

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
RAILWAYS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3895
ANSWERED ON:09.08.2017
Upgradation of Services and Facilities
P.K. ,Shri,Kunhalikutty;Pandey Shri Rajesh

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of new initiatives which are being taken for quantum jump in the matter of new trains and upgradation of services and facilities;
- (b) whether it is a fact that there is not much improvement in facilities in trains despite charging high fare from the passengers;
- (c) if so, the reasons therefor; and
- (d) the details of steps taken by the Government to provide facilities to passengers in trains including catering services?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(SHRI RAJEN GOHAIN)

(a) to (d): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (d) OF UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3895 BY SHRI P.K. KUNHALIKUTTY AND SHRI RAJESH PANDEY TO BE ANSWERED IN LOK SABHA ON 09.08.2017 REGARDING UPGRADATION OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES

(a) to (d): Introduction of new trains is an ongoing process over Indian Railways subject to traffic justification, operational feasibility, availability of resources. In Railway Budget 2016-17, introduction of Antyodaya, Humsafar, UDAY, Tejas brand of train services have been announced. As of now, 2 Antyodaya Express, 9 Humsafar Express and 1 Tejas Express have been introduced.

Improvement to Passenger amenities on Indian Railways (IR) is a continuous process. Present day passengers expect visible and qualitative improvement in public utilities and amenities provided at the Stations. With a view to meeting the expectations of the passengers, Indian Railways is making all out effort to provide improved facilities at the stations including those located in small cities/towns. Indian Railways has more than 8000 Stations. It has always been the endeavour of the Railways to provide adequate amenities to the passengers at the stations. Certain amenities are provided at the time of construction of new stations based on anticipated volume of traffic. Amenities are further augmented from time to time with growth in passenger traffic handled at stations, based on the felt need, expectations of the travelling public and availability of funds.

In the recent past Indian Railways have taken various steps to improve the services and facilitate the passengers, some of which are given below.

At stations:

- (i) Lifts and Escalators at the stations for facilitating movement across platforms.
- (ii) Battery Operated Vehicles for carrying passengers before/after the train journey, especially senior citizens and persons with disabilities.
- (iii) Yatri Mitra Sewa for passengers requiring wheel-chair assistance.
- (iv) Well appointed Retiring Rooms, Waiting Halls and Executive Lounges to relax for passengers during transit.
- (v) Wi-fi facility at 127 important stations on IR.

In Reservations and travel:

- (i) Introduction of the Alternate Train Accommodation Scheme known as 'VIKALP' to give option to waitlisted passengers to shift to alternate train having vacant accommodation.
- (ii) Provision of facility to physically handicapped persons to book reserved tickets online.
- (iii) Introduction of paperless unreserved ticket booking through mobile phone.
- (iv) Automatic refund of confirmed/ Reservation Against Cancellation (RAC)/e-tickets on cancellation of trains.
- (v) Enhancement of Senior Citizen Quota as well as quota earmarked for physically handicapped persons.
- (vi) Making provision in the system for automatic preparation of reservation charts at least four hours before the scheduled departure of train.
- (vii) Provision of facility to book available accommodation after preparation of first reservation chart through internet as well as across

any computerized Passenger Reservation System (PRS) counter upto preparation of second reservation chart.

(viii) Acceptance of all International Credit/Debit cards for booking of e-tickets through Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) website.

(ix) The passengers having confirmed/RAC/Waitlisted PRS counter tickets may cancel the same through IRCTC website (www.irctc.co.in) or through 139 within the prescribed time limit and the refund amount maybe collected across PRS counter on surrendering the original ticket.

(x) In order to facilitate cancellation of PRS counter tickets at relatively smaller stations, one of the Unreserved Ticketing System(UTS) cum PRS counters (wherever PRS booking facility is available) has been earmarked for granting refund beyond the working hours of PRS counters/Current counters. This facility is available in respect of PRS counter tickets for those trains whose scheduled departure time is within the next 24 hours.

(xi) Establishment of Yatri Ticket Suvridha Kendras for issuing of tickets through public private partnership for establishment and operation of computerised Passenger Reservation System (PRS)-cum Unreserved Ticketing System (UTS) terminals.

(xii) Facility for booking unreserved ticket including platforms tickets and Season Tickets through mobile phone in the 6 suburban sections of IR in Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, Secunderabad and in Delhi – Palwal and Delhi-Ghaziabad sections of Northern Railway.

(xiii) Commencement of concierge services with facility for online booking of wheelchairs through IRCTC website at New Delhi and 23 other stations.

(xiv) Provision of Automatic Ticket Vending Machines to facilitate purchase of unreserved journey tickets.

