

Air India 787 fleet cleared of safety issues by watchdog

ROBERT WRIGHT — LONDON

India's aviation safety regulator has said it has found no "major safety concerns" during surveillance of Air India's Boeing 787 aircraft following last week's fatal crash of a flight from Ahmedabad to London.

The authorities have announced safety measures following the crash immediately after take-off on Thursday — the first loss of a 787 — that killed all but one of the 242 people on board and tens more on the ground.

The regulator made the statement in a press release following a meeting between officials of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and senior officials from Air India and its sister airline Air India Express.

Among the measures undertaken, there have been additional pre-flight checks on aircraft and a programme of "enhanced safety inspection", which has still not been completed for all of Air India's 787 aircraft.

"The recent surveillance conducted on Air India's Boeing 787 fleet did not reveal any major safety concerns," the statement said. "The aircraft and associated maintenance systems were found to be compliant with existing safety standards."

The regulator added that 24 of Air India's 33 remaining 787s had successfully completed the "enhanced safety inspection" mandated after the crash, with another two due to be completed by the end of yesterday.

The statement made no mention of any preliminary findings of the investigation into last week's crash, which is being undertaken by the DGCA, with assistance from the UK's Air Accidents Investigation Branch and the US's National Transportation Safety Board.

Independent experts have raised questions about the position of the plane's wing flaps, thrust generated by its engines and why its landing gear remained down in the seconds before it crashed.

Boeing's shares rose 0.45 per cent, to \$202.61, following the Indian announcement. The shares are still down nearly 5 per cent since the day before the crash.

Air India declined to comment on the DGCA's statement.

The 787 has been one of the most commercially successful aircraft in history, with more than 1,175 having been delivered to airlines worldwide since it first flew in 2009.