

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2512
ANSWERED ON 13.03.2026

COST, PRICING AND QUALITY OF MEALS IN PREMIUM EXPRESS TRAINS

2512 SMT. RENUKA CHOWDHURY:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) the cost charged from passengers for meals in premium express trains such as Vande Bharat and other similar services, train-wise and class-wise;
- (b) the percentage of the total ticket fare attributable to food charges;
- (c) the actual cost incurred by Indian Railways or its catering agencies in providing such meals and the margin, if any, charged from passengers;
- (d) whether any audit or independent assessment has been conducted on the pricing, quality, hygiene and nutritional standards of meals served on these trains; and
- (e) the number of complaints received from passengers regarding food quality and overpricing during the last three years, train-wise?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF RAILWAYS, INFORMATION & BROADCASTING AND
ELECTRONICS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI ASHWINI VAISHNAW)

(a) to (e): It is continuous endeavor of Indian Railways to make available catering services in all trains as per laid down standards and as per menu and tariff notified from time to time. The meal rates for these trains were issued vide Commercial Circular No. 49 & 60 of 2019.

As mandated by Ministry of Railways, IRCTC has been managing catering services in these trains on license fee model and not on cost based model.

Indian Railways serve about 58 cr meals every year on average in all trains including premium trains. About only 0.0008% complaints are received on average. Based on inquiry on these complaints during the last three years, a fine of Rs 2.6 cr has been imposed.

The following measures have been taken to improve quality, hygiene, and food safety:

- Supply of meals from designated Base Kitchens.
- Commissioning of modern Base Kitchens at identified locations.
- Installation of CCTV Cameras in Base Kitchens for better monitoring of food preparation.
- Shortlisting and use of popular and branded raw materials, like cooking oil, atta, rice, pulses, masala items, paneer, dairy products etc. for food production.
- Deployment of Food Safety Supervisors at Base Kitchens to monitor food safety and hygienic practices.

...2/-

- Deployment of on-board IRCTC supervisors on trains.
- Introduction of QR codes on food packets, enabling display of details like name of kitchen, date of packaging etc.
- Regular deep cleaning and periodical pest control in Base Kitchens and Pantry Cars.
- In order to ensure compliance with Food Safety Norms, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) certification from designated Food Safety Officers of each catering unit has been made mandatory.
- Regular food sampling as a part of the inspection and monitoring mechanism to ensure quality of food on trains.
- Third Party Audit is done to examine hygiene and quality of food in Pantry Cars and Base Kitchens. Customer satisfaction survey is also conducted.
- Regular and surprise inspections by Railway/ IRCTC officials, including Food Safety Officers.
- Regular training is conducted by IRCTC to enhance the skills of catering staff, focusing on customer service areas i.e., communication, courteous behaviour, service standards, personal grooming, and hygiene.

IRCTC and Railway officials conduct surprise and periodic checks to ensure compliance with catering standards on trains. IRCTC has deployed supervisors and catering assistants for ongoing monitoring of onboard services and real-time resolution of passengers grievances. To enhance inspection coverage, IRCTC has engaged additional Hospitality Monitors for sectional oversight of catering services on mail express trains.

In order to take passenger feedback, complaint management system over Indian Railways has been strengthened, simplified and made more accessible over the last few years through introduction of RailMadad Portal. With the launch of RailMadad Portal, Indian Railways provided passengers a single window system to register complaints and suggestions.

In case any food related passenger complaint in trains is reported, prompt and appropriate punitive action is taken against the service providers for deficiency in service.
