GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1625
TO BE ANSWERED ON 30.07.2025

TRAIN ACCIDENT NEAR THIRUVALLUR, TAMIL NADU

1625. SHRI K SUDHAKARAN:
SHRI RAJA A:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the fire incident involving a crude oil tanker on a freight train near Thiruvallur, Tamil Nadu, on July 13, 2025, including the cause of the fire and the extent of damage to railway infrastructure;

(b) whether any enquiry has been ordered, if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government has investigated reports of a crack in the railway track near the incident site and if so, the measures taken/being taken to address potential sabotage or track safety issues;

(d) whether safety audit of these tracks under Southern Railway was ever done, if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether Railways would order for safety audit and preventive maintenance of all tracks including signal and communication system in Railway, if so, the details thereof;

(f) the details of the steps taken to mitigate the disruption caused to train services, including the cancellation, diversion and short-termination of trains on the Chennai–Arakkonam route;

(g) the safety measures being implemented to prevent similar incidents on freight trains carrying hazardous materials; and

(h) the timeline for restoring full train operations on the affected route and any compensation planned for affected passengers?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF RAILWAYS, INFORMATION & BROADCASTING AND ELECTRONICS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

(SHRI ASHWINI VAISHNAW)

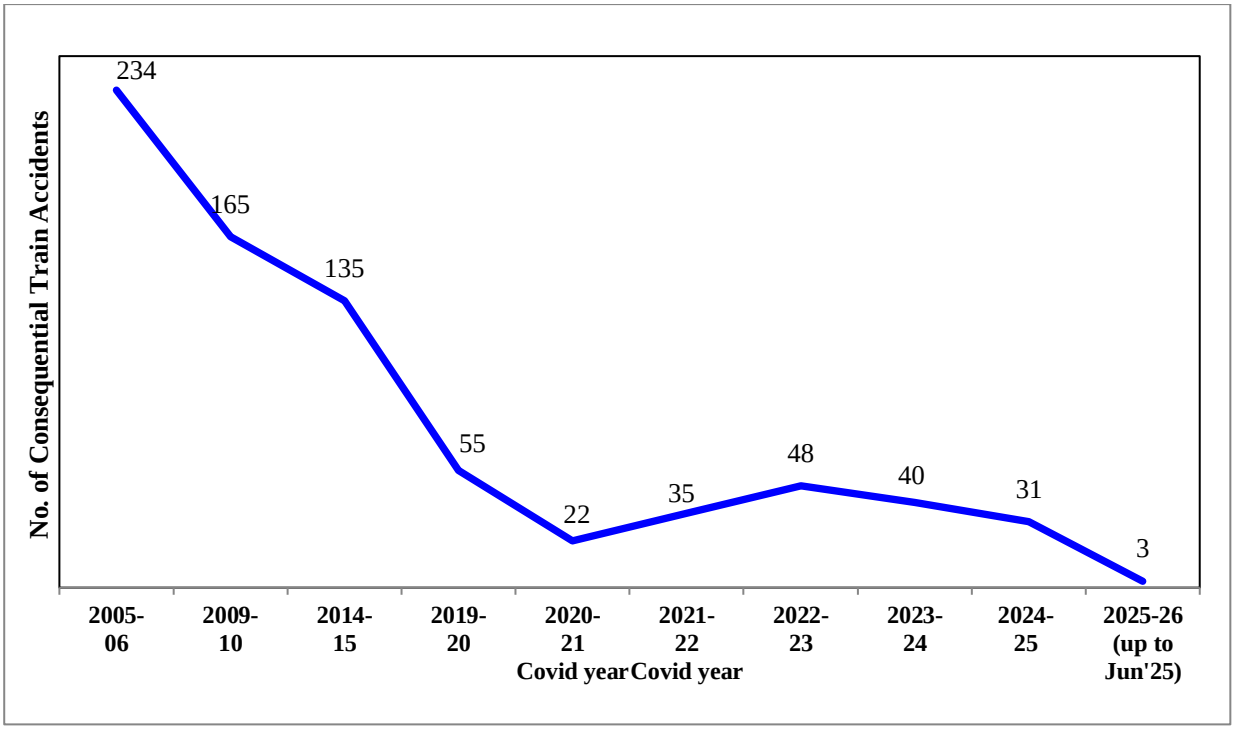
(a) to (h): On 13-07-2025 at 05.10 hours, a freight train carrying petroleum products caught fire at kilometer 42/10A-16A near Thiruvallur station over Chennai Division of Southern Railway. In the incident, 18 wagons of the train suffered damage. At the location of the incident, there was damage to the tracks (sleepers, rails, turnout switch), electrical equipment (overhead equipment mast, catenary and contact wires) and signaling equipment (point machine, bond wires). The cost of damage to the railway infrastructure due to the incident has been estimated to be roughly ₹1.69 crore. An inquiry committee has been constituted by Southern Railway to inquire into the incident.

