‘Bhog’ to feed gods, devotees hygienic food

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Thiruvananthapuram: Blissful Hygienic Offering to God or Bhog aimed at maintaining food safety and hygiene in places of worship mandated by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) will be implemented in the state by February 28.

On Tuesday, the Kerala Commissionerate of Food Safety held a meeting with the officials of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar Devaswom boards to enforce the project at 10 prime temples.

Sree Padmanabhaswamy temple, Mannarasala, Guruvayoor, Sabarimala, Parassinikadavu, Lokanarkavu are some of the places of worship chosen by the Commissionerate for launching the pilot project.

However, apprehensions loom large over the enforcement of Bhog which makes licensing and registration mandatory for places of worship offering ‘prasadam’ to devotees. FSSAI has set specific rules for maintaining food safety and hygiene in the preparation of the offering.

“We have initiated discussions with Devaswom officials. The Commissionerate will be giving proper training and all technical support,” said a top official.

The initiative mandates adoption of hygienic practices by the food handlers which requires wearing of aprons, gloves and head covers. Proper cleaning and waste management facilities are a must for getting the license.

“We will sensitise them about the need for food safety regulations and health hygiene. We have pressure from the Centre to implement the project and report its progress,” said the official.

As per the guidelines, the procurement of raw materials for prasadam should be from authorised traders with FSSAI licenses.