FDA teaches 300 Maharashtra temples how to pack prasad better

A senior official said 53 temple trusts and vendors who prepare various kinds of prasad will attend next sessions.

Prasad packages sent to devotees abroad by city’s Siddhivinayak temple and over 300 other temples in the state will no longer be rejected because of improper labelling and packaging.

The Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) Maharashtra recently trained temple workers on cooking and labelling standards that confirm to international standards. FDA officials said that earlier, since the packaging, labelling and information on the packages’ content did not meet international
guidelines, the consignments would be held up at custom offices abroad, failing to reach devotees.

“The workshops were attended by more than 100 temple trustees, personnel, and staff. We had named the initiative ‘Blissful Hygienic Offering to God’ (BHOG) and it was originally launched by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) in Siddhivinayak Temple,” said Pallavi Darade, FDA commissioner.

Sanjeev Patil, executive officer of Siddhivinayak Temple trust, said, “Our temple was the only one in Asia with FSSAI registration. However, we realized that earlier, there were no norms in place for quality of ingredients, disclosing the contents of prasad on packaging and international food standards about packaging and labelling. Hence, with FSSAI, FDA Maharashtra and other food science organisations we prepared a training module for the temples on how to make and package better.”

A senior official said 53 temple trusts and vendors who prepare various kinds of prasad will attend next sessions. “We largely covered guidelines on handling, cooking and packaging of prasad. International standards also demand disclosure of the process and ingredients on the packaging,” another FDA official added.

One of the temple personnel said that they were following the standard procedure for making prasad. “This session was helpful as we didn’t know some scientific procedure. But we maintain hygiene in making and packaging the prasad,” said the personnel.
FDA officials across Maharashtra have been asked to follow the example of the BHOG initiative. A senior official said, “More training sessions will be planned depending upon the number of temple trusts that come forward in future. Moreover, in October and November, we have planned similar training for restaurant and hotel staff in Mumbai,” said a senior FDA official.