

All packaged water must have 3 stamps of approval: Govt

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KOLKATA: After KMC's crackdown on unsafe packaged water, the state has made it mandatory for all such water units to have certification from two food-security authorities, besides the Bureau of Indian Standard (BIS) seal of approval.

The BIS mark alone was not enough to guarantee purity of packaged drinking water, said consumers affairs department minister Sadhan Pandey at the state assembly on Tuesday, adding that every container must also carry certification from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and the legal metrology department.

Besides, a task force will be set up to combat the menace, Pandey said. Headed by an additional district magistrate, the force—set up at Darjeeling, Hooghly, Howrah, North 24 Parganas, West Midnapore and Jhargram—will conduct raids on spurious packaged drinking water units across the state, shut them down and initiate criminal proceedings against the offending traders.

The measures are expected to add teeth to the government and the civic body's crackdown on firms that did not follow any rules and packaged unsafe drinking water for sale. Following an outbreak of enteric disease in the southern part of Kolkata, the KMC found a number of units selling unsafe drinking water in bottles after which the enforcement branch of the city police raided and sealed those units. But these units—several of them illegal—apparently make for only the tip of an iceberg as spurious packaged drinking water units have mushroomed all across Bengal, especially in North and South 24 Parganas.

The new task forces, which will have representatives of the enforcement branch, Bureau of Indian Standard (BIS) and legal metrology, has already carried out three major raids and seizure operations.

“From now on, we will take stricter measures against those units, such as shutting them down and starting criminal cases against the owners,” Pandey said. “Chief minister Mamata Banerjee asked me to check on the units selling unsafe packaged drinking water. I immediately issued an order to form a district-level task force, headed by the additional district magistrate. If any unit is found to sell drinking water without the three mandatory security marks, we will not only shut it down but also initiate a criminal case against it.”