

After facing public ire regarding a drop in punctuality of trains, Indian Railways is now planning to re-time table all the trains from August 15, factoring in the safety-related maintenance work at all the zones. Going on airline mode, it also announced free meals for passengers for un-planned blocks on Sundays.

Railways minister [Piyush Goyal](#) said on Monday that re-arranging [train timings](#) will be done giving a window of two-three hours every day, expanding the window to even five hours on Sundays. "This punctuality exercise will be done without compromising with the pace of safety works," Goyal said.

The minister further announced that since the delay period is longer on Sundays, concerned zones will provide free food and water to passengers, if it is meal time. This facility may even be extended to passengers of General compartments. The decision was made after reviewing the new automated data logging system, which provides a more accurate picture of [train timings](#).

TRACKING TRACKS

65%

Punctuality of Indian Railways for the week ended June

53 mins

Average delay on all trains in 2017, up from 45 minutes in 2016

34%

Punctuality of West Bengal's Howrah division, the worst hit. The Lucknow division follows it with 39%

₹20 bn

Project planned by railways in the Mughal Sarai-Allahabad route to tackle congestion

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Based on the latest data, punctuality of Indian Railways dipped to 65 per cent during the week ended June 3.

Independent estimates of data by analytical platform [RailYatri](#) indicate that the average delay on all trains was 53 minutes in 2017, up from 45 minutes in the prior year.

In order to improve bottlenecks on the Mughal Sarai-Allahabad route, which has a capacity utilisation of close to 200 per cent, the minister has given nod to a Rs 20-billion project to construct a third line in the area with immediate effect. "I have also asked zones to take out all such bottlenecks for punctuality and address it immediately," Goyal added. The government is also planning to come up with new elevated corridors in

such busy areas.

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The Howrah division in West Bengal is the worst in punctuality at 34 per cent, followed by the Lucknow division at 39 per cent. Meanwhile, to solve the complaints regarding the quality of food supplied on trains, Railways is planning to exhibit live feeds of 16 base kitchens to passengers. "In the review meetings of seven zones held so far, I have given

priority to safety, cleanliness and hygiene," he said. The national transporter is planning to have bio-toilets in all the coaches by March 2019.

Goyal added that due to the safety related works, Railways was successful in bringing down the number of accidents this year. Due to the ongoing works, railways now have over 5,000 hours of blocked tracks, which used to be in the range of 4,000 hours last year. Infact, the average speed of passenger trains in April was 44 kmph, while that of freight trains was around 23 kmph.

Goyal indicated that the priority will still be given to infrastructure developments and the difficulty to passengers due to works may extend up to a year.

The routes with maximum delay include Howrah-Patna section of 253 minutes and Delhi-Dibrugarh 232 minutes based on [RailYatri](#) data.