

More than 240 die as Air India flight crashes in Gujarat following take-off

◆ Deadliest airline disaster since 2014 ◆ Dreamliner jet bound for UK ◆ New pressure piled on Boeing

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More than 240 people died when an Air India flight to London crashed in the Gujarati city of Ahmedabad shortly after take-off yesterday, in the worst aviation disaster in more than a decade.

The airline said 242 people were on board the Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner. Almost all the passengers and crew were believed dead, after only one passenger walked away from the wreckage. The death toll is likely to be higher with additional fatalities on the ground.

The crash comes after a series of accidents involving Boeing aircraft and continued questions over the US company's safety record. Its shares had fallen 5 per cent in New York by midday yesterday.

Air India said that those on board included 169 Indian nationals, as well as 53 British citizens, seven Portuguese and one Canadian. There were also 10 cabin crew and two pilots. Local media said the sole survivor was British.

The aircraft was more than 10 years old, according to Flightradar24, which added that after reaching an altitude of 625 feet, it began to descend with a vertical speed of 475ft per minute.

The tracking service added that the plane's signal was lost at 1.38pm local time, moments after departure.

India's aviation regulator said the jet made a mayday call to air traffic control "but thereafter no response was given by the aircraft to calls made by ATC".

Rohan Krishnan, head of the Indian doctors' association Faima, said the flight crashed into the BJ Medical College in Ahmedabad, adding that some students had been taken to hospital.

The crash is likely to be the deadliest since 2014, when Russia-backed forces in Ukraine shot down a Malaysia Airlines flight en route from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, killing all 298 on board.

John Strickland, an aviation consultant, said Boeing's 787 had a "good in-service safety record" since it started flying in 2011. It is the first time a 787 has crashed, according to the Aviation Safety Network database.

Last year Boeing rejected allegations



The rear of the plane protrudes from buildings in Ahmedabad: a survivor, said to be a Briton, walked away
AFP Photo/Central Industrial Security Force

Boeing revival doubts

Boeing's recovery had been on track, chief executive Kelly Ortberg told the Financial Times in an interview this month, although he stopped short of saying that the company had already turned a corner. **Analysis, Page 2**

about the aircraft's structural integrity from a longtime in-house engineer.

But the crash follows a series of safety crises involving other Boeing aircraft.

The company is trying to rebuild trust after two fatal crashes of its 737 Max model in 2018 and 2019, which led to the departure of then chief executive Dennis Muilenburg.

The mid-air blowout of a door plug on a 737 Max-9 jet operated by Alaska Airlines in January 2024 triggered another clear-out of top management amid concerns over the quality of Boeing's manufacturing. Kelly Ortberg, who became the manufacturer's chief executive last

August, has sought to stabilise Boeing's production and improve its quality control, as well as shore up its balance sheet.

The company said its "thoughts are with the passengers, crew, first responders and all affected".

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi said: "The tragedy in Ahmedabad has stunned and saddened us. It is heart-breaking beyond words."

UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer wrote on X: "The scenes emerging of a London-bound plane carrying many British nationals crashing in the Indian city of Ahmedabad are devastating."

Tata, which took over the airline from

state control in 2022, said it would give Rs10mn (\$117,000) to each family that had lost relatives.

Tata chair Natarajan Chandrasekaran added that it would cover medical expenses of those injured and "ensure they receive all necessary care".

Tata had vowed to modernise the carrier, and, in 2023, Air India agreed a deal with Boeing and Airbus to buy 470 new aircraft, one of the largest ever orders.

Air India had faced the "challenges of decades of state ownership and poor management", said Strickland, adding that since its sale to Tata it "had begun to move in the right direction".