

an>

Title: Regarding reported disruption of train services in southern Kerala due to protest by the loco pilots.

SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL (ALAPPUZHA): Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the Government to a lightning strike launched by loco pilots at Ernakulam Junction that badly affected the frequency of trains and movement of passengers.

Yesterday, train services in southern Kerala were disrupted partially after loco pilots refused to undergo breath alcohol analyzer test, which is mandatory while reporting to work. For more than ten hours, passengers were in a very difficult situation. Some local trains were cancelled and a few long distance trains got delayed at Ernakulam Junction after loco pilots protested against breath analyzer test to nullify all possibilities of them driving drunk on duty.

It is reported that it badly affected a number of major train services. Loco pilots alleged that for many days it was the indirect machine, the one that was used by the police was used for the test. The concern of the loco pilots is that there was no need to blow into it, and one only needs to talk. However, yesterday the supervisors used an old instrument as per the instruction by the Railway Officers. Loco pilots complained that since the instrument holds the breath of a person for ten seconds, there were chances of virus spread.

According to drivers, the All India Loco Running Staff Association has decided not to cooperate with such kind of breath analyzing practice using old and used equipment, which is 'imposed' on them by their supervisors in the Railways. Whereas the Railways blamed the loco pilots for disrupting the services and said the breath alcohol analyzer system was introduced as Railways was not ready to take any chances concerning efficient services and safety of its passengers.

This misunderstanding and confusion between loco pilots and railway officers brought railway operations in the Southern Zone to a standstill partially. It is reported that at least four local trains, including Ernakulam-Kottayam, Kottayam-Ernakulam, Ernakulam-Palakkad and Ernakulam-Kollam *via* Kottayam have been cancelled due to loco pilots' strike. Passengers affected by the strike also staged a protest outside the Railway Station Master's office.

Therefore, I would request the hon. Railway Minister and the Railway Board to make an inquiry and to take necessary action to stop this sort of confusion as the lightning strike is badly affecting thousands of common passengers.

HON. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri P.K. Biju, Shri P. Karunakaran and Adv. Joice George are permitted to associate with the issue raised by Shri K.C. Venugopal.