

Taiwan train derails, killing 22 and injuring 171

21/10/2018 09:47 by admin

The Puyuma express train was carrying more than 366 passengers from a suburb of Taipei toward Taitung, a city on Taiwan's southeast coast, when it went off the tracks at 4.50 pm, the Taiwan central government said in a statement.

An overturned train is seen in Yilan County, Taiwan October 21, 2018 in this picture grab obtained from social media video. (Reuters)

Taipei: Twenty-two people were killed and 171 others injured on Sunday when one of Taiwan's newer, faster trains derailed on a curve along a popular weekend route, officials said. The Puyuma express train was carrying more than 366 passengers from a suburb of Taipei toward Taitung, a city on Taiwan's southeast coast, when it went off the tracks at 4.50 pm, the Taiwan central government said in a statement.

The National Fire Agency cited the Cabinet spokesman's office as saying 22 people were killed and 171 injured.

Some passengers were crushed to death, Ministry of National Defense spokesman Chen Chung-chi said. "Their train car turned over. They were crushed, so they died right away," Chen said.

Rescuers search an overturned train in Yilan, Taiwan October 21, 2018. (REUTERS)

Soldiers have been removing bodies to identify them, he added, but nightfall was complicating rescue work.

Photos from the scene just south of the city of Luodong showed the train's eight cars in a zig-zag formation near the tracks. Five of the cars are turned over on their sides.

Most of the deaths were in the first car, which flipped over, a government spokesman said.

Rescuers search an overturned train in Yilan, Taiwan October 21, 2018. (REUTERS)

It was unclear how many people may still be trapped in the train, said the spokesman, who spoke on customary condition of anonymity. Some 120 soldiers joined firefighters in their rescue work.

On a live feed provided by Taiwan's United Daily News, rescuers were seen carefully carrying what appeared to be a body wrapped in white plastic away from the site.

Local television reports said passengers were trying to escape through train windows and that bystanders had gathered to help them before rescuers arrived.

Rescuers search an overturned train in Yilan, Taiwan October 21, 2018. (REUTERS)

The Puyuma was launched in 2013 to handle the very difficult topography of Taiwan's east coast and is distinct from the high-speed rail that runs on the west coast. The trains travel up to 150 kilometers (93 miles) per hour, faster than any other in Taiwan except for high-speed rail.

The train that derailed is 6 years old and its most recent inspection and major maintenance took place in 2017, Taiwan Railways Administration Director Lu Chie-shen said at a televised news conference.

Authorities are investigating the cause of the derailment.

- AP