

# The Telegraph India

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Food safety comes on four wheels [A.S.R.P. Mukesh](#)



HEALTH HOPE: The mobile lab stationed in Namkum, Ranchi, on Tuesday. (Manob Chowdhary)

**Ranchi:** The food safety division under the state health department is all set to roll out its first mobile lab to curb adulteration by facilitating on-the-spot testing of samples at nominal rates.

A minibus, allocated by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and equipped with laboratory apparatuses, is currently stationed at the state health directorate in Namkum and may be launched as early as later this week.

"The tentative launch date is Friday. We have made preparations already. Besides testing food samples on the spot, the mobile lab will also generate awareness against adulteration at marketplaces and educational institutions," an official at the directorate told this newspaper on Tuesday.

Officials maintained that they were eyeing another mobile lab for greater reach.

"The FSSAI recently allocated vehicles to Chhattisgarh, Jammu and Kashmir,

## FSSAI IN NEWS

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Manipur and a few other states in the first phase. We are lucky to have secured one. Depending on the response, we shall pursue FSSAI to give us another vehicle," an official said, adding that the idea was to have at least one mobile lab for each of the five commissionerates, namely Ranchi, Dumka, Chaibasa, Daltonganj and Hazaribagh.

The central food safety watchdog has also sanctioned Rs 5 lakh as operational cost for a period of three years. The health department has appointed two chemists and an assistant technician, besides a driver, to man the van. They have been trained. The lab will currently service only urban areas of Ranchi, Jamshedpur and Dhanbad.

On what kind of tests could be done, an official said people could get chemical use and adulteration levels checked for milk and its products, spices, vegetables, packaged drinking water and sweets (only starch). For high-end tests, depending on the seriousness of the contamination or adulteration, officials will then send the samples to the state lab in Namkum.

"The van lab will serve three purposes. It will get us survey samples readily; equip public with a platform to get their products checked; and last but not the least, allow us to penetrate the common market easily. Also, it will instil fear among unscrupulous traders who deal in spurious items. The lab will empower people," said another official.

Rules and regulations for handling the mobile lab has been prepared, except for the rates. "The charges will be nominal, ranging between Rs 10 and Rs 30 per sample," he added.

State food analyst Chaturbhuj Meena confirmed that a mobile lab had arrived, but preferred not to share details on quote before its formal rollout.