Safety is accorded the highest priority on Indian Railways. As a consequence of various safety measures taken over the years, there has been a steep decline in the number of accidents. Consequential Train Accidents have reduced from 135 in 2014-15 to 31 in 2024-25 as shown in the graph below.

It may be noted that the Consequential Train Accidents during the period 2004-14 was 1711 (average 171 per annum), which has declined to 31 in 2024-25 and further to 3 in 2025-26 (upto June, 2025).

Another important index showing improved safety in train operations is Accidents Per Million Train Kilometer (APMTKM) which has reduced from 0.11 in 2014-15 to 0.03 in 2024-25, indicating an improvement of approx. 73% during the said period.

The number of consequential train accidents during the last five years are depicted in the Graph below.



The various safety measures taken to enhance safety in train operations are as under:-

i. **On Indian Railways, the expenditure on Safety related activities has increased over the years as under:-**

Expenditure on Safety related activities (Rs. in Cr.)					
	2013-14 (Act.)	2022-23 (Act.)	2023-24 (Act.)	RE 2024-25	BE 2025-26
Maintenance of Permanent Way & Works	9,172	18,115	20,322	21,800	23,316
Maintenance of Motive Power and Rolling Stock	14,796	27,086	30,864	31,540	30,666
Maintenance of Machines	5,406	9,828	10,772	12,112	12,880
Road Safety LCs and ROBs/ RUBs	1,986	5,347	6,662	8,184	7,706
Track Renewals	4,985	16,326	17,850	22,669	22,800
Bridge Works	390	1,050	1,907	2,130	2,169
Signal & Telecom Works	905	2,456	3,751	6,006	6,800
Workshops Incl. PUs and Misc. expenditure on Safety	1,823	7,119	9,523	9,581	10,134
Total	39,463	87,327	1,01,651	1,14,022	1,16,470

ii. Electrical/Electronic Interlocking Systems with centralized operation of points and signals have been provided at 6,635 stations up to 30.06.2025 to reduce accident due to human failure.

iii. Interlocking of Level Crossing (LC) Gates has been provided at 11,096 level Crossing Gates up to 30.06.2025 for enhancing safety at LC gates.

iv. Complete Track Circuiting of stations to enhance safety by verification of track occupancy by electrical means has been provided at 6,640 stations up to 30.06.2025.

v. Kavach is a highly technology intensive system, which requires safety certification of highest order. Kavach was adopted as a

National ATP system in July 2020. Kavach is provided progressively in phased manner. Kavach has already been deployed on 1548 RKm on South Central Railway and North Central Railway. Presently, the work is in progress on Delhi-Mumbai and Delhi-Howrah corridors (approximately 3000 RKm). Track side works on these routes have been completed on about 2200 RKm as on 30.06.2025. Regular trials are being done on these sections.

vi. Detailed instructions on issues related with safety of Signalling, e.g. mandatory correspondence check, alteration work protocol, preparation of completion drawing, etc. have been issued.

vii. System of disconnection and reconnection for S&T equipment as per protocol has been re-emphasized.

viii. All locomotives are equipped with Vigilance Control Devices (VCD) to improve alertness of Loco Pilots.

ix. Retro-reflective sigma boards are provided on the mast which is located two OHE masts prior to the signals in electrified territories to alert the crew about the signal ahead when visibility is low due to foggy weather.

