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W.P.No.23002 of 2026

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 13.07.2026

CORAM :

THE HONOURABLE MR.SUSHRUT ARVIND DHARMADHIKARI,
CHIEF JUSTICE

AND

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE G.ARUL MURUGAN

W.P.No.23002 of 2026

AND

W.M.P.Nos.24924 & 27620 of 2026

D.Shankaran
S/o.Late. G.C. Duraisamy
3/18, Kollaimesu, Vanniyarpatti
Ammanangkuppam, Gudiyatham Taluk
Vellore District - 636 803

Petitioner(s)

Vs

1.The General Manager
Southern Railways, Park Town
Chennai-600 003

2.The District Collector
Office of the District Collectorate
Vellore District -632 009

3.The Senior Divisional Engineer (West)
Southern Railways, Park Town
Chennai-600 003

4.The Chief Bridge Engineer
Southern Railways, Park Town
Chennai-600 003



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5.The Divisional Railway Manager
Southern Railways, Park Town
Chennai-600 003

6.The Assistant Divisional Engineer
Southern Railways, Jolarpet Junction
Thirupathur District -635 851

7.The Revenue Divisional Officer
Gudiyatham, Vellore District

Respondent(s)

PRAYER: Petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India seeking issuance of a writ of mandamus refraining the respondents 1,3,4, 5, and 6 from downsizing the existing Road Under Bridge No.465 at K.M. No.155/21-23 up line between Valathoor-Gudiyatham in Jolarpet Arakonam Junction by taking into account the recommendations made by the District Collector on 05.12.2025 and the Minutes of the Coordination meeting with regard to reduction of Road under Bridge No.465 at Ammanangkuppam Village, Gudiyatham Taluk, Vellore District (Upline Between Valathoor-Gudiyatham in Jolarpet Arakonam Section) held on 26.12.2025 and communicated by the District Collector on 05.01.2026.

For Petitioner(s): Mr. R.Syed Mustafa
for Mr. K.P.Jotheeswaran

For Respondent(s): Mr. AR.L.Sundaresan
Additional Solicitor General of India
Assisted by Mr. V.Chandrasekaran
Senior Panel Counsel for RR1,3 to 6

Mr. Mohammed Fayaz Ali
Government Pleader for RR2 & 7

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ORDER

(Made by G.ARUL MURUGAN, J.)

The present writ petition, styled as public interest litigation, has been filed seeking to refrain respondents 1 and 3 to 6 from downsizing the existing Road Under Bridge No.465 K.M. No.155/21-23 up line between Valathoor-Gudiyatham in Jolarpet Arakonam Junction by taking into account the recommendations made by the District Collector on 05.12.2025 and the Minutes of the Coordination meeting held on 26.12.2025.

2.1. The brief facts of the case according to the petitioner are that Ammanangkuppam Village is a land and waterlocked area with a railway track running from North-West side, Koundanya Maha River on the Southern side and the Veppur irrigation tank on the Eastern side. The only access to reach the houses and agricultural lands is *via* Road Under Bridge No.465 at K.M.No.155/21-23 on the up line between Valathoor and Gudiyatham in the Jolarpet-Arakonam Junction.

2.2. The petitioner further states that the said bridge is 12 feet wide and 14 feet high, which has been in existence since time immemorial. The village map prepared in the year 1916 and



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maintained at the revenue office shows the existence of the bridge referring to it as a cart track for reaching the village.

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2.3. While so, the Southern Railways took steps to strengthen the Upline Arch Bridge No.465 with RCC jacketing. Since the proposal would reduce the height and affect the movement of the villagers, they approached the second respondent/District Collector. A railway coordination meeting headed by the District Collector was conducted on 31.01.2025, where it was decided to conduct an inspection on 07.02.2025. Pursuant to the reports of various authorities, the District Collector took up the issue with the Divisional Railway Manager, Southern Railway and requested the authorities to build an RCC box culvert bridge with inner dimensions of 5 meters width and 4 meters height for public welfare.

2.4. In spite of several subsequent meetings, the railway administration proceeded with the construction work to downsize the bridge on 09.12.2025. Hence, the present writ petition has been filed seeking a direction to restrain the authorities from downsizing the bridge.



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3. Learned counsel for the petitioner submitted that, even though it was a cart track earlier, due to efflux of time, the population of the village has increased and the entire village can have access to their houses and lands only through this road under bridge and the Railways have to undertake any work by protecting the interests of the villagers.

4. He further submitted that a coordination meeting was conducted by the District Collector, where the villagers grievances were heard, and it was resolved that further jacketing work on the said bridge would be stopped until a joint decision was arrived at. However, the railway authorities have proceeded to downsize the bridge only in view of the cost involved, without considering the welfare of the residents and, thus, the arch bridge work has to be interfered with.

5. Mr.AR.L.Sundaresan, learned Additional Solicitor General appearing for the Southern Railways, submitted that the bridge is a stone masonry arch bridge constructed in the year 1860 and it is only a waterway bridge intended for a trench of water across the railway line. He further submitted that it is exclusively the Railway's property



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and that mere usage by the villagers did not give them any right and since many number of trains are crossing the railway line, there was an urgent need for the Railways to execute the work considering the welfare of thousands of passengers and, thus, the jacket work has been proceeded with and completed.

