

## Tirupati temple to keep laddu patent

**Maneesh Chhibber** Posted online: Tue Jul 31 2012, 00:18 hrs

**New Delhi** : The Venkateswara temple in Andhra Pradesh, India's richest temple, Monday scored a sweet legal victory: the Geographical Indications Registry upheld its claim of a patent over the famous Tirupati laddu.

The laddu, which is offered as prasad, was granted a Geographical Indicator (GI) tag in September 2009 — the tag ensures a product becomes synonymous with a geographical location — after Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) convinced the Registry that the laddu was unique in its “preparation, quality and reputation”.

But, owing to the growing demand, unscrupulous elements, including hawkers, were selling their preparations as Tirupati laddu. Granting it GI tag, TTD argued, would curb the problem as violating GI laws invites punishment.

The Registry's order granting the GI tag was, however, challenged by R S Praveen Raj, a scientist with CSIR-NIIST, Thiruvananthapuram, and an intellectual property rights activist.

The tag, he contended, is meant to benefit local producers and act as an indicator of the geographical origin of the product. Thus, everyone from Tirupati has the right to use GI tag as long as their laddus are prepared in Tirupati and have the same delicacy and features as the laddu prepared by TTD.

On Monday Chinnaraja G Naidu — Assistant Registrar of Trade Marks and GI, Chennai — issued the verdict, upholding TTD's claim and fined Raj Rs 10,000.