



GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION  
(COMMISSION OF RAILWAY SAFETY)

# RAILWAY ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORT

On

सत्यमेव जयते

THE ACCIDENT THAT OCCURRED TO  
UNAUTHORISED TRAVELLERS ON THE ENGINE AND ROOFS OF  
COACHES OF

NO. 114 UP MADURAI - MADRAS JANATA EXPRESS

BETWEEN

VALLAMPADUGAI & CHIDAMBARAM STATIONS

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

ON

4TH FEBRUARY, 1969

C O R R I G E N D U M

<u>Page</u> <u>No.</u>	<u>Para</u> <u>No.</u>	<u>Line</u> <u>No.</u>	<u>F o r</u>	<u>R e a d</u>
5	12(2)	3	Tiruchchiappalli	Tiruchchirappalli
6	15(1)	9	he roof	the roof
6	15(1)	10	idges	bridges
7	16(4)	2	If	It
8	19(1)	3	head	heed
8	20(1)	3	Colenoon	Coleroon
9	23	3	ff	off
9	25	2	purchase on	purchase one on



सत्यमेव जयते

## SUMMARY

1. Date . . . . .	4th February, 1969.
2. Time . . . . .	About 9.45 hours.
3. Railway . . . . .	Southern.
4. Gauge . . . . .	Metre (3'—3 3/8").
5. Location . . . . .	At Bridge No. 685 between Vallampadugai and Ch dambaram stations.
6. Nature of accident . . . . .	Roof travellers being struck by the overhead bracing of the bridge.
7. Train involved. . . . .	Train No. 114 UP "Madurai-Madras Janat Express".
8. Consisting of . . . . .	Steam engine hauling 11 bogie Passenger coaches.
9. Engine No. . . . .	Steam Locomotive No. YP 2808.
10. Estimated speed . . . . .	Slowly—the speed could not be estimated.
11. Method of working . . . . .	Absolute Block System of working.
12. Gradient . . . . .	Level.
13. Alignment . . . . .	Straight.
14. Weather . . . . .	Clear morning.
15. Casualties . . . . .	37 dead, 16 with grievous injuries and 22 with simple injuries.
16. Parties held responsible . . . . .	The roof travellers themselves.



GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF TOURISM & CIVIL AVIATION  
(COMMISSION OF RAILWAY SAFETY)

FROM : The Additional Commissioner of Railway Safety,  
Southern Circle,  
BANGALORE.

TO : The Secretary to the Government of India,  
Ministry of Tourism & Civil Aviation,  
NEW DELHI.

THROUGH : The Commissioner of Railway Safety,  
LUCKNOW.

Sir,

In accordance with Rule 10 of the Railway Board's Notification No. 59-TTV/42/1 dated the 11th April 1966 I have the honour to report the result of my Inquiry into the accident that occurred to unauthorised travellers on the engine and roofs of coaches of No. 114 UP "Madurai-Madras Janata Express" between Vallampadugai and Chidambaram stations on the Villupuram-Tiruchchirappalli Main Line of the Southern Railway on the morning of the 4th February 1969.

An Inquiry into this accident was not obligatory according to the Rules, but in view of its serious nature, it was considered desirable to inquire into the same.

2. **Inspection and Inquiry.**—Some of the injured were visited by me in the Cuddalore District Headquarters Hospital along with the Divisional Superintendent, Tiruchchirappalli on the evening of the 6th February. The evidence of 2 witnesses was then recorded.

The site of the accident was inspected on the morning of the 7th February in company with the Deputy Chief Engineer (Bridges), Madras. The evidence of other witnesses was recorded at Chidambaram the same day.

The Inquiry was continued at Mayuram on the 8th February, when the evidence of further witnesses was recorded.

The Civil Authorities and the Police were advised about the Inquiry, and the following Officers, among others, were present at the same:—

- |                             |   |                          |
|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| (i) Shri C. V. B. Menon     | Divisional Superintendent, Tiruchchirappalli        | 6th, 7th & 8th February. |
| (ii) Shri S. A. Farooki     | Superintendent of Railway Police, Tiruchchirappalli | 7th February             |
| (iii) Shri R. V. Gopal      | Deputy Superintendent of Police, Chidambaram        | 7th February             |
| (iv) Shri A. V. Sreenivasan | Deputy Superintendent of Railway Police, Madurai    | 7th & 8th February.      |

NOTE:—The terms "front", "rear", "leading", "trailing", "left" and "right" where used are with reference to the direction of motion of the train.

## I. PREAMBLE

3. **Brief Description of the accident.**—No. 114 UP “Madurai-Madras Janata Express”, which left Madurai on the 3rd February, arrived at Coleroon at about 9-15 hours on the 4th February—about 9 hours late due to trouble enroute with a number of unauthorised ticketless passengers travelling on the engine, on the foot-boards, and on the roof tops, proceeding to Madras to attend the funeral of Shri Annadurai, late Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. Attempts were made by the Railway staff to bring down the roof travellers, but although many got down, they apparently got back on to the engine and on to the roofs of the carriages when the train left Coleroon a little later. The train passed through Vallampadugai without stopping, and, while passing over Bridge No. 685 at Km. 251/7-8 (2 × 100 feet through girders) some of the roof travellers were struck by the overhead bracing of the girders resulting in several being killed outright and others being injured.

4. **Casualties.**—As a result of the accident 24 persons were killed on the spot and 51 were injured—29 grievously and 22 with simple injuries. Subsequently 13 of those grievously injured expired bringing the death-roll to 37.

5. **Composition of the train.**—No. 114 UP “Express” consisted of 11 bogie coaches hauled by a YP locomotive. The train was marshalled in the following order:

Engine No. YP 2808;

1st Coach GT 7927	Third Class;
2nd Coach GT 3507	Third Class;
3rd Coach GT 9919	Third Class;
4th Coach GTCW 5221	Third Class 2-Tier Sleeper;
5th Coach GTCN 4007	Third Class 3-Tier Sleeper;
6th Coach GT 7902	Third Class;
7th Coach VP 9422	Parcel Van;
8th Coach VPU 9110	Motor-cum-Parcel Van;
9th Coach TLR 6810	Third Class Luggage & Brake Van;
10th Coach GTY 3817	Third Class with Ladies Compartment;
11th Coach GT 10175	Third Class.

