

BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI

O.A. No. 142 of 2021

IN THE MATTER OF:-

(In re : News item published in The Hindu, dated 29.05.2021 entitled
"Night, early morning trains cause most elephant deaths")

I N D E X

Sl No	Particulars
1.	Status Report Filed on behalf of Respondent No. 3
2.	Letter Addressed to Southern Railway

Filed By:



RAM SANKAR
Standing Counsel
State of Tamil Nadu
I-4, Jangpura B
New Delhi – 110014
M- 98732 51588
011 43051588

Email: ramlawdelhi@gmail.com

States Report on the Application OA No.142/2021, Notice of Hearing in Suo Moto: Regarding the News item published in the Hindu, Dated. 29.05.2021, Titled: “Night, early Morning trains cause most elephant death”

(1) It is humbly submitted that in Tamil Nadu side, the railway tracks (two tracks) from Coimbatore (Pothanur) to Palakkad are passing through Boluvampatti Block I reserve forest. The two tracks separates at 504 kms and track A enters the Reserve Forest between 506 - 507 kms and the distance is about 1.5 km and exists the reserve forest at 508 kms. Track B enters the Reserve Forest at 505 A kms and exist at 506 A and 507 kms, that is about 2.5 kms. The elephant habitat is about 200sq.kms lies between track A & B. Hence, the elephant cross track A & B frequently and are subject to risk of train hits. The elephants are also crossing the railway tracks inside & outside forest areas in their attempts to raid agricultural crops raised by farmers.

(2) It is submitted that the statistic regarding the elephant deaths in the last five years (from 2016 to 2021) as follows.

(a) During 2016 (20.06.2016), one female elephant was killed at 1.00 am due to train collision in track B near Dharmalingeshwarar temple near Ettimadai Station (outside the forest area).

(b) During 2016 (29.07.2016), one female elephant was killed at 6.00 am due to the train accident in track B, inside forest area.

(c) During 2021, (15.03.2021) one male elephant was injured 1.20 am due to the train accident in track B near Kerala - Tamilnadu border area that is outside the forest area. This elephant died on 18.03.2021.

As mentioned above, 2 out of 3 elephants have died on the railway line outside the forest area. Only one elephant died inside the forest area.

(3) It is submitted that the above deaths statistic has concluded that most of the accidents were took place on the railway line B which passes through Boluvampatti Block I Reserve Forests, Solokkarai Beat, Madhukarai Range in Coimbatore Forest Division. Track B has one acute curve. The visibility of animals on the track in the curve is poor to the loco pilots. For this complication some elephants were hit by loco while crossing the tracks. Track B runs for 2.5 km into the reserve forest. Most of the length is laid by raising the path with steep slopes on both sides. Elephants are facing difficulty either to ascend or decend. When the train arrives, the elephants find difficulty in getting down from the track. Hence after the last incident which was happened on 29th July of 2016, the forest department established a ramp like a structure across the track B in either side at 505/4 point. After two more such ramps were also established across the B track, one at 506A/1 and another at 506 A/4. This give clear visibility when elephants cross the railway track, and the ramp also facilitate the animals to cross the track easily.

(4) It is submitted that five Track watchers / Anti-depredation watchers are deputed round the clock to monitor the animal movement in Railway lines “A & B”. As soon as they sight an elephant in the railway track, the location of the animal will be given to the railway authorities who in turn will alert the Loco Pilots immediately to minimize the train speed in the vulnerable stretch.

(5) It is submitted that a watch tower has been constructed near the curve during 2016-17 to monitor the movement of elephants. When the loco travels along the railway line B, the railway staff are alerted by track watchers who stationed at watch tower to slow down the speed of train and blow the horns when any elephants are spotted on the track.

(6) It is submitted that a percolation pond was also been formed before the Railway line “B” for providing water for animals to minimize the movement of animals to cross the Railway line “B”.

(7) It is submitted that a Whatsapp group (Railway & Forests) comprising the staff of Kerala and Tamil Nadu State Forest Department and Railway Department has been created. If there are any elephants or other wildlife near the two railway lines, the staff will immediately post the details to the Whatsapp group. The other staff immediately will go to the spot and drive the animal away from the tracks.

(8) It is submitted that recently a letter dated 22.03.2021 was written to the Divisional Railway Manager, Palakkad Division by the District Forest Officer, Coimbatore, regarding the compliance with the suggestions relating to the operation of trains at night as previously agreed by railway department in various Joint Meetings. The reply to this letter has been received from Divisional Railway Manager, Palakkad Division on 05.05.2021 (copies enclosed).

(9) Therefore, I humbly submit that the above precautionary steps are being taken to prevent accidents caused by trains while crossing the Elephants on these two railway lines.

Therefore I most humbly pray before this Hon’ble NGT, Principal Bench to consider this status report.

TAMILNADU FOREST DEPARTMENT

From
Thiru.D.Venkatesh IFS
District Forest Officer
Coimbatore Division
Coimbatore -641 043

To
The Divisional Railway Manager
Palakad Division
Palakad
Kerala state

Ref. No. 1431/2021/O dated: 22.03.2021

Sub : Forest – Wildlife – One male elephant Injured due to train hit on
15.03.2021 – Detailed report submission – regarding.

I invite your kind attention to the tragic incident occurred on 15.03.2021 at 0120 hrs happened between walayar – Madukarai railway B line in which a gigantic tusker popularly known as PT2 (Palakad Tusker -2) was killed by an express train (Thiruvananthapuram - Chennai) just 200 m away from Kerala-Tamilnadu interstate border.

Several joint meeting were conducted earlier and certain remedial measures and precautions were suggested in those meetings and it is accepted to undertake the following precautionary and remedial measures.

1. All loco pilots running in the section shall be directed for continuously whistling on Ettimadai-Walayar – Kanjkode section on both up and down direction.
2. Sign boards shall be provided for alerting the drivers at the known locations where wildlife is likely to cross the railway track.
3. The speed of the train in this section shall be reduced to 65 kmph in day time and 40 kmph in night time.
4. The railway shall undertake of the railway track with gang-men and to inform about the elephant movement to the train drivers.

The above precaution measures have been undertaken ? In spite of all these we lost a tusker which is a precious wild animal which receives highest protection status as per the Wildlife protection act 1972.

In this regard whether any investigation is taken up from your side to confirm whether the precautionary measures were taken by all the concerned on that day ? If any such investigation or enquiry is conducted, please kindly communicate the outcome of such investigation/enquiry to this office at an early date.

If such investigation/enquiry is yet to be started, I request that it may be started at the earliest.

Yours faithfully,

Sd/-D.Venkatesh
District Forest Officer
Coimbatore Division.

/t.c.b.o/


Superintendent

22/3/2024