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Title: Need to take stringent action against the agency responsible for food poisoning in Ajmer-Ernakulam Marusagar Express train and ensure supply of hygienic food.

SHRI N. PEETHAMBARA KURUP (KOLLAM): It is reported that more than 50 travellers in the Ajmer-Ernakulam Marusagar Express suffered from food poisoning due to the food items served from the pantry car of the train on 17-8-2013. Many of them were totally exhausted due to stomach ache, vomiting and diarrhoea by the time they were hospitalized at two different stations. What the Food Inspectors could see in the pantry car of the train on 18-8-2013 was more horrible as food items were piled up just near the door of the toilet and worm and fly infested rotten meat pieces lying there. Chapatis meant for travellers were lying on the floor. Similar incident occurred in the same train three years ago.

The people who travel to and from Kerala are facing difficulties due to lack of frequency in train services as well as old and dilapidated rail coaches. Food served is of inferior quality and the quantity is very less than the prescribed amount. The blankets are never dry cleaned resulting in spreading of contagious diseases. Many a time the bed sheets are just folded properly and reissued again. But it is more fearful and dangerous to eat poisonous food cooked and served in our trains. The contract for serving food in Marusagar Express has been given to a private agency from Kolkata.

Food poisoning in trains has become common since the day Railways decided to limit its direct supply of food and gave the job to private agencies on contract basis. Recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee years ago to restructure the catering system by giving priority to social justice and the needs of travellers have been ignored. IRCTC is not doing its job well to ensure hygienic food. Railways is earning Rs.2000 crore per year from the catering contract. Still it is really pathetic to see that no action is being taken to ensure hygienic and quality food to the passengers. Adequate quantity of food is also to be ensured.

I, therefore, urge upon the hon'ble Minister of Railways that stringent action should be taken against the agency responsible for the food poisoning in the Marusagar Express so that similar act of callousness is not repeated. The Agency's license should be cancelled immediately. The policy of cooking food in the base kitchens of the railways should be encouraged.