The train was fully vacuum-braked, and its length and weight were approximately 765 feet and 480 tonnes, respectively (inclusive of the engine).

All the coaches had steel bodies except No. VPU 9110, which had a wooden body.

The engine had a speedometer-cum-recorder, but the recorder was not functioning at the time as a new chart had not been inserted at Mayuram.

6. **Damage to Railway Property.**—There was no derailment, nor did the bridge or train sustain any damage as a result of this accident.

7. **Number of Passengers.**—The seating capacity of No. 114 UP “Express” was 546. The train was overcrowded, and it is possible that over 1000 passengers were travelling at the time.

8. **Weather conditions.**—It was a clear morning and visibility ahead was good.

## II. RELIEF MEASURES

9. **First-aid and medical assistance.**—Immediately after the accident occurred, somebody seems to have pulled the alarm chain, and the train came to a stop with the 2 end coaches on the bridge. The Guard got down at once, and, after the train was drawn ahead to clear the bridge, first aid was rendered to the injured, with the help of a number of scouts who were travelling in the train. The dead and injured were then put inside the train, which reached Chidambaram at 11-05 hours.

Prior to this information had been given about the accident over the telephone at the level crossing gate adjacent to the bridge where the accident occurred. The train was, therefore, met on its arrival at Chidambaram by the Deputy Superintendent of Police, Chidambaram, the Inspector of Police, Chidambaram and some local doctors with a lorry and an ambulance. The doctors then immediately rendered further aid to the injured, all of whom (51 in all) were straightway removed to the Chidambaram Government Hospital. 4 of these, however, expired before arrival at the Hospital, but the remaining 47 were admitted.

By 12-00 hours, the District Medical Officer, Cuddalore District Headquarters Hospital arrived with a team of doctors and the Superintendent of Police, Cuddalore. They immediately arranged for the transfer of 24 of the more seriously injured passengers to the Cuddalore District Headquarters Hospital by ambulances and lorry. Later, on the 5th February, 4 more of the injured were transferred from the Chidambaram Government Hospital to the Cuddalore District Headquarters Hospital, and the same day 2 of the injured were transferred from the Cuddalore District Headquarters Hospital to the General Hospital, Madras.

The remaining 19 injured in the Chidambaram Government Hospital were discharged on the evening of the 5th February.

## III. LOCAL CONDITIONS

10. **Description of the site and method of working.**—(i) The accident occurred at Km. 251/7-8 on Bridge No. 685 (2 × 100 feet through girders) between Vallampadugai and Chidambaram stations. The Divisional Headquarters and Control Offices are located at Tiruchchirappalli.

(ii) The kilometrage (reckoned from Madras Beach) of the various places mentioned in this report is detailed below :

	<i>Kms.</i>
Villupuram . . . . .	162·8
Cuddalore . . . . .	209·2
Chidambaram . . . . .	247·5
Vallampadugai . . . . .	252·3
Coleroon . . . . .	254·9
Sirkazhi . . . . .	264·8
Mayuram . . . . .	284·5
Malliyam . . . . .	288·9
Kumbakonam . . . . .	315·6
Thanjavur . . . . .	355·0
Tiruchchirappalli . . . . .	404·8 (via Main Line)
Madurai . . . . .	559·5 (via Main Line)
Rameswaram . . . . .	668·8 (via Main Line)

(iii) The section between Mayuram and Cuddalore is worked in accordance with the Absolute Block System by means of Neale's Ball Token Instruments. Standard I multiple aspect upper quadrant signalling is in force on this section, except at Mayuram and Cuddalore which are interlocked to Standard III and equipped with lower quadrant signalling. Trains proceeding from Mayuram towards Cuddalore are termed UP trains, and those proceeding from Cuddalore to Mayuram DOWN trains.

(iv) UP trains leaving Coleroon first have to negotiate a left hand  $1.4^{\circ}$  curve immediately on leaving the station. The line is then straight for about 1 kilometre after which there is a right hand  $1.4^{\circ}$  curve. The approach to Bridge No. 685 is straight for about one kilometre from Km. 252/6.

There are 3 through girder bridges between Coleroon and Chidambaram stations, viz :

- (a) Bridge No. 687 ( $14 \times 150$  feet through girders) over the New Coleroon river at Km. 253/8-12;
- (b) Bridge No. 685 ( $2 \times 100$  feet through girders) over the Old Coleroon river at Km. 251/7-8—where the accident occurred;
- (c) Bridge No. 675 ( $2 \times 100$  feet through girders) over the Oopandar river at Km. 249/2-3.

The track on the section is on embankment throughout varying from 4 feet to 20 feet in height, and is stone ballasted, consisting of 75 lbs. RBS rails laid on CST 9 sleepers to density N plus 6 except the bridge approaches which have wooden sleepers to density N plus 6, and over Bridge No. 687 where there are 60 lbs. RBS rails.

The approach to Bridge No. 685 is level from Km. 252/13.

**11. Permissible Speeds.**—The maximum permissible speed on the section is 75 Km. p.h. and the booked speed of No. 114 UP Express is 67.5 Km. p.h.

There is a permanent speed restriction of 50 Km. p.h., over the facing points at Vallampadugai Flag station, and on the day in question there was a temporary speed restriction of 16 Km. p.h. between Km. 249/3 and Km. 248/12 due to screening of ballast.

#### IV. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

**12. Divisional Superintendent, Tiruchchirappalli, Shri C. V. B. Menon** in a statement drew attention to the unprecedented rush of people to Madras on the 3rd February. Unlike melas and other festivals there had been no prior warning, but special precautions were immediately taken by the Railway Administration to watch the position, and to take whatever steps possible to cope with this sudden rush of people to Madras.

The crowds collecting at Tiruchchirappalli that morning (3rd February) were in no mood to buy tickets for their journey, and apparently expected the Railway to run special trains to Madras for them to travel without tickets. In the absence of the Superintendent, Railway Police, who was said to be out of the station that day, the Inspector, Railway Police, Tiruchchirappalli was contacted and asked to take suitable action. The District Collector and Superintendent of Police, Tiruchchirappalli were also contacted and requested to render all possible assistance to disperse the crowd, the Security Officer (South), Tiruchchirappalli, and his Assistant Security Officer also being similarly contacted to go at once to the station and take necessary action.

