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### THE TIMES OF INDIA

# Railway to stop Duronto service to Coimbatore, cites low patronage

TNN | Nov 13, 2013, 06.12 AM IST



CHENNAI: Southern Railway will discontinue the Duronto trains to Coimbatore and Thiruvananthapuram due to low patronage, and plans to introduce regular express trains on the route.

The all-AC non-stop services were introduced when Mamata Banerjee was Union minister of railways. It was promoted as her pet project and special air-conditioned coaches were built.

A senior official said, "We have written to the railway board for permission to change the service into a regular express because the patronage is low. The slot will not be cancelled and regular express trains will be run instead of Duronto. The trains were getting less than 50% reservations though other trains on the same routes are popular."

Railways have stopped reservations for the trains from first week of December. The last service of Chennai-Thiruvananthapuram Duronto will be on December 3 and last service of Chennai-Coimbatore

Duronto will be on December 9.

The Chennai-Coimbatore Duronto Express is a day train that stops at Erode for maintenance. "The train is not popular because of the high fare and the lack of stops. The stop at Erode is not for passengers to board and alight. Those who want to get down at Erode will have to buy a ticket till Coimbatore which is not feasible because fare is too high. So people prefer Kovai Express," said S Mohanram, a member of divisional rail users' consultative committee of Southern Railway.

There is not much difference between the travel time of Duronto and Kovai Express. Kovai leaves Chennai at 6.15am and reaches Coimbatore at 1.45pm, while Duronto departs at 7.15am and reaches Coimbatore at 1.55pm. Many prefer Kovai Express because it is cheaper than the non-stop train.

"There are many people who will not mind paying more to travel by Duronto but the services are not up to the mark. The food is bad and on-board amenities do not match the ticket price," said Kishore Kumar, a member of zonal rail users' consultative committee.

Chennai-Thiruvananthapuram Duronto Express is not popular because not many people travel all the way to Trivandrum. Majority of the passengers get down at intermediate stations like Ernakulam or Kottayam, but Duronto does not stop at these stations.

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