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Indian railways , which is the fourth largest railways after United States, Russia and China, has 114500 km track length, in which 30 million passengers commute every day and Indian railway reservation activity for advance booking of seats is very vital for ensuring passenger comfort.

In the initial days, reservation in Indian railways was done at railway station counters established in selected railway stations , when manual reservation process was going on with a set of registers and stacks of card tickets. Now, computerization taking over the booking activity, the Indian railway reservation is done from every corner of the world, for any place from any place, without any hassle.

Further, with today's online booking facilities enabling a passenger to do reservation in Indian railways right from one's home, with corresponding online payment facilities through net banking or credit card usage, when one signs up with a Username and Password exclusive to one.

Indian railway reservation is monitored with a unique number allotted to every ticket called PNR. There can be maximum six passengers in a ticket carrying a particular PNR.

Indian railway reservation is done not only for the available seats at a point of boarding, the reservation is done for some more tickets, anticipating cancellations by passengers due to exigencies of circumstances arising later. Indian railways obliges such cancellation request by returning the fare the passenger had remitted, but with a small cut and such vacancies are filled up by the additional bookings already made.

That way, apart from the Confirmed tickets for journey in a particular train, tickets are booked mainly in two other categories, viz., Reservation against cancellations (RAC) and Wait listed (WL) in Indian railway reservation system.

The process of reservation is so programmed that once a vacancy arises, it is automatically filled by the RAC ticket standing in the queue, followed by the WL tickets in their order. PNR number is an important index for monitoring this process in Indian railway reservation system.

Just in case, there are no cancellations, the RAC ticket holders are allowed to travel, but not with the full comfort of occupying a berth for sleeping or relaxing during travel, but provided a seat to sit and travel. For this purpose, they always have couple of berths in a compartment, in which two seats are booked for two RAC passengers, taking a chance for one to get accommodated against a cancelled ticket and the other continuing in the berth as a confirmed passenger.

Indian railway reservation is possible 90 days ahead of travel in all sections. The reservation and the ticket purchased can be cancelled at any point of time, even 6 hours after the train had departed.

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