

# Drunks put fear into regulars in 1st class suburban coaches

## 'Commuters May Be Shifting To Faster CMRL'

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File Photo

Recent data shows a drop in the number of first class passengers on the suburban section

en. N Vinoth, another frequent traveller on the section, said he had once seen a drunk sprawled on the floor of a coach, his vomit spread all around. This was not late in the night but during the rush hour when officegoers as well as students travel in packed trains. "Invariably these people are non-bona fide passengers, meaning those who travel in first class with an ordinary ticket claiming to be railway employees and carrying identi-

ty cards owing allegiance to railway unions," Vinoth said.

When journalists raised the issue before officials of the Chennai division of Southern Railway at a press conference last week, divisional railway manager P Mahesh assured them that he would look into the matter.

Around two years ago, top officials in the division had issued a strict warning to railway employees who travel in first class coaches without possessing proper tickets or passes. The commercial department then launched an exercise to identify repeat offenders among employees, but officials now say there is no such database available.

At the press meet, Mahesh said officials would conduct checks to find if railway employees were flouting rules or travelling with bona fide on-duty passes.

Between 2% and 5% of commuters travel in first class compartments, paying anywhere between 5 and 10 times the regular fare, say of-

ficials. For instance, a passenger travelling from Chennai to Tirvullur, a distance of 42km, can buy a second-class ticket for ₹10, but will have to shell out ₹140 to travel first-class. Similarly, a second-class monthly season ticket on the same route is ₹185, while a first-class pass costs ₹805.

It is in the interest of Southern Railway to ensure that issues of first class passengers are taken care of to ensure patronage remains high. Recent data shows a drop in the number of first class passengers on the suburban section, with officials saying a section may have migrated to the faster and cleaner Chennai metro rail, especially on the Chennai beach-Tambaram section.

Passengers travelling by metro trains, whose daily footfalls are steadily increasing, don't have such problems as the airconditioned coaches are kept spic and span and the services are twice as fast as those on the suburban route.

**Chennai:** The scourge of non-bona fide commuters and those intent on creating trouble has returned to haunt first class passengers on the city's suburban rail network, which is used by 11 lakh commuters everyday.

Karthik, a regular commuter on the Chennai Beach-Tambaram-Chengalpet section, on Monday complained that no travelling ticket examiner (TTE) or Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel were inspecting EMU trains and that many drunks were creating problems in first class coaches. -

This is unnerving for passengers, particularly wom-