



▲ A bandaged Vishwash Kumar Ramesh carries the body of his brother to a crematorium in the Indian beach town of Diu yesterday

Sole survivor of Air India crash helps carry body of his brother

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Delhi

The sole survivor of the catastrophic Air India crash helped to carry his brother's flower-heaped coffin to a crematorium yesterday, six days after they both plummeted to the ground just after takeoff.

Still bandaged, Vishwash Kumar Ramesh broke into sobs and was consoled by relatives. He had been discharged from hospital on Tuesday.

Last Thursday, the 40-year-old Leicester-based businessman had been sitting with his brother, Ajay, on a London-bound Boeing 787 Dreamliner that crashed into a medical college hostel in Ahmedabad.

All 241 other passengers and crew onboard the flight died, as did at least 30 people on the ground, including five medical students.

Ramesh and his brother, who was sitting a few rows from him, had been heading back to the UK after a holiday with their family in India.

He escaped through a small space by his seat and stumbled through the flames and smoke into the arms of waiting rescuers.

The streets of Diu were filled with mourners as he walked with his brother's coffin on his shoulder, his mother beside him in a monsoon-drenched blue sari. More than a dozen of the crash victims were from Diu, a beach town on the Arabian Sea.

The Wall Street Journal reported yesterday that investigators examining the crash of Air India flight 171 believe the aircraft's emergency power system - known as a ram air

turbine - was deployed during take-off. Establishing the definitive cause of the crash could take years. But the preliminary finding prompts new questions about whether the plane's engines were working properly.

Data from Flightradar24 showed that the Dreamliner climbed to only 625ft. Moments before it crashed, the pilot made a distress call: "Thrust not achieved ... falling ... Mayday! Mayday! Mayday!"

A CCTV clip showed the plane beginning to descend about 17 seconds after takeoff.

"The most common occurrence is when a pilot thinks that both engines failed," said Anthony Brickhouse, a US-based aviation safety consultant.

He noted that in commercial aviation "a dual engine failure is extremely rare. Engines today are more efficient and reliable than ever."

Though widely praised for its fuel efficiency and long range, the 787 Dreamliner has been dogged by quality control issues.

Last week's crash was the first fatal incident involving one but the fallout could be far-reaching. Boeing, which manufactures the aircraft, and GE Aerospace, which makes the engines, declined to comment to the WSJ.

Findings from the wreckage suggest that the flaps and other control surfaces were correctly configured for takeoff, the newspaper said, citing investigators.

The report comes a day after India's aviation regulator, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, said its inspections had found no "major safety concerns" with the Dreamliner fleet but did flag recurring maintenance issues.

Air India's chair, Natarajan Chandrasekaran, yesterday told Times Now, a news channel, that the aircraft had nothing of concern in its maintenance history.

He said he expected the preliminary findings to be released within 30 days, adding: "Everybody needs closure. We need to know."

'A dual engine failure is extremely rare in commercial aviation'

Anthony Brickhouse
Aviation consultant