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Finally, remote railway stations in Bengaluru Division to have catering stalls

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BENGALURU:Offering a huge relief to passengers boarding or alighting trains at railway stations in the outskirts of the city, the Bangalore Railway Division has decided to open up 88 catering stalls and refreshment rooms across its network. It also marks the first time in eight years that the Division has called for tenders for new entrants to become stall licencees.

Rayokottai, Toppur, Dodbele, Hebbal, Devangothi, Kunigal, Marikuppam, Bellandur Road, Sidlagatta, Muttampati Halt figure among the wayside stations that will have railway

catering stalls shortly. Among the main stations, contracts will be called afresh for 12 existing stalls at Krantivira Sangolli Rayanna railway station, 8 at Yesvantpur station and five stalls at Bengaluru Cantonment.

N R Sridharamurthy, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Bangalore Railway Division, told The New Indian Express that the general norm followed earlier was that the licence period of existing stall holders were extended when their contracts expired. "The Railway Board's New Catering Policy 2017 makes it mandatory to call for fresh bids at stalls when existing contracts expire. In line with that policy, we have called for bids to run these stations in August. The tenders close on September 4," he said.

The stalls are to come up on spaces of 10ft x 6 ft dimension on railway platforms. The move offers an opportunity to those who own small stalls to compete with established names and make their entry at railway stations, he added.

"Rates are fixed by Railways for all products in our stalls. So, the stalls will be subject to frequent inspections to check if this aspect is adhered to," the SDCM said. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India would also keep a tab on the quality of food supplied. "The kitchens from where the products are brought would be subject to inspections too," Sridharamurthy added.

The absence of basic amenities, snacks or even water bottles, at smaller stations (classified as D, E and F in railway terminology based on number of footfalls) has been a complaint frequently spelt out by passengers. Mysuru and Hubballi Railway divisions too have called tenders for a limited number of stations.