The Divisional Superintendent also went to the station (Tiruchchirappalli) where he met the Revenue Divisional Officer, Tiruchchirappalli and the Town Deputy Superintendent of Police, who requested that the crowd should be permitted to go to Madras on payment of a nominal fare of Rupee 1 per head; this request was naturally not conceded. He persuaded the Revenue Divisional Officer to appeal to the crowd either to buy tickets for their journey to Madras or to disperse from the station premises. Meanwhile, buses and lorries had been permitted by the local authorities to convey passengers to Madras and these were quoting rates as low as Rupees 3 per head. The crowd, however, continued to remain at the station, but later some of the leaders of the crowd addressed them, requesting them to buy tickets or alternatively

to leave the station without causing any trouble and, as a result of this, most of the people then went away. Many also then bought tickets, so a special train with 11 bogie coaches was arranged for them to leave Tiruchchiappalli at 12-30 hours, after which there was practically no trouble till the evening.

A constant watch was also maintained throughout the day by the Operating and Commercial Officers, but there was no report from any station indicating an abnormal sale of tickets, and, therefore, the necessity to run more special trains to Madras did not arise.

Reports, however, continued to be received from various stations about overcrowding of trains by ticketless travellers. Special instructions were issued to all stations to keep a special watch on overcrowding and not to permit roof travelling under any circumstances. Station Masters were instructed to take the assistance of the Railway Police and Railway Protection Force, wherever available, to control the crowds, and staff were also asked to take special precautions and stop trains out of course at such stations where there were bridges or other overhead structures ahead, warn all passengers about the over-head structures, and ensure that passengers did not travel on the roofs of the carriages. Further, special precautions were taken to stop all trains short of Villupuram to make doubly sure that there were no roof travellers as over-head electric traction commences from this station to Madras.

Despite these precautions over-crowding persisted and attempts were made by crowds to board UP trains at Tiruchchirappalli and travel on the roofs of carriages and on the buffers of the coaches etc. With the help of the Railway Police and the Railway Protection Force, however, as many ticketless passengers as possible were removed from UP trains, and it was ensured that all roof travellers were removed before UP trains started from Tiruchchirappalli.

As a result of all this and continued trouble with passengers en-route, all UP trains ran abnormally late, and Train Crews, Station, Railway Protection Force, and Railway Police Staff had a very difficult time trying to regulate the crowds—most of whom were ticketless passengers.

On the morning of the 4th February the Control Office at Tiruchchirappalli was informed that passengers were attempting to get on to the roofs of the coaches of Nos. 102 UP "Rameswaram—Madras Express" and No. 114 UP "Madurai—Madras Janata Express" while these trains were on the run and approaching Coleroon station. The Station Master, Coleroon was, therefore, instructed by Control to stop both these trains out of course at Coleroon, warn the passengers of the danger of the bridges ahead, and to start the trains only after all roof passengers had got down. Despite this, however, a little later Control received a report from Vallampadugai station that No. 114 UP "Express" had stopped near the gate lodge close by since some roof travellers had been injured, and that some were even feared to have been killed.

Later that day on receipt of information of the accident, he proceeded by road to Chidambaram, and, after visiting the injured at the hospitals at Chidambaram and Cuddalore he went to Coleroon station where a large crowd of local people met him. These, it was subsequently seen, had only come to complain about the hooliganism and rowdiness of the ticketless passengers on No. 114 UP "Express" and the looting and vandalism which they had indulged in. He was told by them that the passengers had not liked the train being stopped out of course at Coleroon station, and had, therefore, manhandled the Station Staff and the Train Crew and looted the refreshment stall on the platform and the wares of the vendors on the station road. According to them the unruly crowd, who were travelling even in the Guard's brake-van and on the engine of the train, had forced the Station Staff and the Train Crew to start the train immediately, threatening them with dire consequences, including murder, if they did not. The passengers on the engine also got hold of the regulator and threatened to run the train themselves after getting rid of the Train Crew, who were eventually forced to start the train—apparently out of fear for their lives and to prevent a serious catastrophe that might have resulted had the crowd on the engine taken it into their hands to start the train themselves.

13. **Inspector, Railway Police, Tiruchchirappalli, Shri R. Murugaiya** said that early on the morning of the 3rd February information was received about the death of Shri C. N. Annadurai followed by instructions to mobilise the Railway Police Force at the station.



In consequence, orders were issued to protect the trains, and to provide 2 constables on each important train instead of 1.

Crowds began coming to Tiruchchirappalli by about 6-00 hours that day (3rd February), and all day there were crowds in all the trains. As far as possible they, with the help of the Railway Protection Force, and Armed Reserve Police, managed to ensure that roof travellers were detained before the trains were started. Instructions were also issued to the Inspector, Railway Police, Thanjavur, to ensure that no roof travelling should be permitted.

The crowds that day were very unruly, but the situation was such as to preclude use of force to control them.

**14. Inspector Railway Protection Force, Tiruchchirappalli, Shri S. Renganathan** said that on the 3rd February crowds began to collect at Tiruchchirappalli demanding accommodation in trains to go to Madras. He went to the station along with about 15 men to deal with the crowds. The Divisional Superintendent arranged for a special train which left Tiruchchirappalli at about 12-30 hours. He (the Divisional Superintendent) had given instructions to the Inspector, Railway Police and himself not to permit roof travellers by any train, and accordingly they attended to incoming trains from Madurai side and from Rameswaram side and saw to it that all roof travellers were pulled down.

No. 114 UP "Express" arrived at 21-30 hours with roof passengers, but the latter were removed before the train started from Tiruchchirappalli at about 23-45 hours.

The crowds on all the trains were very unruly, and although they removed the roof travellers the latter ran after the trains when they started and climbed back on to the roofs of the carriages.

He informed his Sub-Inspectors at Thanjavur and Mayuram to assist the railway staff to control the crowds of these trains along with the Railway Police. Specific instructions were also given not to permit trains to start with roof travellers.

