

TAMIL NADU

Empty rakes take to the track on Pamban bridge



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More than a month after suspension of rail services on Pamban rail bridge after some members of the Scherzer's span developed cracks, the Madurai division of Southern Railway test-ran empty rakes of an express train on the structure on Monday.

The railway division ran the empty rakes of Tirupati– Rameswaram Express after terminating the service at Mandapam as a team of engineers from the Structural Engineering Research Centre (SERC), Chennai, tested the stress after installing sensors in one section of the span.

SERC Director Santosh Kapuria, who inspected the bridge on Monday, told reporters that the centre, a constituent research laboratory of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), had sought a month's time to complete the testing and submit a report to Southern Railway. The centre would try to submit the report even before that.

After submission of the report, it was for Southern Railway to take a decision on resumption on rail services on the bridge.

The Railways had already carried out retrofit measures. SERC would test the span for necessary loading for the railway wagons and inform the railways, he said.

“As of now, the stresses are in the permissible level,” he said.

After installing sensors in one section of the span, SERC engineers found that they worked fine when the empty rakes passed through the span in the bridge. After installing sensors on the other section, they would conduct load testing and submit report to the railways on the safety of the span in the bridge, he said.

SERC would take 15 days to complete the testing. “We will assess the maximum strain and stress to critical members of the span during full load testing,” he said replying to a question.

Meanwhile, the Madurai division announced that the Rameswaram–Tirupati express, which was scheduled to leave Mandapam at 4.30 p.m. would leave at 11.30 pm.

