

Tamil Nadu temple prasadam to soon get hygiene certificate

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Prasadam

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CHENNAI: Prasadam such as laddu, murukku, vadai and other food offered to devotees at Tamil Nadu's temples will soon have to be of better quality. This is because the State Food Safety and Drug Administration has told temples under the Hindu Religious & Charitable Endowments (HR &CE) department to obtain the Blissful Hygiene Offering to God (BHOG) quality certificate issued by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) at the earliest.

HR&CE officials said the first phase of the project for BHOG certification was likely to be introduced at over 46 big temples including Devi Karumariamman temple (Thiruverkadu), Arunachaleswarar temple (Tiruvannamalai), Subramaniya Swamy temple (Tiruttani), Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple (Madurai) and Aranganatha Swamy temple (Srirangam). FSSAI and HR & CE officials are scheduled to meet next week and modalities for implementing the project are likely to be finalised.

"The Madurai Meenakshi Amman temple, which got a Central award for second best maintained iconic place, is likely to be asked to get the BHOG certificate at the earliest,"

said a HR & CE official.

Though FSSAI notified launch of BHOG certification for temples in 2017, the project remained on paper due to delay in training temple authorities. All places of worship, including temples, mosques and gurudwaras, are covered by the project.

Dr T R Senthil, deputy director, Food Safety and Drug Administration, told Express that places of worship should have the infrastructure necessary to maintain high levels of hygiene at their premises and other places where prasadam and food are prepared, distributed and disposed of. "Further there should be a standard mechanism to ensure that no expired ingredients are used for preparing prasadam in the temples. Accordingly, temples, which fulfil the criteria set by the Centre, can apply for BHOG certificate from the FSSAI," he added.

Prasadam and eatables offered at temples already came under the Food Safety Act and, since 2018, the FSSAI has been issuing licences to temples and contractors that manufacture prasadam.

The HR & CE department has been entrusted with the task of introducing safety licences and quality certificates for the consumables at the temples governed by it. "Barring a few, all HR & CE temples have obtained the food safety licence for prasadam. The BHOG certification will be an additional tag to ascertain the quality of eatables in the temple," said sources.

Top HR & CE officials and executive officers of popular temples were trained in BHOG certification by the Centre last year. FSSAI officials have also trained the temple workers, staff, priests and contractors in procedures for getting the food safety licence.