**15. Driver of No. 102 UP "Rameswaram—Madras Express", Shri V. Ramaswamy** said that he worked this train on the 4th February ex : Mayuram to Villupuram.

The train was stopped out of course at Coleroon at 8-35 hours because of roof travellers, and he warned them, with the help of the Guard and others, that there were bridges ahead, and that they should get down from the roofs of carriages at least till the train passed through the bridges, after which they could do what they wanted. At first the crowd would not listen, but he took a few ahead and showed them the first bridge, after which the roof travellers got down and walked across the first New Coleroon Bridge. The train then was taken slowly across the bridge, after which the passengers got back on to the roofs of the carriages. The same procedure was adopted when passing over the Old Coleroon Bridge and the 3rd bridge ahead i.e. the roof travellers got down and walked across each bridge after which he passed slowly over the bridges and the roof travellers got back on the roofs of the carriages.

In addition to the travellers on the roofs of the coaches there were also about 20-30 persons on the tender of his engine—he made it quite clear to the passengers that none should be at the front of the engine, on top of the engine cab, or inside the engine cab, if the firemen and he were to drive the engine. The men on the engine tender did not actually threaten him, and he managed to drive the train without any untoward incident.

**16. Guard of No. 114 UP "Express", Shri N. Swamidurai** said that he worked the train ex : Tiruchchirappalli.

The train left Tiruchchirappalli at 23-50 hours on the 3rd February after all the roof travellers had been brought down. At Thanjavur also the train was started only after ensuring that there were no roof passengers, but the train arrived at Mayuram over-crowded, and with a large number of passengers travelling on the roofs of the carriages. With the help of the Station Staff and the Police these roof travellers were brought down, but immediately the train started from Mayuram the crowd got on to the roofs of the carriages again. At Sirkazhi station there was nobody to render assistance except the Station Staff, and since the crowd was considerable he started the train from this station even though there were roof passengers.

At Coleroon station the train was stopped because No. 102 UP "Express", which was ahead, had not cleared the block section. The crowd then got down, abused the Station Master and himself, and went into the station building and meddled with the Block Instruments. They also threatened him with a knife. He warned the roof passengers that there were bridges ahead, but after the train started, they got back on to the roofs of the carriages even though he warned them that their lives would be in danger.

After leaving Coleroon station the train was momentarily stopped at the New Coleroon Bridge and then re-started. He could not look outside because of the crowd that was in the brake van along with him, who threatened to kill him if the train was not taken through to Madras.

The train then stopped at 9-45 hours with his T.L.R. almost clear of the Old Coleroon Bridge and the 2 coaches behind on the bridge. If (the train) had stopped as a result of somebody applying the vacuum brake. Hearing cries he, therefore, got down and saw a number of dead and injured. Most of the passengers then immediately ran away, and the dead and injured were put in the train with the help of some scouts who were on the train. The train eventually reached Chidambaram at 11-05 hours.

Questioned as to why he had started the train at Sirkazhi station when there were still passengers on the roofs of carriages, this witness replied that he appealed to the roof travellers to get down, but that they did not heed him, and with the abnormal conditions prevailing at the time he was helpless, and had to start the train, particularly as the crowd were threatening him.

17. **Brakesman of No. 114 UP "Express", Shri Manimozhi** said that right through from Tiruchchirappalli upto the time of the accident the train was over-crowded and with passengers on the roofs of the carriages, who generally got down when the train stopped and then got back when the train started from the stations.

He had been travelling in the brake-van along with the Guard and 2 Travelling Ticket Examiners. At Coleroon station other people jumped into the Guard's brake-van and he could not look out because he was wedged in by these people.

The train passed through Vallampadugai station slowly, and then, when passing over the Old Coleroon Bridge, the alarm chain was pulled and the train stopped.

18. **Travelling Ticket Examiner on No. 114 UP "Express" Shri S. Renngaraju** confirmed that all the way from Tiruchchirappalli there had been roof travellers, and that although they were made to get down at each station, they climbed back on to the roofs of the carriages as the train left each station. At Coleroon station also roof travellers were brought down and warned about the bridges ahead, but although they got down, they got back on to the roofs of the carriages when the train started.

After leaving Coleroon the train slowed down at the first big bridge over the New Coleroon river since there was a Watchman displaying a red flag. He heard the people on the roofs of the carriages abusing the Watchman for holding up the train, and although the Watchman warned them they paid no heed to him. As the train was passing through the second bridge over the Old Coleroon river he heard that some people had fallen off the train, and the train stopped.

19. **Travelling Ticket Examiner on No. 114 UP "Express" Shri K. S. Santhana-gopalan** said that he boarded the train at Tiruchchirappalli. The train arrived at the station overcrowded, and with a number of people travelling on the top of the engine and on the roofs of the carriages. At Tiruchchirappalli, Thanjavur and other stations en-route, including Mayuram, Sirkazhi and Coleroon, the Station Staff made attempts to get the roof travellers down from the train, but although they were successful to some extent the passengers just got down and climbed back on to the roofs of the carriages from the other side as the train started from these stations.

At Coleroon the Station Staff also warned the roof travellers that there were bridges ahead, but to no avail; as soon as the train started the passengers climbed back on to the roofs of the carriages. After leaving Coleroon the train stopped, or slowed down—he did not recall which

at the first big bridge over the New Coleroon river since there was a Watchman displaying a red flag. He heard the people on the roofs of the carriages abusing this Watchman for holding up the train, and although this Watchman warned them they paid no heed. As the train was passing through the second bridge over the Old Coleroon river they heard that some people had fallen off the train, so the Guard applied the Vacuum brakes and the train stopped.

He had been travelling with the Guard in the rear brake-van all along, and due to the over-crowding, and the number of roof travellers, it had not been possible for him to do any ticket checking from Tiruchchirappalli.

20. **Driver of No. 114 UP "Express" Shri M. Sankaralingam** said that he took over charge of No. 114 UP at Mayuram on the morning of the 4th February. When the train reached Mayuram it was seen that there were a number of people on the roofs of the carriages, and these were made to get down by the Station Master with the help of the Police. After the train started, however, the passengers climbed back on to the roofs of the carriages, and a number of them got on to his engine. When he objected to people getting on to the engine and was about to apply the brakes, he was threatened with a knife at his back, and told that if the train did not reach Madras by 13-00 hours that day he would be killed and buried along with Shri C. N. Annadurai.