x. A GPS based Fog Safety Device (FSD) is provided to loco pilots in fog affected areas which enables loco pilots to know the distance of the approaching landmarks like signals, level crossing gates, etc.

xi. Modern track structure consisting of 60kg, 90 Ultimate Tensile Strength (UTS) rails, Prestressed Concrete Sleeper (PSC) Normal/Wide base sleepers with elastic fastening, fan shaped layout turnout on PSC sleepers, Steel Channel/H-beam Sleepers on girder bridges is used while carrying out primary track renewals.

xii. **Mechanisation of track laying activity through use of track machines like PQRS, TRT, T-28 etc. to reduce human errors.**

xiii. **Maximizing supply of 130m/260m long rail panels for increasing progress of rail renewal and avoiding welding of joints, thereby improving safety.**

xiv. **Ultrasonic Flaw Detection (USFD) testing of rails to detect flaws and timely removal of defective rails.**

xv. **Laying of longer rails, minimizing the use of Alumino Thermic Welding and adoption of better welding technology for rails i.e., Flash Butt Welding.**

xvi. **Monitoring of track geometry by OMS (Oscillation Monitoring System) and TRC (Track Recording Cars).**

xvii. **Patrolling of railway tracks to look out for weld/rail fractures.**

xviii. **The use of Thick Web Switches and Weldable CMS Crossing in turnout renewal works.**

xix. **Inspections at regular intervals are carried out to monitor and educate staff for observance of safe practices.**

xx. **Web based online monitoring system of track assets viz. Track database and decision support system has been adopted to decide rationalized maintenance requirement and optimize inputs.**

xxi. **Detailed instructions on issues related with safety of Track, e.g. integrated block, corridor block, worksite safety, monsoon precautions, etc. have been issued.**

xxii. **Preventive maintenance of railway assets (Coaches & Wagons) is undertaken to ensure safe train operations.**

xxiii. **Replacement of conventional ICF design coaches with LHB design coaches is being done.**

xxiv. **All unmanned level crossings (UMLCs) on Broad Gauge (BG) route have been eliminated by January 2019.**

xxv. **Safety of Railway Bridges is ensured through regular inspection of Bridges. The requirement of repair/rehabilitation of Bridges is taken up based upon the conditions assessed during these inspections.**

xxvi. **Indian Railways has displayed Statutory "Fire Notices" for widespread passenger information in all coaches. Fire posters are provided in every coach so as to educate and alert passengers regarding various Do's and Don'ts to prevent fire. These include messages regarding not carrying any inflammable material, explosives, prohibition of smoking inside the coaches, penalties etc.**

xxvii. **Production Units are providing Fire detection and suppression system in newly manufactured Power Cars and Pantry Cars, Fire and Smoke detection system in newly manufactured coaches. Progressive fitment of the same in existing coaches is also underway by Zonal Railways in a phased manner.**

xxviii. **Regular counselling and training of staff is undertaken.**

xxix. **Concept of Rolling Block introduced in Indian Railways (Open Lines) General Rules vide Gazette notification dated 30.11.2023, wherein work of integrated maintenance/ repair/replacement of assets is planned up to 52 weeks in advance on rolling basis and executed as per plan.**

Safety-related Works: The details of the Safety related works related to better maintenance practices, Technological improvements, better

infrastructure and rolling stock etc. undertaken by Railways are tabulated below:-

