

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS

RAJYA SABHA

**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2978
ANSWERED ON 20.12.2024**

IRREGULARITIES IN ONBOARD CATERING SERVICE

2978 # SHRI DIGVIJAYA SINGH:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has received any representation from a Member of Parliament regarding serious irregularities in onboard catering service in the Indian Railways, if so, the date of receipt and action taken thereon;
- (b) the present status of tendering process started by Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) in February 2024 to improve quality of onboard food for railway passengers and whether contractors supplying food have been selected as per the rules of Railway Board; and
- (c) whether Railway Board has received complaints of irregularities in the tendering process, if so, the number of complaints received and the action taken thereon?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (c): Representations/suggestions/concerns regarding catering service related issues, are received from elected representatives, associations, other stakeholders, etc. by Railways at various levels, including Railway Board. Any concern raised in such representations is properly examined and necessary action is taken.

With the objective to bring about visible improvement in train catering services by ensuring high quality and hygiene in food production and standardised services, Ministry of Railways have notified Commercial Circular No. 24/ 2023. Necessary measures have accordingly been put in place to achieve this objective.

Following steps have been taken for improvement in catering services over Indian Railways:

- 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.

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- 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.
- 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 (every 15 days) 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.
- Implementation of rationalised menu in trains so as to introduce items of regional cuisines/ preferences, seasonal delicacies, food items, as per the preferences of different groups of passengers, such as diabetic food, baby food, health food options including millet based local products, etc.

Catering licenses have been awarded by IRCTC under the given mandate and policy instructions issued from time to time. Further, award of contract is a continuous and dynamic process.