Again at Sirkazhi station, he was threatened when he stopped the train and got off the engine, and was forcibly put back on the engine. This was repeated when the train stopped at Coleroon Home Signal and at Coleroon station he was abused and threatened by the men on the engine and the rest of the crowd and threatened with a knife to start the train. The Station Staff, the Guard, the travelling Ticket Examiners and he warned the roof travellers about the bridges ahead, but to no avail.

Leaving Coleroon at 9-27 hours the train was stopped by the Watchman at the New Coleroon Bridge and the train passed slowly through the bridge with the crowd crouching down on the roofs of the carriages. After passing this bridge the crowd hit him and said that as there was ample clearance he should proceed at 60 miles an hour; they would not believe him when he told them that the bridge ahead had less clearance, and threatened him with the pricker and shovel, and forcibly opened the regulator. To prevent a disaster, therefore, he folded his hands and said he would not stop, and took charge of the regulator again, passing over the Old Coleroon Bridge slowly—he was forcibly restrained from stopping the train at Vallampadugai. Immediately after passing the Old Coleroon Bridge there was a hue and cry, the vacuum dropped, and the train stopped. Immediately thereafter, the crowd got down and ran away in all directions.

21. **First Fireman of No. 114 UP "Express", Shri M. Poongavanam** said that all the way from Mayuram upto Coleroon there were roof travellers on the train, and also a number on the engine who assaulted the Driver and himself several times and threatened them with death if they did not hasten.

At Coleroon station the Driver warned the mob about the bridges ahead, and even said that he would stop the train and that after passing the bridges they could get on to the train again, but they only abused him and forcibly put him on to the engine when he got down to take the token.

Approaching New Coleroon Bridge they saw the Watchman displaying a red flag, and the Driver attempted to stop the train but was again assaulted and forcibly restrained from applying the brakes. Passing Vallampadugai station they saw the Station Master displaying a red flag, but again the crowd would not let the Driver stop and threatened his life.

After passing the Old Coleroon Bridge the train was stopped due to the accident that occurred, and immediately thereafter the crowd got down from the engine and the roofs of the carriages and ran away.

22. **Second Fireman of No. 114 UP "Express", Shri K. Perumal** said that all the way from Mayuram there had been a number of people travelling on the roofs of the carriages and on the engine and tender and all along the Driver had been threatened and assaulted by the crowd on the engine. He also confirmed that the train did not stop at Vallampadugai because the crowd threatened the Driver and forced him to proceed.

Immediately after the accident occurred all the people on the engine and on the roofs of the carriages ran away.

23. **A Passenger on 114 UP "Express", Shri Kannan** said that he had been travelling without a ticket on the engine, despite the fact that the Driver and others had told him to get off. He and others on the engine had shouted to the Driver to go fast, and not to stop till the train reached Villupuram. The Driver, therefore, could not be blamed for this accident.

24. **A Passenger on No. 114 UP "Express", Shri A. Packiam** said that he had been travelling in the train from Madurai without a ticket. At first he had attempted to get on to the roof of the train but had been chased off by the Police. As the train left the station, however, he and 8 others (who were together in a group) got on to the train. He travelled in the train up to Malliyam where he got down with others to get some food—but no food was to be had. Returning to the train he, along with about 15 others got on top of the engine cab, there being about another 30 persons on the tender and another 5 or so inside the engine with the Driver.

At Mayuram they demanded from the Station Master another Driver as their Driver was going slow. They also insisted that the train should run through to Villupuram without stopping, and that the train should reach Madras in time for them to pay their respects to Shri Annadurai. At this station also—Mayuram—the Reserve Police attempted to get them down from the engine and the roofs of the carriages, but they would not listen.

Both at Mayuram and Coleroon, where the train stopped, the Station Staff tried to get them down from the roofs of the carriages, and also warned them about the bridges ahead, but they paid no heed to them.

After leaving Coleroon the train passed over a long through girder bridge slowly, and since nothing happened, the Driver was urged to go fast over the next bridge where the accident actually occurred.

The accident was solely due to their anxiety to reach Madras as quickly as possible, and no blame what so ever could be attributed to the Railway Administration or to any Railway Staff.

The witness confirmed that the contents of the alleged interview given by him to the Press and reported in 'Mulai Murasu' of 5-2-1969 (Tiruchchirappalli Edition) was generally correct, except that he had not told the Reporter that :—

- (a) They had travelled on the roofs because there was no room in the train;
- (b) He went to the sugar cane fields;
- (c) He heard the man with the red flag at the first long bridge warn them about another bridge ahead;
- (d) He saw dead bodies strewn on the roofs of other carriages.

25. **A Passenger on No. 114 UP "Express" Shri K. Doraiswamy** said that he boarded the train at Mayuram that morning without a ticket as he was unable to purchase on account of the rush at the station. The train arrived at Mayuram with a number of people travelling on the roofs of all the coaches and on the engine. The Station Master tried to persuade the people to get down from the roofs of the carriages, but although they came down, they got back immediately the train started. The Driver was also threatened with a dagger and forced to start the train.

At Coleroon station he heard the Driver again asking the people to get down from the roofs of the carriages, warning them about the bridges ahead, but they did not heed him.

Approaching the first bridge, the Driver again warned the overhead passengers, who said that they would stoop down, and threatened the Driver to make him speed up the train. The train was going slowly through the second bridge when one person was knocked down by the overhead bracing, and others lifting themselves to see what had happened, were in turn struck by the overhead bracing and knocked down.

26. **Railway Police Head Constable, Kumbakonam, Shri N. Suryamurthy** said that when No. 114 UP "Express" arrived at Kumbakonam there were a number of passengers travelling on the roofs of the carriages and on the engine. The Station Staff, the Railway Protection Force and he tried to get the people down, but they paid no heed, and insisted that the train should start, and threatened all of them with dire consequences if it did not. As far as he was aware there was no constable on the train.