S.N.	Item	2004-05 to 2013-14	2014-15 to 2024-25 (till March 25)	2014-25 Vs. 2004-14
	Technological improvements			
1.	Use of high-quality rails (60 Kg) (Km)	57,450 Km	1.43 Lakh Km	More than 2 times
2.	Longer Rail Panels (260m) (Km)	9,917 Km	77,522 Km	Nearly 8 times
3.	Electronic Interlocking (Stations)	837 Stations	3,691 Stations	More than 4 times
4.	Fog Pass Safety Devices (Nos.)	As on 31.03.14: 90 Nos.	As on 31.03.25: 25,939	288 times
5.	Thick Web Switches (Nos.)	Nil	28,301 Nos.	
	Better maintenance practices			
1.	Primary Rail Renewal (Track Km)	32,260 Km	49,941 Km	1.5 times
2.	USFD (Ultra Sonic Flaw detection) Testing of Welds (Nos.)	79.43 Lakh	2 Crore	More than 2 times
3.	Weld failures (Nos.)	In 2013-14: 3699 Nos.	In 2024-25: 370 Nos.	90 % reduction
4.	Rail fractures (Nos.)	In 2013-14: 2548 Nos.	In 2024-25: 289 Nos.	More than 88% reduction
	Better infrastructure and Rolling stock			
1.	New Track KM added (Track km)	14,985 Nos.	34,428 Km	More than 2 times
2.	Flyovers (RoBs)/ Underpasses (RUBs) (Nos.)	4,148 Nos.	13,808 Nos.	More than 3 times
3.	Unmanned Level crossings (nos.) on BG	As on 31.03.14: 8948	As on 31.03.24: Nil (All eliminated by 31.01.19)	Removed
4.	Manufacture of LHB Coaches (Nos.)	2,337 Nos.	42,677	More than 18 times

Intra-railway safety audits were conducted in the section comprising the location of the incident in February 2024 and before that in December 2017. In both these audits, no specific deficiencies were reported regarding track and signal and communication system at the location where the incident took place. These audits are over and above the regular inspections that have been conducted as prescribed in Indian Railways manuals.

In the wake of the incident, Southern Railway made all round efforts to minimize effects on its services. As a result, 94.6 percent of scheduled services were maintained. This was made possible by suitably diverting inter-zonal and long distance trains by providing alternate stoppages for the benefit of travelling passengers. In addition, Southern Railway efficiently planned and utilised the available lie-over rakes of long distance trains to run the highly patronized services towards Mangalore and Alappuzha which otherwise would have got cancelled due to the want of rakes. Special trains operated towards Coimbatore from Chennai Central for stranded passengers as there were no regular services from Chennai Central towards Coimbatore. The following steps were taken to mitigate the disruption caused to train services, including the cancellation, diversion and short-termination of trains on the Chennai- Arakkonam route:

i. **Arrangement of Special Buses- At Arakkonam Junction (AJJ), a total of 20 buses were arranged to bridge stranded passengers from Train Nos. 17654, 16022, 12674, and 12672. Through these arrangements, approximately 750 passengers, including EMU passengers, were safely transhipped from AJJ to Avadi (AVD), Ambattur (ABU), and Chennai, ensuring minimal inconvenience**

during the disruption. At Katpadi (KPD), 23 State Government buses were deployed to facilitate the movement of passengers from multiple affected trains, including Train Nos. 12686, 12696, 12608, 22641, 22698, 12680, 12028, 12698, 12295, 22305, 18189, and 22638. These arrangements enabled around 1,500 passengers to be transported from KPD to Chennai, with drop-off points organized at Koyambedu Bus Stand for onward connectivity.

ii. **Catering services: Around 1500 numbers of water bottles and snacks were distributed to the passengers of the short-terminated trains at AJJ and KPD.**

iii. **EMU Services: In addition to bus bridging services, seven EMU trains were operated via the AJJ-CJ-CGL route as an alternative diversionary measure. This arrangement benefited over 3,000 passengers, providing safe and convenient travel options despite the operational challenges.**

iv. **Connection through Vande Bharat Express: Train No.20644 Vande Bharat Express (CBE to MAS) was operated via diverted route of CGL, AJJ so as to connect the trains which started from AJJ (Partially cancelled between MAS &AJJ) viz, Trivandrum mail (MAS -TVC)Train No.12623 and Shatabdi Express (MAS-SBC) Train No.12027.**

v. **Help desks: To manage passenger needs and disseminate information, help desks were established at Control Room and across important stations viz., MAS, MS, KPD, JTJ, TRT, AJJ, CGL and GDR.**

vi. **Additional counters: Additional counters were operated at MAS, MS with increased number of staff for managing the excessive crowd approaching for refunds, as 17 trains were cancelled, 34 trains**

were diverted and 4 trains originated from AJJ/KPD instead of MAS. A total refund to the tune of Rs.1.5 cr was made in PRS counters. Apart from these, full refunds of around Rs.80,000/- were made to unreserved passengers.

