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Mathura, Varanasi will be first in UP to see Project BHOG rollout Oliver Fredrick

FSSAI initiative-- Implementation expected by April first week, focus to be on hygiene and handling of 'prasad'.



FSSAI's CEO Pawan Agarwal had asked states to ensure that safe 'prasad' is served to devotees at places of worship. (HT)

Holy cities Mathura and Varanasi would be the first ones in UP to see the implementation of project BHOG (Blissful and Hygienic Offering to God) – the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's (FSSAI) initiative to ensure safe and hygienic distribution of 'prasad' at temples and religious establishments across the country. The project is expected to be rolled out by April first week.

BLISSFUL AND HYGIENIC OFFERING TO GOD

- Project BHOG was launched nationwide with the support of Association of Food Scientists and Technologist of India (AFSTI), which has been involved in food safety system implementation in Siddhivinayak Temple, Mumbai and also Sai Prasadalya, Shirdi.
- FSDA officials said a special committee has been constituted to ensure implementation of the first-of-its-kind project in UP.
- Ayodhya, Allahabad, Sarnath, Agra, Chitrakoot, Barabanki and others would be next in the line for the implementation of the project.

Officials with the Food Safety and Drug Administration (FSDA), the department that aims to prevent the manufacture and sale of spurious or sub-standard food articles, said a special committee has been constituted to ensure implementation of the first-of-its-kind project in UP.

FSSAI's CEO Pawan Agarwal had asked states to ensure that safe 'prasad' is served to devotees at places of worship.

"Initially, the project is being implemented in two districts (Mathura and Varanasi), where the distribution and consumption of 'prasad' is highest. We have chalked out a detailed plan to ensure its effective implementation. Once the project is successful in the two districts, it would be launched uniformly across the state," said Vineet Pandey, assistant commissioner (food), FSDA, UP.

As per the plan of FSDA (the body that is ensuring the implementation of the project), initially the focus would be on cleanliness, hygiene and handling of 'prasad'. "We are beginning with cleanliness. Under this point, we are covering all the temples and other places in both the districts that are famous for offering 'prasad' – either manufactured by the temple itself, or contractor or is sold outside the premises," said Pandey.

FSSAI IN NEWS

The department has also roped in the managements of religious establishments to ensure that the 'prasad' is prepared in a clean and hygienic environment. It is also focusing on the handling of the 'prasad' for which training is being imparted to all the staff engaged in the preparation and distribution of 'prasad'.

The project would also cover distribution of 'prasad' or food in mosques, churches and gurudwaras, he said.

Project BHOG was launched nationwide with the support of Association of Food Scientists and Technologist of India (AFSTI), which has been involved in food safety system implementation in Siddhivinayak Temple, Mumbai and also Sai Prasadalya, Shirdi.

The first workshop of Project BHOG was organised in 2016 witnessing the presence of managements of around 14 major temples to create awareness and build capacities for improvement of food handling at places of worship.

So far, staff at Meenakshi Temple in Tamil Nadu, Somnath Temple in Gujarat and some others have received training in food safety and hygiene implementation to meet FSSAI quality and hygiene standards.

Ayodhya, Allahabad, Sarnath, Agra, Chitrakoot, Barabanki and others would be next in the line for the implementation of the project.