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E-Paper

Mumbai: Soon, street vendors may be wearing gloves to serve food

— By Swapnil Mishra |



Mumbai: For the welfare and well being of the citizens, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) issued a notification to all states commissioner of Food Safety to start a systematic campaign for creating awareness amongst all citizens to discourage the simultaneous handling of food and currency notes and or coins.

“The handling of currency with unclean and soiled hands, use of saliva during counting and storage under unhygienic conditions leads to its contamination with a harmful micro-organism.” read the notification.

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A senior official said after conducting several studies on Indian rupee, it revealed that rupees are 100 per cent contaminated by pathogens or various micro-bacteria. Moreover, these currency notes and coins are in circulation due to which various microbial agents are present on it which can cause health hazards.

“Cross-contamination from currency risks human health and causes serious diseases like food poisoning, gastrointestinal infection, skin problems and many more. Especially, children and pregnant women and with weak immune system person are more vulnerable to such infections,” said Dr Om Srivastava, Infection Disease Specialist.

Food vendors, especially street food vendors, often prepare and serve food and collect money from patrons using the same hand. They have been instructed to avoid handling currency and food simultaneously.

In this direction, FSSAI has recommended that the handling of food and money should be physically separated and that while gloves are used to handle food, bare hands should be used to handle currency. “After handling currency, hands should be thoroughly washed before touching food items and vice-versa,” the notification stated.

FSSAI official said in this direction, it has been advised that food handlers, food sellers and others should avoid handling currency and food simultaneously. “We further recommended that gloves should be used to handle food and bare hands to handle currency, two should be separated physically and hand should be washed properly before touching food and vice versa,” said V K Panchal, Deputy Director of FSSAI, Mumbai.

He added that it is a good move, but at the same time, it is very challenging. The well-educated and knowledgeable food vendors would not face a problem dealing with it, but educating small-time vendors across every nook and corner of the state could take a long time.

“The vendor can try to control the spread by keeping extra hand/assistant for handling of currency exclusively, but that will add to his costing. If the consumer understands the

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genuine reason and agrees to pay that extra rupee for his protection, the move will be successful,” said Panchal.

The general physician said due to the circulation of currency in various geographic and environmental conditions, it becomes contaminated that transfer potential pathogenic microorganisms. “The viruses, bacteria, and fungi present on the notes and coins are considered as a potential cause of sporadic cases of food-borne illness. Notes with lower currencies are more infectious as it gets circulated more than the higher ones,” said Dr Raveej Mishra, a general physician.