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## One killed, 14 hurt in Chennai railway station blasts

Two bomb blasts rip through Bangalore-Guwahati Express; Manmohan Singh and Jayalalithaa condemn incident

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The bomb blasts occurred at 7.15am, as the Bangalore-Guwahati Express approached Platform No. 9 of the Chennai central railway station. Photo: AFP

**Chennai:** Two bomb blasts ripped through coaches of a train at the busy Chennai central railway station on Thursday morning, killing a passenger and wounding 14 others, five of them seriously.

The explosions took place at 7.15am, as the Bangalore-Guwahati Express approached Platform No. 9, a top police officer said, naming the dead person as a 24-year-old passenger named Swati.

She was identified as an employee of **Tata Consultancy Services Ltd** travelling from Bangalore to Andhra Pradesh to see her parents.

Prime Minister **Manmohan Singh** and Tamil Nadu chief minister **J. Jayalalithaa** strongly condemned the incident, with Singh saying the act highlights the “desperation and cowardice” of those responsible for the blasts.

Police said the blasts damaged sleeper class coaches S3, S4 and S5 of the Bangalore-Guwahati Express. The coaches were detached from the train and were being sent for forensic analysis, said S.Vijayakumaran, additional general manager, Southern Railways.

Trains scheduled to leave the station were stopped and security was tightened around both Central and Egmore railway stations serving the city.

“Bomb experts have been called to examine; investigations on the bombs are being done,” said a top police officer. No one had taken responsibility for the blasts as of press time.

“It was not a major blast and Chennai could not have been the target as the train was running late,” K. Ramanujam, Tamil Nadu director general of police, was reported as saying by TV reports. According to the schedule, the train was expected to arrive at Chennai Central at 5.40am and leave at 6.20am.

Two persons who were travelling by the train have been detained for questioning, the police said, but refused to reveal further details.

Jayalalithaa said she had asked the Crime Branch of the criminal investigation department (CB-CID) to investigate the blasts.

Two days ago, the ‘Q’ branch CID—a special cell of Tamil Nadu Police to deal with extremists—arrested a 37-year-old Sri Lankan suspected to be an operative of the Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency in Chennai. The police seized photographs of vital installations and counterfeit currency from him.

Jayalalithaa said, “My appeal to the public is not to panic and I wish to assure them that police and security agencies are taking adequate precautionary measures... I have ordered authorities to find the culprits as soon as possible. My heartfelt condolences to the family of the one who has been killed.” She announced a compensation Rs.1 lakh to the family of the woman who was killed, Rs.50,000 each to those who were severely injured and Rs.25,000 to those who suffered minor injuries.

Jayalalithaa's political rival and former chief minister **M.Karunanidhi** of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam claimed the tragedy could have been averted had Jayalalithaa been around in Chennai to guide security in the aftermath of the arrest of alleged ISI spy Zakir Hussain.

The Bangalore-Guwahati train left the station at 12.15pm after police searches cleared it, said railway authorities. Security has been tightened at the Anna international and Kamarajar domestic airports in Chennai.

Meanwhile, the Centre was forced to put on hold the dispatch of teams of the National Investigation Agency, the National Security Guards and forensic experts to Chennai after the Tamil Nadu government spurned its help.

*PTI contributed to this story.*

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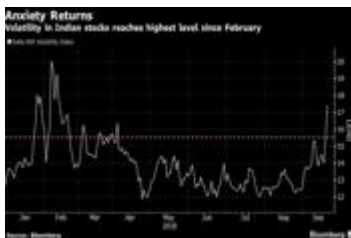
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