6. The learned Additional Solicitor General further submitted that after jacking, the width has not been substantially reduced, but due to the strengthening done around 60 centimeters only on each side was reduced and there is still a clear way for the movement of vehicles. Even when the Railways were prepared to carry out the construction of an RCC box structure, which involved a huge fund of around 5 crore rupees, the State did not come forward. Therefore, the Railways was left with no option, but to proceed with the work based on the requirements, from the funds available with them. As the work has now been completed, nothing remains to be adjudicated.

7. Heard the submissions and considered the materials available on record.



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8. It is not in dispute that Bridge No.465 is a stone masonry arch bridge constructed in the year 1860. The structure, as submitted by the Railways, is essentially a waterway bridge to trench water across the railway embankment and it is not a road designed for vehicular movement in accordance with IRC standards. Mere use by local residents would not alter the character or purpose of the structure.

9. The bridge having been constructed in the year 1860, during inspections, revealed transverse and longitudinal cracks. Based on the expert opinion and considering the increase in train frequency and speed, the reinforcement of the bridge became essential in the interest of safety of passengers and train movement. An RCC jacket was approved as the most efficient and cost effective method for strengthening the existing structure.

10. Even as per the averments in the affidavit, it is stated that according to the village map prepared in the year 1916 and maintained by the revenue officials, the existence of the bridge, referring to it as a cart track to reach the village, was found. However, the petitioner was not able to produce any records proving the

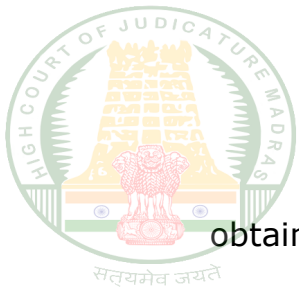


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existence of a public road belonging to the revenue department or a local body which was in existence all along.

11. On the contrary, the records reveal that the arch bridge was constructed by the Railways in 1860 and it is a waterway bridge used to trench water across the railway line. Be that as it may, considering the representations and requests made by the villagers as well as the resolution of the joint meeting and inspection conducted by the authorities, the Railways came forward to construct an RCC box culvert bridge. As per the details furnished in the counter affidavit, an abstract estimate for construction of an RCC box structure near the existing bridge No.465 on both the up and down lines comes to Rs.4,72,88,000/-.

12. Even though the proposal was prepared by the Railways giving the estimate, it is to be noted that no administrative approval/ technical sanction or budget allotment has been accorded for the execution of the proposal by the State Government. When the Railways came forward to carry out the construction of the RCC box structure near the bridge, it was open to the District Administration to take up the proposal and estimate given by the railway authorities and



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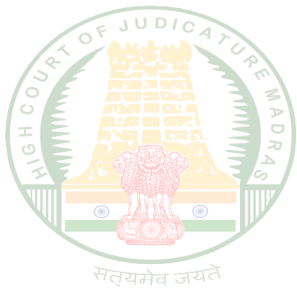
obtain the necessary approval and allot the funds to carry on the work.

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13. On the contrary, no such proposal was taken up and no sanction was obtained. In the absence of any approval or sanctioning of funds from the District Administration, the Railways was left with no option but to proceed with the RCC jacketing work with the funds available with the Railways at a cost of Rs.20 lakhs. When the bridge is already more than 160 years old, where several cracks were noticed, considering the expert opinion, there was an urgent need for the Railways to carry on the work at the earliest. Since the Railways came forward to carry on the work by providing an RCC box structure and also provided a remedy, if the villagers had grievance to be addressed, then the District Administration ought to have acted and provided for the funds and sanction, which did not happen.

14. In view of the urgency and the requirement, the Railways have now completed the strengthening work through the RCC jacket method. As per the submission made, the same took up only 60 centimeters on each side for strengthening purposes and still, the movement of the villagers is not restricted or disturbed in a major way.

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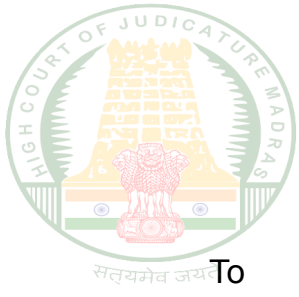
15. Since the work has already been completed, the relief sought in the writ petition to restrain the authorities from downsizing the existing Road Under Bridge No.465 no longer survives and the relief sought in this writ petition has become infructuous. In such circumstances, it is left open to the petitioners to submit a representation to the District Administration, which shall consider the needs and requirements of the village. In the event necessary funds are allotted, the District Administration can address the Railways and the proposal will be considered by the Railways on its own technical feasibility and merits.

16. With the above observation, the writ petition stands dismissed. There shall be no order as to costs. Consequently, connected miscellaneous petitions are closed.

(SUSHRUT ARVIND DHARMADHIKARI, CJ) (G.ARUL MURUGAN, J)
13.07.2026

Index : Yes/No
Neutral Citation : Yes/No
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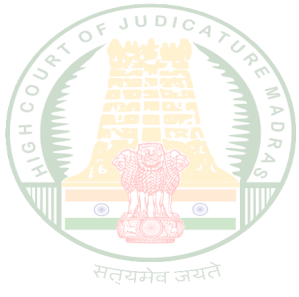


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