Telangana sets focus on food safety

Telangana today is set to introduce an online Food Licensing and Registration System (FLRS) where Food Business Operators (FBOs) i.e. eateries can apply online for licenses and registration.

It is mandatory for persons who operate food business to apply for license and registration under Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) Act, 2006. However, it is a fact that there are many eateries that operate their business without registration and license.
In the round-table on Food Safety held in New Delhi, Health Minister Dr C Laxma Reddy said the process of integration of payment gateway and online licensing system to implement FLRS was under process and very soon it would be completed. To bring in more food business operators under the umbrella of FSSAI, the authorities also want to issue license and registration within 30 days of receiving an application.

The authorities have also decided to launch special drives to identify unregistered FBOs and conduct more inspections through food safety officers who from now on are required to maintain a database of eateries that are operating in their jurisdictional areas.

**Web-based sampling system**

In another major initiative to improve food safety, the health authorities have decided to adopt a web-based mobile application ‘Food Safety Compliance through Regular Inspections and Sampling (FoSCoRIS)’ that can be used in mobile devices, tablets and desktops.
The app will essentially replace manual inspection that is carried out by the food safety officers and serve as an empowering tool for data collection, monitoring and data analysis.

These officers will carry out inspections with their handheld devices, capture images and upload the inspection report while Food Safety Commissioner will be able to monitor live update of the inspections that are being carried out at the ground level.
The Food Safety Commissioner will also be able to view details of the officers conducting inspections, geographical location, food premises being inspected etc. They would also be able to draw inspection plans on FoSCoRIS itself and assign inspections to the officers on the field. The status of inspections assigned and inspection reports submitted can also be monitored.

**Framework to promote safe eating habits in children**

To bring social and behavioural changes towards eating habits, especially among children, the State health authorities have decided to adopt Safe and Nutritious Food initiatives in schools. With the double burden of under-nutrition and increasing childhood obesity, authorities want to target children and encourage them to develop healthy and safe eating habits early in life.

To encourage food safety, hygiene and consumption of nutritious food among schoolchildren, authorities will collaborate with Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to come out with a framework to promote safe and wholesome food eating habits in schools. Essentially, it will deliver and reinforce the message of safe and nutritious food through both curricular and co-curricular activities and create Health and Wellness Coordinators and teams in schools.

According to officials here, FSSAI has already created scientifically and technically accurate content for inclusion in the curriculum. It has also come up with a Teacher’s Training Manual to equip teachers with necessary information on food safety.

**Release funds for AIIMS, Minister to JP Nadda**

Health Minister Dr C Laxma Reddy on Tuesday met Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare JP Nadda and requested him to expedite the long-pending All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) project in Telangana.

Reddy met Nadda on the sidelines of a round-table meeting of State Health Ministers on Food Safety in New Delhi and urged him to release funds that were meant to establish AIIMS in the State. He also requested to release the funds that were set aside by the Union Ministry of Health to improve mother and child health in the State.

During the meeting, he reminded the Union Minister that the Centre had promised AIIMS for Telangana in the last year’s budget but so far funds were not released to launch the
much-awaited project. According to health officials, Laxma Reddy also drew Nadda’s attention towards the proposed medical colleges in Mahabubnagar, Siddipet, Suryapet and Nalgonda and urged him to allocate funds for the colleges.