

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1566
ANSWERED ON 31.07.2026

COMPLAINTS OF FOOD QUALITY IN PREMIUM TRAINS

1566 SHRI CHANDRAKANT DAMODAR HANDORE:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of complaints received regarding poor food quality, unhygienic pantry cars and hospitality deficits in premium and express trains during the last three years, State- wise and zone-wise;
- (b) the statutory action taken against IRCTC licensees found guilty of institutional overcharging and serving substandard or less than prescribed quantities;
- (c) the structural steps taken under the revised Catering Policy to mandate electronic billing (e-PoS) by onboard vendors to eradicate systemic cash fleecing; and
- (d) the policy decision formulated to introduce a dynamic fare refund mechanism for passengers who do not receive the designated quality of prepaid meals?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF RAILWAYS, INFORMATION & BROADCASTING AND
ELECTRONICS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

(SHRI ASHWINI VAISHNAW)

(a) to (d): Indian Railways serve about 58 cr meals every year on average. About only 0.0008% complaints are received on average. Based on inquiry on these complaints during the last three years, a fine of Rs 5.13 cr has been imposed.

Indian Railways continuously endeavour to provide good quality and hygienic food items to the travelling passengers as per the prescribed norms. Necessary steps are accordingly taken by Indian Railways from time to time to ensure the same. 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 real time and better monitoring of food preparation.
- Shortlisting and use of popular and branded raw materials for food production.
- Deployment of Food Safety Supervisors at Base Kitchens to monitor food safety and hygienic practices.
- Deployment of on-board IRCTC supervisors on trains.
- Introduction of QR codes on meal packets supplied in trains to enhance food safety, transparency and passenger awareness. The QR code provides details regarding date and time of packing, name of the licensee and FSSAI license number, for information of passengers.
- Regular deep cleaning and periodical pest control in Base Kitchens and Pantry Cars.

- Mandatory Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) certification to ensure compliance with Food Safety Norms.
- Regular food sampling as a part of the monitoring mechanism to ensure quality of food on trains.
- 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.
- 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.

Steps taken to promote electronic billing and digital payments in trains:

- Installation of Point of Sale (POS) machines in Pantry Cars to facilitate digital billing and cashless transactions. Further, multiple digital payment options such as UPI, QR Codes, swipe machines are also made available in pantry cars.
- SMS is sent to passengers with a link of menu and tariff to make them aware of rates of food items.
- Introduction of e-pantry service in Mail/Express trains to facilitate passengers to pre-book meals through online mode.
- Regular special inspection drives by Railways/IRCTC officials to monitor all aspects of onboard catering services including billing, overcharging, availability of cashless payment options etc .
