



IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 02.04.2026

CORAM

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE **P.VELMURUGAN**

and

THE HONOURABLE MRS.JUSTICE **K.GOVINDARAJAN THILAKAVADI**

W.P.No. 11898 of 2025

and

W.M.P.Nos. 13472 & 13474 of 2025

1. Union of India,

Represented by the General Manager

Southern Railway,

Park Town, Chennai – 600 003.

2. The Senior Divisional Operation Manager

Chennai Southern Railway

Chennai – 600 003.

3. The Senior Divisional Personnel Manager

Chennai Southern Railway

Chennai – 600 003.

.... Petitioners

Vs



K.R.Kishore Kumar

Retd. Transportation Inspector

Southern Railway

Chennai Division.

.... Respondent

Prayer: Writ Petition is filed under Article 226 of Constitution of India, praying to issuance of Writ of Certiorari, calling for the records pertaining to the order dated 07.11.2023 passed in O.A.No.46 of 2023 on the file of the Central Administrative Tribunal, Chennai Bench, and quash the same.

For Petitioners : Mr.A.R.Sakthivel

For Respondent : Ms.N.R.Jasmine Padma

ORDER

(Order of the Court was made by P.VELMURUGAN, J.)

The respondents in O.A.No.46 of 2023, being aggrieved by the order dated 07.11.2023 of the Central Administrative Tribunal, Chennai, have filed the present Writ Petition.

2. The said O.A.No.46 of 2023 was instituted by the respondent herein seeking to quash the order dated 13.12.2022, whereby his claim for payment of



Accident Free Service Award [hereinafter referred to as 'AFSA'], equivalent to 45 days of his last drawn salary, came to be rejected.

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3. The respondent herein was appointed as Trainee Signaler through the Railway Service Commission in the year 1977 and was subsequently promoted to the posts of Assistant Station Master, Assistant Yard Master, Deputy Chief Yard Master, Station Master and Traffic Inspector. He retired on 31.05.2014 upon attaining the age of superannuation as Traffic Inspector. It is the case of the respondent that he submitted a representation dated 15.12.2021 claiming AFSA for the service rendered by him in the cadres of Station Master, Yard Master, and Traffic Inspector, contending that all the said posts fall within the notified safety categories as per Railway Board Guidelines dated 06.07.1998, and therefore, his entire service from 30.11.1978 to 31.05.2014 ought to be reckoned for the purpose of granting AFSA. However, the third petitioner, by order dated 13.12.2022 sanctioned only a sum of Rs.173/- towards AFSA, holding that the respondent had served in the safety category for less than three years, i.e., from 30.11.1978 to 14.07.1981, and consequently, rejected his claim for payment of AFSA equivalent to 45 days of last pay drawn. Challenging the said rejection order dated 13.12.2022, the respondent preferred O.A.No.46 of 2023 before the Tribunal. The Tribunal, by its order dated 07.11.2023, held that the issue raised in the application was covered by its earlier order dated



11.04.2023 and, consequently, quashed the impugned order dated 13.12.2022 and directed the petitioners herein to pay AFSA equivalent to 45 days of the respondent's last drawn salary within three months from the date of receipt of the order. Aggrieved by the said direction, the petitioners have filed the present Writ Petition.

4. The learned counsel for the writ petitioners contended that the respondent had rendered less than three years of qualifying service in the safety categories involving train passing duties and confined to the period from 30.11.1978 to 14.07.1981, for which he was sanctioned Rs.173/- towards AFSA for 15 days. It was submitted that service rendered beyond his tenure as Assistant Station Master cannot be reckoned for the purpose of granting AFSA.

