



RAILWAYS DECIDES TO STRENGTHEN MECHANISM TO ENSURE FOOD SAFETY

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Days after 14 people complained of discomfort following breakfast on board the Puri-Howrah Shatabdi Express, the railways on Friday decided to deploy 300 health inspectors, conduct more surprise tests on samples and create a databank of vendors across its network to ensure the quality of food served. At a high-level meeting, it was also decided that food safety officers (FSO) will cover each division of the railways, besides directing all vendors to register themselves online with food safety regulator, FSSAI.

“We discussed ways to strengthen the entire ecosystem of food being served and sold by railways. It was decided to ensure that all vendors register with FSSAI online for better monitoring,” FSSAI CEO Pawan Agarwal told PTI.

He said at present, some of the vendors have paper registration of their license and efforts are being made to shift the registration process online. The online registration will begin in the next 15 days, the railways said in a statement.

“It has been decided in the meeting that Food Safety Officer (FSO) will cover each division of Indian Railways and also 300 health inspectors will be deployed to undertake the work of food safety officer and assist them,” it said.

It was also decided that a databank of caterers and food suppliers of railways will be created by July 15 which will have details of vendors, online registration details and sample tests done. “FSSAI and the railways have decided to adopt a revised protocol for sample selection for food sample test, frequency of data collection will increase and surprise sample collection will be included in data bank,” the statement said.

A mobile application with geo tagging technology will be developed for collection of food sample.

A decision for third party audit of vendors has also been taken.

According to FSSAI norms, vendors with a turnover of below Rs 12 lakh need to register with the food safety regulator, while those with turnover above Rs 12 lakh or whose production capacity of food does not exceed 100 kg per litre per day are required to obtain a licence. The Chief Managing Director of IRCTC, the food safety commissioner and Chief Operating Officer of FSSAI, Additional Member (Commercial), Railway Board, Director General (Health), Railway Board and other senior officials were present during the meeting.