

## Food safety approval must for Kerala temple offerings

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**E-Paper**

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Temples in Kerala are set to offer prasadam (offerings made to deities) approved by the country's food regulator, the Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) — a decision that has been taken in the wake of a series of food poisoning incidents in some Karnataka temples that killed more than a dozen people in the past two months, a government official said on Monday.

To begin with, at least 10 major temples will implement the new policy for hygienic preparation of prasadam from March 1, a senior official of the state food safety authority said. All offering packets will carry manufacture and expiry dates, contents and FSSAI licence number, he said. All prasada vendors will have to obtain an FSSAI licence.

Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra have implemented BHOG (Blissful Hygienic Offering to God), a project conceived in 2017 that mandates food safety licence for all offerings, including free food serving (anna danam) and pooja prasada. The Travancore Devaswom Board, which controls majority of the temples in the state, including the hill shrine Sabarimala, said it will implement the scheme on a priority basis.

“The main offering of Sabarimala temple aravana paysam (a special kheer made of rice, jaggary, ghee and cardamom) is already carrying batch number, manufacture and expiry dates. We will obtain an FSSAI licence soon,” said TDB president A Padmakumar. The Guruvayoor Devaswom Board, one of the richest temples in the state, had received the licence and it will start displaying details from March 1.

The Attukkal Bhagwati temple in Thiruvananthapuram, run by a trust, has also obtained the licence and it will be implemented during the ‘pongala’ festival in February, an official of the trust said. As per the guidelines, procurement of raw materials should be from authorised traders having FSSAI licence.

“We have to ensure hygiene in all temples. But in small shrines offerings are not given in packets or cans. We have to make some arrangements for them,” said Padmakumar.