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VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

SGPC to adopt food safety norms in shrines

Golden Temple cooks to attend Centre's workshop on hygiene

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After the introduction of organic vegetables, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) has decided to implement food safety norms in the kitchens of gurdwaras under its control, including the Golden Temple.

Following a communication from the Union Health Ministry on its BHOG (blissful hygienic offering to God) programme, the SGPC has directed the 'langaris' (cooks) of the Golden Temple kitchen to attend a hygiene workshop being conducted by the ministry.

Dr Lakhwinder Singh Bhagowalia, District Health Officer, Amritsar, said the workshop would be held in the last week of this month.

Under the BHOG programme, the cooks are supposed to cover their heads and wear aprons as well as gloves. Even the ones who serve langar are expected to wear gloves. It is a flagship initiative of the country's apex food regulator, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), encouraging religious organisations to adopt and maintain food safety and hygiene while preparing langar.

The Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) has already adopted FSSAI norms in at least 10 gurdwaras in the Capital.

SGPC president Gobind Singh Longowal said very high standards were maintained while purchasing langar material at the Golden Temple and other gurdwaras, but there was always room for improvement. “We have no issues with implementing the FSSAI norms,” he said.

When asked about the unbranded ghee, milk etc. received as donations, Longowal said such items were never used for preparing langar.

“Desi ghee, edible oil and spices are procured from authorised dealers. Only purified water is used for cooking. We have expanded our organic farming project. We also ensure that the vegetables purchased from the market are fresh,” he added.

Roop Singh, SGPC chief secretary, said only designated ‘langaris’ prepared ‘dal’, ‘sabzi’ and ‘kheer’, whereas the volunteers only chopped the vegetables. “The community kitchen premises are cleaned several times a day. Still, if there’s any lapse, we will rectify it,” he said.

18 Trained head cooks Rs 3 crore Monthly kitchen expenses

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