27. **Relieving Assistant Station Master Mayuram Shri K. S. Velayutham** said that No. 114 UP "Express" arrived at Mayuram at 7-53 hours on the 4th February with about 500 passengers on the roofs of the carriages and on the engine and tender. On arrival the crowd looted the refreshment stalls. He tried to get the roof travellers down with the help of the Railway Police and about 10 Special Armed Police who came to the station, but they all failed.

The crowd threatened to kill him if he did not start the train immediately, and to save his own life and railway property, he had been forced to start the train at 8-20 hours even though there were passengers still on the roofs of the carriages.

28. **Assistant Station Master, Mayuram, Shri K. S. Jambulingam** generally confirmed what the Relieving Station Master Shri K. S. Velayudam stated. He also said that he saw the Driver being rudely manhandled by the crowd, who pushed him from the platform on to his engine. In such circumstances the crowd could not be controlled and the train had to be started.

29. **Sub-Inspector of Police, Mayuram, Shri V. Somu** said that at about 7-15 hours on the 4th February he was requested over the telephone by the Railway Police to help in dealing with the crowd on No. 114 UP "Express". He accordingly went to the station with 2 sections of Armed Reserve Police (18 men) and brought down the roof travellers from the train, but immediately the train started, the crowd ran up to the train and got back on to the roofs of the carriages.

This was the only train on the 4th February for which his assistance had been sought by the Railway Police, and the crowd on the train appeared to consist largely of "Goondas", and those without any ostensible means of livelihood.

30. **Senior Rakshak, Mayuram, Shri A. Susairaj** said that at about 4-00 hours on the 4th February he was instructed by the Assistant Sub-Inspector, Railway Protection Force to take charge on the platform at Mayuram, and to co-operate with the Railway Staff in controlling the crowds.

No. 114 UP "Express" arrived over-crowded with passengers on the roofs of the coaches and on the engine. With the help of about 10 Reserve Police with lathis, and about 10 Railway Police, attempts were made to get the crowd down. They did get down at first, but only to go to the refreshment stall which they looted, and, as the train was slowly leaving the station, the crowd got back on to the roofs of the carriages.

With the small Police Force totalling about 20 it was quite impossible to have controlled the crowd and stopped the train from proceeding as otherwise a very serious situation would have arisen.

31. **Head Constable, Railway Police, Mayuram, Shri R. Govindaswamy** said that on the 3rd February instructions were received to mobilise Railway Police Staff for dealing with crowds expected to be travelling towards Madras. Because of this mobilisation no constables were booked to travel on trains since their services were otherwise required.

On the morning of the 4th February No. 114 UP "Express" arrived in an over crowded condition, with a large number of passengers on the roofs of carriages and on the engine. He accordingly telephoned the Local Police and two sections of the Armed Reserve Police (about 15 constables with lathis) arrived under 2 Sub-Inspectors. They asked the roof travellers to get down and warned them of the bridges ahead, but although they initially got down no sooner did the train start from the station than they all rushed back and climbed once again on to the roofs of the carriages.

In his opinion, if the train had been stopped and permission not given for it to start because of the roof travellers, a serious situation might have arisen.

32. **Assistant Station Master, Coleroon, Shri K. Shanmugam** said that No. 102 UP "Express" arrived at Coleroon station at 8—30 hours on the 4th February. There were roof travellers on the train, and he managed to persuade most of them to get down, but some did not obey. The train left Coleroon at 8—45 hours.

No. 114 UP "Express" arrived at the station at 9—14 hours, also with a number of roof travellers. He requested the roof travellers to get down, but many of them did so only to manhandle him and the Guard and the Pointsmen, the latter's red flags being torn to shreds. The crowd also attempted to interfere with the Block Instrument and insisted that the train should proceed even though the section ahead had not yet been cleared by No. 102 UP "Express". When the token was eventually obtained after No. 102 UP "Express" had cleared the section, he handed over the same to the Driver, who was bodily taken by the crowd and forced on to the engine. He also heard some of the passengers on the engine threatening the Driver, saying that they would throw him into the fire box if he did not run at 60 m.p.h. He warned the people that there were 3 bridges ahead which would endanger the roof travellers, but although some of them got down, others remained on the roof. The train started slowly at 9—25 hours, and many then got back on to the roofs of the carriages after the train started.

After the train left he informed Vallampadugai to exhibit a danger signal on account of the roof travellers.

Questioned as to whether he was aware that there are definite orders that when low overhead structures like bridges had to be passed by a train the train should not be started from the station if passengers were on the roofs of carriages, this witness admitted that he was aware of such orders. On the day in question, however, when No. 114 UP "Express" stopped at his station the Guard, the Driver and he were all threatened and manhandled by the crowd, and with the situation obtaining at the time he was unable to do anything.

33. **Pointsmen at Coleroon, Shri V. Manickam** confirmed that there were a large number of roof travellers on No. 114—UP "Express" on the 4th February, and that a number were also on the engine. The crowd were very unruly, and tore the red flag that he was displaying because the section ahead had not been cleared by No. 102 UP "Express". The crowd also looted the shops, and manhandled the Station Master, the Guard and the Driver, the last mentioned being threatened with dire consequences if he did not start the train immediately.

34. **Pointsmen at Coleroon, Shri R. Kothandapani** confirmed that the Guard and the Station Master had been manhandled by the crowd, who had torn his red flag and shirt as well.

35. **5 other persons, including Shri G. Ethiraja Mudaliar, ex-President, Coleroon Panchayat Board** also gave statements generally to the effect that No. 114 UP "Express" had a number of roof travellers, and that although they were requested and urged to get down they paid no heed to the warning regarding the bridges ahead, but rather manhandled and threatened the Station Staff and the Train Crew, insisting that the train start at once.

36. **Watchman at New Coleroon Bridge, Shri A. Sambandam** said that No. 114 UP "Express" was stopped by him by display of a red flag on the 4th February because of roof travellers. A number of passengers on the engine, however, got down and snatched away the red flag and were angry with him for having stopped the train, which then crossed the bridge slowly after the roof travellers crouched down at the request of the Guard and the Driver.

37. **Clerk-in-Charge Vallampadugai station, Shri T. S. Kuppuswamy** said that on the 4th February he had been informed by Coleroon station that No. 114 UP "Express" had roof passengers, and that the train should be stopped. He, accordingly, displayed a red flag to the over-crowded train with roof travellers as it passed through his station slowly, but some of the passengers abused him, and threw stones at him and shouted for him to display a green flag.