(xv) Extension of e-ticketing facility to foreign debit/credit cards for foreign tourists and NRIs.

(xvi) Commissioning of online booking of retiring room at over 488 Railway stations.

In addition to this, provision of enhanced passenger amenities in train coaches is a continual endeavor of the Indian Railways. Some of the policy decisions taken in this regard are:

1. Provision of cushioned seats in General Second class coaches.
2. Provision of bottle holders and snack tables in Non-AC Sleeper Class coaches.
3. Provision of dust bins in Non-AC coaches.
4. Provision of mugs with chain in Non-AC coaches.
5. Provision of Health Faucets in AC as well as Non-AC Sleeper class coaches, etc.

Besides, new trains having better passenger amenities, such as Tejas, Humsafar and Antyodaya have already been introduced.

It has also been decided to carry out the work of upgradation of coach interiors and exteriors and to provide additional amenities in the identified coaches that have a certain balance residual life. The upgradation of coaches would result in an improvement in the overall ambience and furnishing and enhanced passenger comfort. It has been decided to carry out the work in a phased manner depending upon the availability of capacities and funds.

With the objective to provide quality food to rail passengers, new Catering Policy 2017 has been issued on 27.02.2017 wherein Indian Railway

Catering and Tourism Corporation Limited (IRCTC) has been mandated to carry out the unbundling of catering services by creating a distinction primarily between food preparation and food distribution. The new catering policy, inter-alia, includes the following features for unbundling of catering services (i) IRCTC shall manage catering services on all mobile units. (ii) Meals for all mobile units will be picked up from the nominated kitchens owned, operated and managed by IRCTC. (iii) IRCTC will engage service providers for hospitality industry for service of food in trains. (iv) IRCTC shall not outrightly outsource or issue licenses for provision of catering services to private licensees. (v) IRCTC shall retain the ownership and shall be fully accountable for all the issues pertaining to setting up and operation of the Base Kitchens and quality of food. (vi) IRCTC shall ensure compliance of all statutory guidelines viz. FSSAI norms of food safety in Base Kitchens/kitchen units and mobile catering units, pollution control, Green Tribunal etc. (the statutory bodies mentioned are indicative in nature, not exhaustive). (vii) Third Party Audit of mobile units and base kitchens shall be done by Zonal Railways periodically by an independent agency.

Other steps taken to ensure good quality and hygienic food served to the passengers inter-alia include:- (i) Phased introduction of station based e-catering at all A1 and A category stations for widening the range of options available to passengers for ordering food of their choice. (ii) Introduction of precooked food ('ready to eat' meals). (iii) Operation of Centralized Catering Service Monitoring Cell (CSMC) (toll free number 1800-111-321) for prompt redressal of passenger grievances relating to the catering activities and real time assistance to travelling public. (iv) Imposition of penalties in case of deficiencies detected in services. (v) Operation of All India Helpline (No.138) for rail-users to lodge complaints/suggestions regarding food and catering services (vi) A Twitter handle with the address @IRCATERING has also been made operational to cater to the complaints/suggestions with regard to catering services. (vii) To effectively check and control unfair practices of overcharging, issues of quality as well as quantity, the following measures are being taken:

â€¢ In prepaid trains, optional catering has been introduced as a pilot project so that passenger has the option to 'not eat' if he does not want the food supplied onboard. This scheme has been introduced on 31 Rajdhani/Shatabdi/Duronto trains under the management of Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Limited (IRCTC) w.e.f. 01/08/2017 for an initial period of 180 days, subject to mid-term review after 3 months.

â€¢ It has also been decided to introduce optional catering, as a pilot project, in mail/express trains so that passengers can pay for the meals and packaged Drinking Water (PDW) in advance at the time of booking of journey tickets.

â€¢ Empanelment of Self Help Groups (SHGs) to provide healthy, wholesome regional cuisine at an affordable cost to the travelling public through e-catering has initiated and 9 SHGs have been empanelled at 10 stations.

â€¢ As announced in the Rail Budget 2016-17, Tejas Train has been introduced on 22/05/2017. Management of on-board catering services on Tejas Express is done by IRCTC. Service-wise Catering services on Tejas Express are optional and for the passengers who do not opt for catering services at the time of booking, catering charges will not be included in the ticket fare. However, if the passenger asks for catering services at a later stage, an extra amount of ? 50/- per service, in addition to the cost of catering charges.

â€¢ Instructions have been issued stipulating that Humsafar trains may have the facility of Automatic Vending Machines (AVMs) for dispensation of beverages including Tea/Coffee/soup etc.
