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Regulator to ensure quality prasad at shrines

What FSSAI plans

- A unique workshop for managements of famous shrines to help them implement food safety plans
- On invitee list are the Golden Temple, Char Dhams, Haji Ali, Ajmer Sharif, Hazratbal dargahs, Shirdi, Balaji and Siddhivinayak temples



Ever thought about the quality of food your revered shrine is serving? Well, the country's apex food regulator is thinking about that on your behalf.

For the first time in the history of India's food safety movement, efforts are afoot to see that food and prasad served by temples, gurdwaras, mosques and churches conforms to the highest safety and hygiene standards and shrines voluntarily open their kitchens up for scrutiny.

“Lakhs of people throng places of worship, which mostly have large kitchens and pose potential health hazards to pilgrims. We are engaging the managements of shrines to help them implement food safety management systems for which we have prepared a draft manual. We are planning a workshop shortly for

representatives of about 40 religious places in India. Our effort is to sensitise them on the significance of safety and hygiene in large community kitchen settings,” CEO of Food Safety Standards Association of India Pawan Agarwal told The Tribune today.

On the list of FSSAI’s invitees for the workshop, where the draft manual for food safety in places of worship will be circulated, are the Golden Temple, Gurdwaras Nanded Saheb and Patna Saheb; all four dhams of Hindu religion Badrinath, Dwarkadheesh, Rameshwaram and Jagannath Puri; Siddhivinayak, Balaji, Shirdi and Akshardham temples. In the category of mosques, Dargah Ajmer Sharif, Nizamuddin, Haji Ali and Kashmir’s Hazratbal are to be invited.

“We will also invite representatives of deras like Beas, Sacha Sauda and Patanjali yogpeeth, which cater to a large number of people. If we can get shrines and deras to implement food safety management systems, we can secure large sections of our population from any potential contamination or infection by way of food. Around 10 per cent of the country’s people are affected by the food and prasad served at religious places,” says AK Singla, Joint Director, Food Safety Management Division of FSSAI.

The workshop follows a successful experiment on the implementation of food safety systems in the kitchens of Shirdi and Siddhivinayak temples. The exercise was conducted by All India Food Technologists Association, which will partner with the FSSAI to take the exercise forward by piloting the same experiment in 100 places of worship. The upcoming workshop is the first step in that direction.

FSSAI officials say places of worship are mandated to be covered under the FSSAI Act. “The Act covers all catering establishments under which all places of worship fall as they serve food and maintain kitchens. All such establishments, including charity organisations like shrines, are required to be registered under the food safety law but registrations are low due to lack of awareness among their managements. Our workshop will help create awareness about the need for places of worship register and practice highest food safety standards,” Singla adds.

Under the FSSAI Act, any catering establishment with an annual turnover of less than Rs 12 lakh needs to be registered with the state government; establishments with a yearly turnover between Rs 12 lakh and Rs 20 crore need to be licensed by the state.
