

FDA checks Mapusa market for artificial ripening of bananas, no chemical found

BY A STAFF REPORTER
reporters@gomantaktimes.com

PANAJI: The Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) raided the Mapusa sub-yard market early Friday morning to check for artificially ripened bananas. Though there was no instance of use of chemicals to ripen banana was observed, the FDA officials at Mapusa market found bottles of plant growth regulator Ethapone was found hidden in one of the shop.

Health Minister Vishwajit Rane on Thursday had ordered FDA officials to take up extensive drive against artificially ripened bananas across the State, using chemicals.

He had said that carcinogenic substances were used to ripen the fruits resulting in increase of cancer cases in the State.

FDA, in a press note issued, said that as promised, prompt action was taken and surveillance drives were conducted early morning today at Mapusa sub-yard market by a team led by Richard Noronha (designated officer) along with Amit Mandrekar and Sujata Shetgaonkar (food safety officer) to check chemical ripening of bananas.

A total number of 15 banana vendor premises were inspected and 13 samples are drawn. The premises were thoroughly checked for any evidence of the use of chemical ripening agents.

In one such premise, shop no 39 which was operated by Noor Ahmad Allupty, bottles of plant growth regu-



Surveillance drives conducted early morning at Mapusa Sub-yard market to check chemical ripening of bananas



“Carcinogenic substances like calcium carbide are used for artificial ripening of bananas, resulting in the rise in the number of cancer cases in the state,”

—Vishwajit Rane, Health Minister

lator Ethapone was found hidden.

During the premise inspection, stock of bananas that had arrived from Belgaum was being loaded into his shop and a stock of around 1500-kilogramme was already stored in the shop.

The vendor admitted to using the said chemical for ripening purposes. The said stock of 1500-kg worth Rs 60,000 was taken up for destruction in the interest of public health at the Mapusa waste disposal site with assistance from Mapusa Municipal

Council. A legal notice was immediately served to the vendor Noor Ahmed.

However, no evidence of chemical ripening was found in the other 14 premises hence samples of fruits were drawn for laboratory analysis from which one part shall be analysed through a third-party lab.

On Thursday, the Health Minister had instructed FDA officials to form teams and take action against persons involved in artificial ripening of the fruit.

“Carcinogenic substances like calcium carbide are used for artificial ripening of bananas, resulting in the rise in the number of cancer cases in the state,”

Vishwajit said.

“We are going to root out the practice of artificial ripening. Cancer cases are on a rise in the State and we have to take steps to curb such illegalities,” he said.

Those indulging in artificial ripening will be booked under relevant laws, the Minister warned.

As part of the drive, FDA teams will raid all godowns and storage facilities in Mapusa, Margao, Panaji and Ponda, Vishwajit added.