38. **Shri C. Sivanandam**, who was at Vallampadugai station that morning, confirmed that the Station Master displayed a red flag to No. 114 UP "Express", but that the train, which had a number of people on the engine and on the roofs of the carriages, did not stop.

## V. OBSERVATIONS

39. **Overhead Clearance at Bridges Nos. 687 (over the New Coleroon river) and 685 (over the Old Coleroon river where the accident occurred).**—On the morning of the 7th February I carefully checked the minimum overhead clearance above rail level at the above 2 bridges. The results were as follows :—

- (a) **Bridge No. 687 (14 × 150 feet girders).**—The minimum clearance was at the end portals of the girders which were 16—0 above rail level.
- (b) **Bridge No. 685 (2 × 100 feet girders).**—The clearance of the overhead bracings varied from 12'—6" to 12'—6½" above rail level.

## VI. DISCUSSION

40. **Time of the accident.**—The Guard and the Driver of No. 114 UP "Express" said that the accident occurred at 9—45 hours. According to the Guard and the Driver the train left Coleroon station at 9—27 hours—though the Assistant Station Master, Coleroon gives the time as 9—25 hours. The Guard also said that the train passed through Vallampadugai station at 9—39 hours, the Clerk-in-Charge at this station giving the time as about 9—40 hours. The distance from Vallampadugai station to the bridge where the accident occurred is about a kilometre, and the evidence is to the effect that the train was proceeding slowly at the time.

Accordingly it is accepted that the accident must have occurred at about 9—45 hours.

41. **Speed of the train.**—There is no clear evidence as to the speed of the train when the accident occurred, and as the speed recorder was not functioning at the time the speed could not be established later. However, the evidence is to the effect that the train was proceeding slowly at the time, and in the circumstances prevailing it is apparent that this was indeed the case.

42. **Overhead clearance at Bridge No. 685.**—Para 10, Chapter I—General—of the Schedule of Dimensions, Metre Gauge, reads as follows :—

"10. Minimum height above rail level at centre of track for overhead structures 3810 mm.  
(12 ft. 6 in.)"

From para 39 above it will be seen that the minimum height of the overhead bracing of this bridge was 12'—6", so there was no infringement of the Standard Dimensions.

43. **Responsibility of the Railway Administration.**—There have been 2 serious accidents of a similar nature in the past on the North-Eastern Railway, and the Railway Board issued orders in 1963 in the matter. A copy of the Board's Circular No. 62-TT/V/1/13 dated 16-2-1963 addressed to all General Managers is attached as Annexure-II, from which it will be seen that the Board had decided that whenever such roof travelling occurred and a fixed structure had to be passed, the train was not to be started from the station in rear of the fixed structure if efforts to persuade or force the roof passengers to come down failed.

It is evident from the statements of the Divisional Superintendent and the Inspectors of Railway Police and Railway Protection Force, Tiruchchirappalli that the Railway Administration took whatever action was possible to implement these orders of the Board and

ensure that roof travellers were brought down. The circumstances were such as to preclude advance arrangements being made to deal with this sudden rush of traffic to Madras occasioned by the demise of Shri C. N. Annadurai, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, early on the morning of the 3rd February. The Railway Administration, however, did take whatever steps were possible to clear the traffic by arranging a special train with 11 bogie coaches from Tiruchchirapalli at 12—30 hours on the 3rd February, and strengthening other trains to Madras with as many as 25 additional coaches. It is also clear that stations were advised to implement the Board's Circular, and not to permit roof travelling. Unfortunately, however, the crowds were very unruly, and considerable force would have been necessary to control the same which was not possible in view of the occasion—the sad demise of Shri C. N. Annadurai.

I am, therefore, satisfied that the Railway Administration took whatever steps were possible in the matter to cope with the sudden situation that arose, and further that they took all possible steps to prevent roof travelling.

**44. Responsibility of the Station Staff and the Train Crew.**—Here again the evidence is clear that the Railway Staff and Train Crew did their utmost to remove roof travellers from the train, obtaining the help of the Railway Police and the Railway Protection Force in the matter wherever these were available. The unruly crowd, however, were not in a mood to be reasoned with, and as fast as the roof travellers were brought down from the train at stations, they climbed back again on to the roofs of the carriages immediately the train started. The Railway Staff at wayside stations and the Train Crew were also manhandled whenever the train stopped, and the Driver of the train was intimidated with a knife to his back, and, as a last resort, was forced to drive the train lest the crowd took charge of the train themselves—as they apparently did at one stage by seizing the regulator on the engine.

I am, therefore, satisfied that the Railway Staff and the Train Crew cannot, in the circumstances, be blamed in any way for this tragic accident.

**45. Responsibility for the accident.**—It will be seen from the foregoing paragraphs that the Railway Administration and the Railway Staff took all possible steps to prevent the roof travelling, but the mood of the crowd was such that they were helpless in the matter. It is clear, therefore, that the unfortunate roof travellers themselves were solely responsible for this accident, and this has also been more or less admitted by the 3 whose statements have been summarised in paras 23, 24 and 25 above.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

**46.** From the evidence available I have no hesitation in concluding that the accident was brought about as a result of the roof travellers themselves insisting on travelling on the roofs of the carriages and on the engine of the train, and that they themselves are solely responsible.

In the circumstances prevailing, I have also to conclude that the Railway Administration and the Railway Staff are not to be blamed for this accident.

**47.** The relief arrangements were satisfactory. Several have drawn attention to the help rendered by the Scouts on the train in picking up the injured and dead at the site of the accident. No doubt the Railway Administration will convey its appreciation to them, and also to the Civil Doctors at Cuddalore and Chidambaram who responded so promptly to the call for assistance.

Yours faithfully,

(Sd.) H. S. HART

*Additional Commissioner of Railway Safety.*

Bangalore, 4-3-1969.



