also import fish from other states. If there is formalin in fish, dealers must be responsible,” said K Bharathi, president, South Indian Fisheries Welfare Association, requesting the government to investigate this matter.

How to detect
Take 2 g of a fish Add 4 ml of diluent. Mix well for 1 minute to extract the formalin. Transfer 2 ml of extract to a sample tube. Add a drop of reagent. Shake the tube well, After 5-10 minutes. Observe the colour. Yellow or yellow-green under UV indicates the presence of formalin