

## Food adulterers to be fined Rs 1L at Baliyatra

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Cuttack: Health department officials have warned food vendors to remain extra vigilant during the upcoming Baliyatra as they could face a hefty fine for adulteration. Compared to Rs 500 earlier, the vendors will be imposed a penalty of Rs 1 lakh in case the food sold by them is found to be adulterated under the revised Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) Act.

City health officer Umesh Panigrahi said, "As per the new regulations of FSSAI, a corporation health officer is authorized to impose the fine on the spot. Earlier, we were imposing a fine of Rs 500 on vendors for violation of the food safety policy. But this year, the FSSAI has given us guidelines to slap a fine of up to Rs 1 lakh if food articles are found to be unsafe for human consumption." He added, "We have already informed the food vendors to be cautious about the safety and hygiene of food during Baliyatra this year. If anyone is found to be guilty of such offences, immediate action will be taken against the vendors. The license of the food vendor may be cancelled."

Panigrahi further said maximum weightage will be given to the hygiene of food during Baliyatra this year with a provision of a hefty fine for adulteration.

Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) has one food safety inspector. "We have hired three food safety officers from the food safety commissioner's Bhubaneswar office and two retired food safety officers for checking the quality of food this year," CMC commissioner Ananya Das said.

As per the new FSSAI rules, anyone who stores, sells or distributes any food article unsafe for human consumption will be punishable where the contravention does not lead to injury – an imprisonment of three months and a fine up to Rs 1 Lakh will be imposed. Even adulteration of food will be a serious offence where one can be booked under the FSSAI Act and a hefty penalty would be imposed on the vendors.