

9 dead as train coach catches fire in Madurai, 'illegal gas cylinder' used by

1x 1.5x 1.8x

At least nine people were killed in a fire that broke out in a stationary train compartment near Madurai railway station in Tamil Nadu early on Saturday, the police said. As per the officials, a gas cylinder used by the passengers to make tea inside the train led to the blaze.

The fire was reported in the private party coach of Punalur -Madurai Express in the Madurai yard at 5.15 am and the firefighters rushed to the spot and doused the flames by 7.15 am, they said.

Addressing the reporters, Tamil Nadu Minister for Commercial Taxes P Moorthy, who represents Madurai East, said all the deceased passengers hailed from Uttar Pradesh and were part of a religious trip.

The passengers of the "private party coach" had arrived from Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh.

"The passengers had locked the party coach inside for their safety. The stove used by them to prepare tea had led to the blast. Nine people have died. We have identified eight passengers among them. The Chief Minister has directed us to visit the spot and take necessary action to help the passengers," he said.

Madurai District Collector M S Sangeetha told indianexpress.com that seven people sustained minor injuries in the accident and were given treatment at the Government Rajaji Hospital as well as at the Railway Hospital.

"A total of nine people have been killed due to the fire accident. This includes six male passengers and three female passengers. All of them are aged above 50 years. As per our initial inquiry, there were about 63 passengers in that tourist party coach. The passengers had used a gas cylinder to prepare tea early this morning. Since they thought that the train was stopped midway in some unknown area, they locked their coach inside by using a lock that they had brought. Soon after the

cylinder blasted, the rest of the passengers were not able to get out of the coach because it was locked and they didn't know who had the key at that moment. Later, they broke open the door and jumped from the coach," the collector said.

According to a statement by the Southern Railways, the train reached Madurai at 3.47 am on Saturday. The party coach was detached and kept at the Madurai stabling line.

As per a statement from Railway Divisional Manager, Madurai, no other coaches except the tourist party coach were damaged in the fire accident and there was a gas cylinder and this has caused the fire. Many passengers had got out of the coach on noticing fire. Some passengers had got down at platform itself," the statement read.

The officials noted that the party coach had started the journey from Lucknow on August 17.

"They are scheduled to return to Chennai tomorrow by Train number 16284 Kollam -Chennai Egmore Ananthapuri Express and return to Lucknow from there," the release added.

The railway officials noted that any individual can book party coach using IRCTC portal and they are not allowed to carry any inflammable material like gas cylinder and the coach is used only for transportation purpose.

The Southern Railway has put out helpline numbers to share information related to the fire accident and casualties.

unprecedented annual price of Rs 799. Get it before it ends