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Compulsory registration scheme mooted for Kolkata food vendors

KOLKATA: Kolkata Municipal Corporation plans to bring city's food vendors under a compulsory registration scheme. The idea behind such a plan is to ensure hygiene of the food being sold in the open as prescribed by Food Safety & Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). The KMC in association with FSSAI will train city's food vendors or hawkers on how to prepare food following basic health standard and sell the same following the hygiene norms.

With this aim in mind, the KMC will invite representatives of city's food hawkers' union to a workshop on food safety and standard to be held in the city on September 13. The workshop will train a vendor the essentials of doing away with adulteration in food. For example, the workshop will focus on the exact means of cooking Biryani without mixing unapproved colours to make the food attractive to the buyers. Similarly, sweet sellers will be advised not to use chemicals to bring colours to the food item. In addition to the workshop which is being organized by the union health and family welfare ministry, the KMC will organize several training sessions for the food vendors across the city from September 15 to October 1.

"We will teach them how to prepare and sell food items following the FSSAI guidelines. After successful completion of the training session, a food vendor can apply for
registration. In that case, our food safety officers will pay surprise visits to the stalls and submit their reports on the state of health and hygiene of food that an applicant is serving to the customers. If the report goes in favour of a particular food vendor, he will be eligible for our registration scheme," Atin Ghosh, the member, mayor-in-council overseeing the KMC health department said on Wednesday.

According to a KMC health department official, the civic body took such a plan after conducting anti-adulteration drives across the city. After examination of food samples such as Biryani, noodles, snacks or sweets in the KMC laboratories it was found that some of these food items were unfit for human consumption. "Side by side with the training sessions, we will conduct anti-adulteration drives during the puja days. The drive will be conducted not only in the pavement food stalls but some major hotels and restaurants will also come under the drive," the civic official said.

Quick facts:

- Number of city’s food vendors: 1 lakh
- The civic initiative for city’s food vendors: Bringing them under a compulsory registration scheme
- The aim: To make them responsible in serving quality food as prescribed by FSSAI.
- The process: They will have to take part in several workshops to be organized by FSSAI and the KMC health department.
- The KMC food safety officials will then pay surprise visits to the stalls before recommending for registration.