FSSAI visits city’s places of worship to check on food safety

Thane: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) recently flagged off a community awareness programme to educate people about food safety and hygiene in places of worship.

The campaign called Bhog is conceptualised by the FSSAI, an autonomous body of the central health ministry, which aims to concentrate its activity at all religious sites where the devotees tend to overlook hygiene while giving away prasad or serving food in and around the premises. In fact, the religious places could be termed as high-risk prone spots for spread of illness caused due to food contamination, flies, said the officials.

The campaign aims to train volunteers in the religious centres around mosques, gurudwaras, churches and temples. It will conduct vendor training programmes, workshops on food safety management systems, utilization of leftover flowers, fruits and vegetables, product handling and safety to name a few.
A senior official from the FSSAI said, "There is a need to inform and alert people about sanitation and food safety when it comes to prasad that is served to the devotees at places of worship. We have big temples in the city that see thousands of visitors, specially during the festive season. So, in September we conducted numerous visits to Kopineshwar temple, Sai Baba mandir at Vartak Nagar and the gurudwara at Teen Hath Naka. We also organised a training session wherein around 105 people from the food industry involved in preparation of sweets participated."

For example, in preparing the traditional sweet boondi as prasad, which is a popular delicacy, a systematic guidance procedure was laid down for the participants. From checking the quality of sieve, the concentration of sugar syrup to checking the frying temperature, everything needs to be inspected to avoid microbial contamination, said the team members.

"Right from preparation of the prasad to its handling, packaging and storage, everything is monitored by a health inspection officer, who also takes into account factors such as cleanliness of the premises, implementation of food hygiene and safety procedures," said an official.

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