NEW DELHI, MARCH 21: While consumers may demand a wider variety of food, the Indian Railways would do better to limit the menu and serve them well, Ashish Bahuguna, Chairman of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), said at an industry-Railway interaction on improving the quality of food served.

Companies such as Nestle and Haldiram that attended the interaction, pushed for the Railways to go in for ready-to-eat meals to improve food quality in the given constraints.

The interaction comes ahead of the Railways’ public sector unit, Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), set to take over catering in several trains in a phased manner.

Hike in prices

To minimise wastage of food, Bahuguna also suggested that the Railways should provide good dustbins. “Trains in the US give you one sandwich or burger when you walk to the counter, and more only if you ask for it,” he said.

Officials from catering and the food sector, including RK Caterers, pitched for hiking the price of food served to improve quality, adding that the Railways should not insist on fixing both the price and quantity of food.

Fares, politeness

Meanwhile, Railway officials asked the industry to take into account the paying capacity of its passengers while suggesting such measures. “Recently, we launched the Ernakulam-Howrah train with a base pricing of ₹450 with great difficulty. This, when the corresponding bus fare is about ₹1,850 after changing
four buses, ₹4,000 if one were to take an AC Volvo bus. Even the ₹450 was decided with great difficulty,” Mohd Jamshed, Member-Traffic, said.

A faculty from the Delhi Institute of Hotel Management called for providing better working conditions for the catering staff. It may be difficult for people working long hours, with little rest, to be polite, he said, referring to complaints of overcharging.