5. The learned counsel for the writ petitioners further contended that the respondent had not been engaged in train passing duties except for the aforesaid limited period, and his subsequent service in other posts cannot be taken into account as qualifying service. The Railway Board, vide Circulars in RB No.86/Safety-I/24/35 dated 06.07.1998 and RB No.2016/Safety-(DM)/18/1 dated 22.05.2018, has categorically restricted eligibility for AFSA to the staff such as Loco Pilot/Motor Man, Points Man/Cabin Man/Switch Man, Station Master/Station Superintendent/Deputy Station Superintendent performing train



passing duties, and no other cadre is covered. It is alleged that the Tribunal erred in holding that the duties of Traffic Inspector fall under the safety category, without properly appreciating Paragraph 10.1 of RBE No.177/2003 dated 09.10.2003, which merely unified certain cadres without altering any change in AFSA policy. It was pointed out that none of the subsequent Railway Board Circulars relating to AFSA make any reference to RBE No.177/2003, and therefore, the cadre restructuring cannot override the settled policy governing the grant of AFSA. The Tribunal further failed to consider the Railway Board's Circular dated 22.11.2022 in No.P(R)436/P/AFS Award/Vol.I, and that the conclusion of the Tribunal directing payment AFSA for the respondent's entire service is contrary to the applicable rules and policy. The respondent's eligibility is confined solely to the period during which he served as Assistant Station Master, which comes under the safety categories.

6. Per contra, the learned counsel for the respondent submitted that, pursuant to the cadre restructuring effected by the Railway Board, the cadres of Station Master, Assistant Station Master, Yard Master, and Traffic Inspector were merged into a unified cadre of Station Masters/Assistant Station Masters. It was contended that, by virtue of such merger, the respondent became eligible for AFSA during his entire tenure. On such premise, the Tribunal had rightly held that once the posts have been merged into a single cadre, the respondent's



claim cannot be rejected, and accordingly, granted relief. Therefore, the writ petition is devoid of merits, and is liable to be dismissed.

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7. We have heard the learned counsel on either side and perused the materials available on record.

8. On a perusal of the entire records, it is seen that the respondent had rendered service in the safety category only during his tenure as Assistant Station Master between 1978 and 1981, for which AFSA was duly sanctioned. The subsequent postings of the respondent as Assistant Yard Master, Station Master, and Traffic Inspector do not fall within the notified safety categories under the Railway Board's circulars, including the clarification vide Circular dated 22.11.2022 issued in P(R)436/P/AFS Award/Vol.I, in which, the Railway Board, has specifically enumerated the safety categories of staff eligible for Accident Free Service Award, which reads as follows :

(B) Safety Categories eligible for Accident Free Service Award

(i) Loco Pilots/Motormen;	RB No.86/Safety-I/24/35 dated 06.07.1988
(ii) Pointsmen/Cabinmen/Switchmen	
(iii) SMs/Dy.SS/SS performing train passing duties	RB No.2016/Safety-(DM)/18 /1 dated 22.05.2018



Thus, as per the said Circular, it is clear that only Station Masters and allied cadres of staff who are engaged in train passing duties fall within the safety categories. In the present case, the respondent admittedly worked as Assistant Station Master between 1978 and 1981, for which AFSA was duly sanctioned at the time of his retirement. Beyond the said period, the posts held by the respondent do not fall within the safety categories, and no material has been produced to establish the claim that he had continued to perform duties falling within the notified safety categories thereafter.

9. In these circumstances, this Court finds that the Railway Board has rightly restricted the grant of AFSA to the period from 1978 to 1981, during which the respondent had rendered qualifying service in the safety category. Further, the respondent has failed to establish that his subsequent service falls within the notified safety categories so as to entitle him to any further benefit. Hence, we are of the considered opinion that the Tribunal erred in extending the benefit of AFSA to the respondent's entire service, contrary to the applicable rules and policy and hence, the same is liable to be set aside.

10. Accordingly, the impugned order dated 07.11.2023 passed in O.A.No.46 of 2023 by the Central Administrative Tribunal, Chennai, is set



aside, and the writ petition is allowed. Consequently, connected miscellaneous petitions are closed. There shall be no order as to costs.

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(P.V.,J.) (K.G.T.,J.)

02.04.2026

Index: Yes/No

Speaking/Non-speaking order

Neutral Citation: Yes/No

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To

The Presiding Officer,
Central Administrative Tribunal,
Chennai.



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