

(c) Excellent performance of Drivers in averting accidents is encouraged and General Managers have been given financial powers for sanctioning cash awards for such Drivers. Appreciation letters are also given to them.

(d) *Ex-gratia* amount of Rs. 337.45 lakhs in case of deaths, Rs. 72.55 lakhs in case of grievous injury and Rs. 41.41 lakhs in case of simple injury have been paid to the victims of train accidents during January, 2010 to 23rd July 2010.

#### **Quality of food served in trains**

667. DR. JANARDHAN WAGHMARE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that the food served on trains is stale, contaminated and of low quality; and

(b) if so, the action taken against the caterers who run the pantries in the trains?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED) : (a) and (b) It is the endeavour of the Indian Railways to provide good quality food to passengers on trains and in railway premises. To ensure the quality of meal, monitoring of catering services is carried out intensively and appropriate action including termination of contract is taken against errant licensees. In the last Financial year alone the departmental caterers were fined on 568 occasions and warning was issued in 710 cases. Given the sensitivity of the problem and to effect considerable improvements in Railway catering, a new Catering Policy has been issued which seeks to address the various issues involved in Railway Catering.

#### **Train service between Akola to Pandharpur**

668. DR. JANARDHAN WAGHMARE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Akola-Pandharpur railway track measuring 450 km. has been completed in 2007;

(b) whether it is also a fact that no train runs from Akola to Pandharpur causing huge revenue loss to Railways and inconvenience to passengers; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED) : (a) Gauge conversion of Akola - Purna (210 km) and Latur Road - Pandharpur (239 km) on Akola-Pandharpur section has been completed in recent past.

(b) and (c) In the Railway Budget 2010-11, it is proposed to extend 531A/532A Parli-Nizamabad Passenger to Pandharpur. This will provide a connection between Akola and Pandharpur with a changeover at Purna. However, at present, there is no direct train service between Akola and Pandharpur.