Immediate steps were taken by Southern Railway to contain the damage from the incident and work towards restoration. Restoration of traffic was completed on 13.07.2025. While the Down slow line was restored at 21:25 hrs on 13.07.2025 and the Up slow line were restored at 00:47 hrs on 14.07.2025. Down and Up fast lines were restored at 23:50 hrs on 14.07.2025.

To ensure safety of track, inspection, maintenance and renewal of track is accorded the utmost priority in Indian Railways. There are well-laid down inspection and monitoring schedules and guidelines stipulated in Indian Railways manuals for the same. These are adhered to strictly and records are maintained. These records are permanent and are crosschecked by designated authorities. To ensure safety of track, multiple inspection schedules have been prescribed for all components of track structure at various levels. Findings in inspections are followed up and necessary action taken well within time for upkeep, maintenance and renewal before any defect can occur. Inspections, monitoring and rectification as above are integral part of the duty and responsibility of permanent way engineers of Indian Railways.

'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India and, as such, State Governments are responsible for prevention, detection, registration and investigation of crime and maintaining law and order etc. on Indian

Railways through their law enforcement agencies viz. Government Railway Police (GRP)/District Police. However, Railway Protection Force (RPF) supplements the efforts of GRP/District Police to provide better protection and security of passenger area and passengers and for matters connected therewith and in order to prevent incident of sabotage over Indian Railways, following steps are being taken by Indian Railways:-

i. **Regular State Level Security Committee of Railways (SLSCR) meetings are being conducted, which have been constituted in each State under the chairmanship of Director Generals/Commissioners of Police of respective States/Union territory with representatives of RPF, GRP and Intelligence units. Further, close liaison is made by RPF with the State Police/GRP authorities at all levels to control crime, registration of cases, their investigation and maintenance of Law & Order in Railway premises as well as on running trains with focus on sabotage incidents and sharing of intelligence. Effective steps are being undertaken to prevent such incidents.**

ii. **Besides Central & State Intelligence agencies, Intelligence Units of RPF i.e. Crime Intelligence Branch (CM) & Special Intelligence Branch (SIB) have been sensitized and instructed to collect intelligence and take necessary action in coordination with Police authorities for detection and prevention of sabotage attempts.**

iii. **Frequent patrolling of identified black spots and vulnerable sections are being done by Railwaymen, RPF, GRP & Civil Police**

iv. **Regular drives are conducted to remove material lying near the railway tracks, which can potentially be used by miscreants for putting obstructive those materials on the track.**

v. **The people living near railway tracks are being sensitized about the consequences of putting foreign material on tracks, removing rail components etc. and are requested to keep watch and report any suspected activity immediately.**

vi. **Special teams are formed to patrol high risk areas, vulnerable sections and sharing of intelligence to mitigate threats effectively.**

Carriage of goods by Indian Railways is done under the provisions of the Railways Act, 1989. In exercise of the powers conferred by Sections 67 and 87 of the Act, conditions for conveyance of dangerous goods over Indian Railways have been notified by the Government. These include comprehensive safety measures for carriage of dangerous goods and are to be compulsorily followed for ensuring safety in transporting such goods over Indian Railways.

Compensation for death/injury of railway passengers in train accidents and untoward incidents as defined under Section 124 and Section 124-A (read with Section 123) of the Indian Railways Act, 1989, is decided by Railway Claims Tribunal (RCT) on the basis of a claim application filed by the victims/their dependents before RCT and it disposes of the cases after following the due judicial process. Railway Administration pays compensation when a decree is awarded by Hon'ble RCT in favor of the claimant and Railways decide to implement the decree. Immediately upon the occurrence of the incident, Indian Railways controlled the movement of trains such that no passenger suffered any injury or loss of property directly due to the incident. Therefore no claim for compensation from train passengers can arise under the Act.

*****