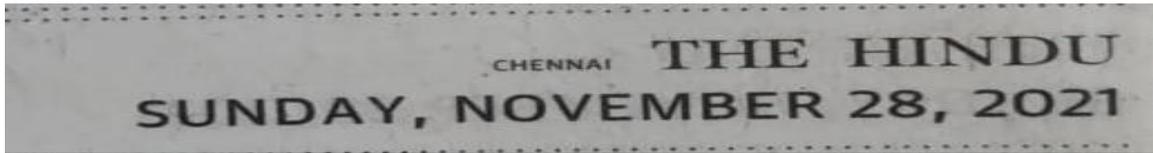


# “Loco pilots booked for elephant deaths”



## Loco pilots booked for elephant deaths

Duo released after recording their statements; they gave an undertaking to cooperate with the probe



**Mammoth tragedy:** Forest Department officials shifting one of the three deceased elephants for post-mortem near Walayar in Coimbatore district on Saturday. +5 200 10000000

**WILSON THIRUKA**  
CORUMBATOR  
The Forest Department on Saturday registered a case against the two loco pilots of the train that knocked down three elephants near Walayar in Coimbatore district on Friday night.  
Main loco pilot M.T. Subair, of Kozhikode, and assistant loco pilot M.C. Akhil, of Thrissur, were booked under Section 9 of the Wildlife Protection Act.  
Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden Shekhar Kumar Niraj said the loco pilots were released after their statements were recorded and they gave an undertaking to cooperate in the investigation. He said a Forest Department team from Coimbatore was sent to Palakkad to get the microchip of the speed recorder of the locomotive. "I have been in constant touch with senior officers of the Indian Railways throughout, and we are going to reach out to them and others to prevent such accidents in future," he said.

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Conservator of Forests S. Ramasubramanian said the case was registered after preliminary investigation.  
The Mangalore-Chennai Express (29602) SA three three elephants on the A line between Walayar and Ettimadai around 9 p.m. on Friday. A senior official told The Hindu that preliminary findings showed the loco pilots had operated the train "negligently" on the stretch. It was a straight track and they could have seen the elephants moving on the side, the official said.  
"The railways is extending its best cooperation to the Forest Department. Investigation is in progress. At the moment there is no evidence supporting the claim

of negligence on the part of the loco pilots. It is being discussed only as a possibility," Southern Railway said in reply to a query on the Forest Department's decision to register a case against the loco pilots. Forest veterinarian A. Subramaniam and Rajesh Kumar inspected the carcasses of the elephants: a female elephant aged around 25, a 'minkie' (milker) male aged around 15, and female calf aged around six.  
Trainees provided at the MEMU shed, Palakkad, when a five-member team of the Forest Department from Coimbatore, which visited the shed for investigation, was picked by members of railway unions and association of loco pilots.

### 'Train ran within speed limit'

**WILSON THIRUKA**  
CORUMBATOR  
The train that moved down three elephants near Walayar in Coimbatore district was running within the permissible speed limit, the Palakkad Division of Southern Railway has said.  
It said speed restrictions had been in place on the stretch. The loco pilot told officials that the train was running at 42 kmph, said a source at the Palakkad Division.  
The Division said that according to a document accessed through the RTI Act earlier this year, a permanent speed restriction of 45 kmph is imposed on 13.9 km of a vulnerable section of the A line, and on 25.81 km of a vulnerable section of the B line from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. It is 65 kmph during the day. The lines A and B connect Kanyakumari and Ettimadai in Tamil Nadu. While trains bound for Palakkad are run on the A line, those bound for Coimbatore are run on the B line. The train that hit the elephants was, however, operated on the A line because of the movement of another train on the B line.  
The train knocked down a 'minkie' (a milkier male elephant), an adult female and a female calf.

## Railway track turned fatal for 25 elephants in over 40 years

Activists urge urgent measures from Centre, adherence to speed limit

**WILSON THIRUKA**  
CORUMBATOR  
A total of 25 elephants that have been killed since 1978 on the two rail lines that connect Kerala and Tamil Nadu through the Walayar and Madakkalai forest ranges had their fatal encounter with moving trains less at night and early morning, according to the details provided by the Palakkad Division of Southern Railway.  
As many as 23 elephants were knocked down on the stretch from 1978 to March 15 this year. Three elephants were killed on Friday, at 9 p.m. This took the toll to 26, as many as 25 elephants were killed between 9 p.m. and 7:30 a.m., the data show. The date of the death of one elephant was unknown, while 17 elephants were killed on the B line, nine were killed on the A line.  
The A line runs through the reserve forest for 17 km between Chudimada and Madakkalai and the B line passes through the reserve forest for 23 km between Madakkalai and Kanyakumari.  
K. Panthiyappa, a feminist-based activist who accesses details of elephant deaths on the two lines under the Right to Information Act, said the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and the Railways should take proactive steps to prevent further fatalities.  
A team of experts of the Project Elephant Division of the Ministry had inspected the lines in September this year after the National Green Tribunal took suo motu cognizance of the elephant deaths based on a report in The Hindu. The report highlighted that night and early morning trains caused most deaths.  
"Immediate" efforts should be made by the MoEFCC, the Railways and Tamil Nadu's Forest Department to save the lives of elephants," Dr. Panthiyappa said.  
K. Kalathoor, of OCSI, an environmental organization, said the speed restriction should be followed strictly on the stretch as such collisions could also lead to derailment.  
Official sources in the Palakkad Division said the loco pilots who operate on the stretch strictly follow the speed limits — 45 kmph from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. and 65 kmph at other times — on the vulnerable stretch.  
The widening of space on either side of the track, installation of signage boards to warn loco pilots, clearance of vegetation on the sides of the track and construction of elephant camps on high embankment were among the measures taken by the Palakkad Division to curb train hitting elephants, officials said.

**News Item in The Hindu newspaper, Chennai Edition dated 28th November 2021**

The Forest Department on Saturday registered a case against the two loco pilots of the train that knocked down three elephants near Walayar in Coimbatore district on Friday night. Main loco pilot M.T. Subair, of Kozhikode, and assistant loco pilot M.C. Akhil, of Thrissur, were booked under Section 9 of the Wildlife Protection Act. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden Shekhar Kumar Niraj said the loco pilots were released after their statements were recorded and they gave an undertaking to cooperate in the investigation. He said a Forest Department team from Coimbatore was sent to Palakkad to get the microchip of

the speed recorder of the locomotive. "I have been in constant touch with senior officers of the Indian Railways throughout, and we are going to reach out to them and others to prevent such accidents in future," he said. Conservator of Forests S. Ramasubramanian said the case was registered after preliminary investigation.

The Mangaluru-Chennai Express (12602) hit three elephants on the A line between Walayar and Ettimadai around 9 p.m. on Friday. A senior official told The Hindu that preliminary findings showed the loco pilots had operated the train "negligently" on the stretch. It was a straight track and they could have seen the elephants moving on the side, the official said. "The Railways is extending its best cooperation to the Forest Department. Investigation is in progress. At the moment there is no evidence supporting the claim of negligence on the part of the loco pilots. It is being discussed only as a possibility," Southern Railway said in reply to a tweet on the Forest Department's decision to register a case against the loco pilots. Forest veterinarians A. Sukumar and Rajesh Kumar autopsied the carcasses of the elephants: a female elephant aged around 25, a 'makna' (tuskless male) aged around 15, and female calf aged around six. Tension prevailed at the MEMU Shed, Palakkad, when a five-member team of the Forest Department from Coimbatore, which visited the shed for investigation, was picketed by members of railway unions and association of loco pilots.