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Keeping an eye on Dasara food mela in Mysuru

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This year, the Dasara Food Mela will be held at the Bharat Scouts and Guides Grounds and at the MUDA plot at Siddharatha Nagar in Mysuru. | Photo Credit: [M.A. SRIRAM](#)

Food safety officers attached to the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) will keep an eye on the quality of food provided at the Dasara Food Mela, a popular attraction of the festivities that draws a large number of foodies and tourists.

This year, the food mela at two venues — the Bharat Scouts and Guides Grounds and the MUDA plot at Siddharatha Nagar — will not be restricted to the period of Dasara celebrations and will continue beyond in order to cater to tourists who continue to flock to the city post-Dasara.

With the understaffed FSSAI office in Mysuru having the task of looking after the protocol duties, with frequent visits of VVIPs to the city during the festivities, the responsibilities will double for the department, which has just five officers.

Therefore, the FSSAI office has written to the State health authorities in Bengaluru seeking deputation of food safety officers from neighbouring districts to Mysuru to support the local staff. The office is awaiting a reply.

Before the food mela begins, the stall owners will be briefed on the food safety guidelines and their responsibilities in ensuring the safety of foods.

Chidambar, designated officer, FSSAI office, Mysuru, told *The Hindu* that all stall owners would be first registered under the FSSAI Act before they get into action since it is mandatory for a government-sponsored programme. If they flout the norms, they will

either be penalised along with a warning or their stall licence will be revoked. He added that two stalls lost their licence last year for flouting safety rules.

“Our officers will keep a watch on the foods cooked. If necessary, the raw materials used such as cooking oils can be sent for lab analysis. Last year, we slapped fines for using artificial colouring agents,” he said.

Dr. Chidambar said two officers at the scouts grounds and two others at Siddhartha Nagar have been planned for supervision during the mela. “As the mela attracts large crowds, we may need more officers for keeping track of the situation, as we did during Kumbh Mela in T. Narsipur. Therefore, we have requested the Health Department to depute officers to Mysuru until the festivities conclude,” he said. He added that four or five officers would be required to handle Dasara duties in the city.