

PRESS RELEASE

FSSAI Raises the Bar for Food Safety in Places of Worship

New Delhi, 11.01.2018: From Chintapurni Shakti Peeth to Meenakshi Temple & from Somnath Temple to ISKON, all major Places of Worship (PoW) gathered in the capital to attend second workshop on Food Safety & hygiene implementation in PoW under project BHOG.

Project BHOG which is an acronym for Blissful Hygienic Offering to God & is one among SNF (Safe & Nutritious Food) bouquet of initiatives launched by FSSAI, a year ago. The BHOG was launched with an aim to ensure that the *prasad*/food received by devotees is safe for devouring. Since, around 30 crores people visit PoW daily across nation & receive *prasad* as blessing of God, it is necessary to ensure that it is safe for devotees.

Project BHOG was launched nationwide with the support of Association of Food Scientists & Technologist India (AFSTI), which have been involved in food safety system implementation in Siddhivinayak Temple, Mumbai & also Sai Prasadalya, Shirdi. A short film on Project BHOG was released on the occasion. The first workshop of Project BHOG was organized in 2016 witnessing the presence of around 14 major temples to create awareness and build capacities for improvement of food handling in Places of Worship. All temples showed overwhelming interest in adopting this Project BHOG in their respective PoW, notably Tamil Nadu & Maharashtra.

With the enthusiasm of Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department, Tamil Nadu, the project was implemented in Tamil Nadu with the participation of 20 major temples, training around 300 food handlers. In first phase, one day practical training of food handlers was organized followed by handholding by local food safety trainers for developing & implementing food safety management system in second phase. FDA Maharashtra also conducted training programme for more than 3500 food handlers from 236 PoW. Similar training was also held in Hanumar Mandir, New Delhi where the food handlers were guided on safe food practices.

FSSAI organized second workshop in Delhi today to review the progress of the states & to cover all other temples under this Project. FSSAI is also reaching to endowment departments & *samitis* to reach maximum number of PoW. On this occasion, a guidance manual was released to facilitate the PoW in self implementation of food safety in their premises. Representatives from Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu & Gujarat shared their experience of improvement in quality of *prasad* after implementation of BHOG at the

PoW. Also, major auditing agencies came forward to support the temples in doing the food safety audit.

Merging the other initiatives of FSSAI i.e. Food Fortification & Food Smart Consumer, FSSAI also emphasized the temples to use fortified staples such as ghee, oil, rice, flour and milk while preparing *prasad/langar* to make it more wholesome along with various means of consumer education about safe and nutritious food in PoW.

Noted food safety expert, Dr. Pasupathy guided the PoW in implementation of food safety during two hour interactive session. The next workshop is likely to be scheduled in Gujarat, covering Somnath Temple & others in February'18.

Somant Temple, Meenakshi Temple, ISKON and other eminent temples will also showcase their temple food/Prasad in food festival from 12th to 14th January' 18 at Jawahar Lal Stadium, New Delhi

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