*Recommendations/Incidental Observations and recommendations made by the Commission of Railways  
Safety in connection with accident that occurred on the 4th February, 1969, to unauthorised travellers  
on the engine and roofs of coaches of No. 114 Up Madurai-Madras Janta Express between  
Vallambadugai and Chidambaram stations of Southern Railway*

1. No stretchers were available with the Guard of No. 114 Up Express for picking up the injured and the dead at the site of the accident. It is understood that this is a result of orders from the Railway Board. It is not known as to why the Board have issued orders withdrawing stretchers from passenger trains, but in any case it is recommended that this item should form part of the equipment with every Guard of a passenger train.

2. The major girder bridges on this section are provided with 2 fixed ends on some piers and 2 free ends on others. It is possible that this arrangement will result in the piers with 2 fixed ends being subjected to increased longitudinal forces particularly by Diesel and Electric locomotives. The matter may be investigated by the R.D.S.O. as this practice apparently obtains at other bridges as well on the old South Indian Railway system.

*Railway Board have remarked as under on the above noted Recommendations etc.*

1. The matter in regard to provision of stretchers in the brake van of the passenger trains have been examined by the Board and it has not been found feasible to provide stretchers in brakevans.

2. The matter has been examined. The position is that theoretical investigations carried out by the railway on the strength of substructures of the bridges having either a fixed or all free bearings on each pier, have shown that the stresses induced in the piers under ML standard of loading (taking into account the longitudinal forces transmitted at the fixed end bearings) are within permissible limits. In the case of bridges with even number of spans, the existing arrangement has the added advantage of free bearings on both abutments, whereby the stresses in the abutments are also kept within safe limits. In the few bridges with odd number of spans, one of the abutments is with fixed bearings, and even in these cases the overstresses are found within reasonable limits, except in the case of bridge No. 579 (15 x 132'-0") on Aikonam-Raichur section. The theoretical stability of such abutments could be improved by interchanging the free and fixed bearings of the abutting span; but in the case of bridge No. 579 this is not practicable on account of differences in the pedestals of the free and fixed bearings. However, it has been verified by detailed inspection that the abutments in question are in good condition, and as such, no alteration in the arrangement of bearings is considered necessary for the present.

In a few other bridges also, there are differences in height between free and fixed end bearings, which makes it difficult to interchange them without replacing pedestals.

From what has been stated in the foregoing, it will seen that for the bridges in question the existing arrangement of bearings can safely be allowed to continue.

## ANNEXURE I

*Translation of an Extract from "Malai Murasu" a Tamil Daily from Tiruchi-Thanjai dated 5-2-1969*

Shri Packiyam injured in this accident stated :—

I am from Panayur near Madurai. My father's name is Shri Andi Ambalam. I am working as a Milk Vendor in the Madurai Milk Supply Scheme.

*special attachment on Anna.*

I have a special attachment on Anna. On hearing the news of his death I felt very sorry.

I had an uncontrollable desire to see his dead body as a last chance.

I decided to go to Madras.

*Brother-in-law.*

My Brother-in-law Pondy also desired to come. Both of us left for Madras on 3rd by day by Janata Express which left Madurai at 2—40 hours.

As there was no room inside the train we sat on the roof and travelled. We had a total sum of Rs. 10 only for expenses. Therefore we did not purchase tickets.

Apart from us several others climbed on the roof and travelled.

The railway officials told us not to travel on roofs and warned that there will be danger.

But we did not pay heed to what they said as we were anxious to see Anna's face as a last time.

They warned us at several places like this. But we did not mind it.

*Hunger-Hunger.*

We did not get anything to eat. Therefore at the halting places of the train we broke sugarcane from the sugarcane gardens and appeased our hunger.

The train left Mayavaram and reached Coleroon. The officials insisted us very much to get down.

They said—Dangerous bridges have to be passed through—get down.

We refused.

First an iron girder bridge (new Coleroon) came. We were sitting as usual.

There was no danger as there was a gap of half foot between us and the top bracings.

Moreover, on arrival at the bridge a railway servant showing a red flag told to go slow. Accordingly the train passed slowly.

He warned us that after passing that bridge another bridge comes next.

*Black smoke.*

After this, lot of black smoke was coming out of the train.

Some had climbed on the engine also. What is coming in front was not known.

"The next bridge is coming very close. Brother-in-law" I said to my brother-in-law.

Afterwards I laid down close to the roof of the coach. I did not get up till the train passed the bridge.

After passing the bridge I saw my Brother-in-law Pandiyan who was seated by my side and was not seen.

I saw several persons lying half dead on the roof of the coach.

Moving slowly I went to.....and fell down unconscious. After reaching the station by sprinkling water on my face made to regain consciousness.

I saw my Brother-in-law with injuries on the shoulder blade. The pain was unbearable. We were admitted into the hospital.

So he said.

ANNEXURE II

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS

(Railway Board)

No. 62-TT/V/1/13

New Delhi, Dated 16-2-63.

The General Manager,  
All Indian Government Railways.

SUB.—*Unauthorised travel—Travelling on roofs—Prevention thereof.*

Recently, an unfortunate case occurred where the passengers, not finding room in the compartments due to rush of mela traffic, had managed to climb on the roof-tops of the coaches and despite repeated efforts by the Railway staff to de-roof them somehow managed to remain there. Eventually, they were hit by the upper bracings of a bridge enroute, resulting in some being injured fatally and others grievously.

2. This is a matter over which the public and the Parliament have expressed great concern and the Board consider that some effective measures are necessary to prevent this type of occurrence.

3. Accordingly, the Board have decided that whenever such travelling on roofs occurs during melas etc. and a fixed structure has to be passed by the train on the roof of which such passengers are perched, the Railway authorities should not start the train from the station in rear of the fixed structure if efforts to persuade or force the roof passengers to come down fail. Only after all passengers on the roof have come down, must the train start.

4. The Board also desire that a special para to this effect should be incorporated whenever instructions in regard to arrangements for mela traffic and other congregations are issued from the Divisional/District Offices. Please acknowledge receipt.

(Sd.) K. D. MADAN

Dy. Director, Traffic Trans. (A & R), Railway Board

D.A.—Nil

Copy to :—

(i) The Commissioner of Railway Safety, Simla-3

(ii) The Additional Commissioner of Railway Safety, Calcutta/Lucknow/Bangalore/Bombay.  
Copy

