



Indira Canteen food to be tested for hygiene in Bengaluru

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File Photo of an Indira Canteen in Karnataka. | Express Photo Services

By Express News Service

BENGALURU: Speculation over the quality of food served at Indira Canteens has evolved into a political slugfest: A BJP councillor alleged that the food was “poisonous” while Congress-ruled Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike, the nodal agency for Indira Canteens in Bengaluru, defended the food quality as “tested” and found fine for consumption.

The issue blew up days ahead of Indira Canteen being used to serve food for election officials in the forthcoming elections. The issue came to the fore on Monday, with Deputy Chief Minister G Parameshwara ordering the BBMP commissioner to investigate the matter. “I have had food at Indira Canteen and also instructed them to ensure hygiene. However, after the report, I ordered the BBMP commissioner to submit a report and take action in case of poor quality,” he said.

BBMP health officials have decided to send samples of food served at Indira canteens in the city to the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) regularly, to ensure quality of food.

During inspection ahead of serving election duty officials, BBMP health officials collected samples and ascertained factors like 'Added Colouring Matter', 'Presence of Insects/Rodent Hair', 'Artificial Sweetening Agents' and other criteria to be "negative", concluding that Indira Canteen food is recommended for consumption and without lead content, too.

This inspection by BBMP officials as well as the Deputy CM's reaction came after BJP corporator Umesh Shetty from Govindarajanagar ward tested the food with samples sent for a laboratory test at MS Ramaiah Hospital, for which it claimed to be 'Poisonous' as it reported it to be bacteria-ridden.

Manoranjan Hegade, Chief Health Officer, BBMP, said, "We conducted an inspection in all BBMP zones and recently conducted the same test. We have not found such poisonous content in the food while it was tested. We have tested the food as per recommendations of FSSAI. However, we have decided to send these samples to FSSAI so that there is no doubt among the public and council members, alike."

However, Shetty is not happy with the BBMP's claims. "BBMP, a government agency, cannot give unbiased reports in the matter. Moreover, the test conducted by MS Ramaiah Hospital has submitted poisonous content in food served in these canteens. A private hospital can't give such reports without testing it properly. Even the FSSAI is a government agency. Then how can someone be sure about results being fair? I demand that there should be some serious testing done. Also, BBMP officials hardly follow these procedures and have never gone to Indira canteens. How can they give an unbiased report?"