

QR Code-Enabled Identity Cards and Digitally Traceable Food Packets in Indian Railways to Eliminate Unauthorised Vending and Ensure Verified Onboard Catering Services for Rail Passengers

Modern Base Kitchens, Mandatory FSSAI Certification, CCTV Monitoring, Surprise Inspections and Third-Party Audits are Delivering Hygienic and High-Quality Meals to Passengers

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Unauthorized hawking and vending in the passenger area on Indian Railways is prohibited. It is an offence punishable under Section - 144 of Railways Act, 1989. Regular inspections are conducted by designated officials and RPF to check and prevent entry of unauthorised vendors in trains. Special drives are also conducted by Railways and IRCTC officials to curb unauthorised vending in railway premises from time to time.

To establish identity of the authorised vendors in trains, issuance of QR code enabled Identity Cards in the name of individual vendors/helpers/staff deployed for managing onboard catering services has been made mandatory. This QR code is linked to establish authenticity of the staff by displaying the Vendor's name, Aadhaar No., Medical Fitness, Police verification details, etc. Other measures taken to curb unauthorised vending include QR code on food packets which displays name of kitchen and date of manufacturing etc.

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.
- Deployment of on-board IRCTC supervisors on trains.
- 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.
- Surprise inspections by 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.

This information was provided by the Union Minister for Railways, Information & Broadcasting and Electronics & Information Technology, Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, in a reply to a question in Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

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