

## Survivor says people were dying in front of his eyes



Vishwash Kumar Ramesh, the sole survivor of the Air India crash in Ahmedabad, recounted the horrific moments leading to the disaster

PTI, AHMEDABAD: Vishwash Kumar Ramesh, the sole survivor of the Air India flight which crashed into a hostel building in Ahmedabad, said on Friday he managed to come out alive because the part of the plane where he was seated was close to the ground unlike other passengers and crew.

Talking to reporters a day after the air disaster, Ramesh, originally a native of coastal town of Diu adjoining Gujarat, said his seat, 11A, was close to an emergency door on the left side of the ill-fated plane, a Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

"Luckily, the portion of the plane where I was seated fell on the ground floor of the hostel premises after the plane crash landed. When I saw that the door of the plane was broken, I told myself 'I can try and get out'. Eventually, I came out of the plane", Ramesh, a British citizen, maintained.

**"I believe that others could not escape because there was a wall on that side while there was a small gap where I was sitting. I still can't believe how I survived the crash because I saw people dying in front of my eyes"**

—Viswash Kumar Ramesh

The only survivor of the Air India crash

He is currently being treated at the Ahmedabad Civil Hospital, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi met him in the morning during his visit to the city.

"I believe that others could not escape because there was a wall on that side (of the hostel) while there was a small gap where I was sitting. I still can't believe how I survived the crash because I saw people dying in front of my eyes," he said.

A resident of Leicester, a city approximately 140 km north-northwest of London, Ramesh escaped with injuries for which he is undergoing treatment.

"Though I managed to escape, my left hand got

burnt as the plane caught fire after the crash. I walked out of the aircraft and then an ambulance brought me to hospital. I am getting proper treatment here," he said.

In a viral video shot by a local resident immediately after the crash, Ramesh can be seen walking towards the ambulance after getting hurt in the crash.

The Boeing 787 Dreamliner (AI 171), with 242 people on board, including former Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, crashed into a medical college complex in Meghaninagar moments after taking off from the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport on Thursday afternoon.

## Will be transparent in our communication on plane crash: Tata Group Chairman

PTI, MUMBAI: Tata Group will not retreat from its responsibilities, from doing what is right even though it is a "difficult" time, Chairman N Chandrasekaran said on Friday while emphasising that the group, which owns Air India, will be transparent in its communication on the plane crash.

In an internal communication to the employees, he also said that when Tata Sons took over Air India, ensuring the safety of its passengers was its first and foremost priority and "there was no compromising on it."

The communication came a day after Air India's London-bound Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner crashed soon after takeoff from the

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—N Chandrasekaran



Ahmedabad airport, killing 241 of the 242 people onboard in one of the country's worst air disasters.

"This is a very difficult moment. What occurred yesterday was inexplicable, and we are in shock and mourning. To lose a single person we know is a tragedy, but for so many deaths to occur at once is incom-

prehensible.

"This is one of the darkest days in Tata Group's history. Words are no consolation right now, but my thoughts are with the families and loved ones of the people who died and were injured in the crash. We are here for them," Chandrasekaran said.

"I want to say that, like

you, we want to understand what happened. We don't know right now, but we will," he said.

In the past 24 hours, investigative teams from the UK and the US have arrived in Ahmedabad to investigate the crash, he said adding "they have our full cooperation, and (we) will be completely transparent about the findings."

"We owe it to the families and loved ones, to our pilots and crew, and to you. Tata Group takes its responsibility to society seriously, and that includes being open about what occurred yesterday," he said.

He said that right now, the group's very human instinct is to look for explanations that make sense of the calamity

and that there was plenty of speculation all around. "Some of it may be right, some of it may be wrong. I want to urge patience."

"Why this routine flight turned into a calamity is something trained investigators will help us understand when their work is complete. Once we have verified facts, we will be transparent in our communication about how this tragedy took place," Chandrasekaran said.

"We built this group on trust and care. It is a difficult moment, but we will not retreat from our responsibilities, from doing what is right. We will carry this loss. We will not forget," the Tata Sons chairman said.

### FALLEN SOULS



Medics carry mortal remains of a victim of the Air India plane crash at a hospital, in Ahmedabad

## NIA, other agencies visit crash site

PTI, NEW DELHI: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) and other central agencies' officials on Friday visited the Ahmedabad plane crash site, sources said.

A London-bound Air India flight - Boeing 787 Dreamliner aircraft - with 230 passengers and 12 crew members on board crashed into a medical college complex, moments after taking off from the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport in Ahmedabad Thursday afternoon.

The central agencies' officials visited the accident site, sources said, without divulging further details.

Air India has confirmed that 241 people onboard the flight have died. Only one passenger miraculously survived the crash.

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB),

**The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB), under the Civil Aviation Ministry, has started a probe into the crash**

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The AAIB is responsible for the classification of safety occurrences involving aircraft operating in the Indian airspace into accidents and serious incidents.

Efforts are on to recover the black box of the Air India flight AI 171 as its analysis will provide vital clues about what triggered the disaster, Gujarat Police and Fire Brigade officials said.

A black box is a small device that records infor-

# HEARTBREAKING STORIES POUR OUT OF THE WRECKAGE

## Two days after marriage, 26-year-old dies in crash

PTI, VADODARA: Bhavik Maheshwari (26) had a simple court marriage in the city two days ago as he had to leave for London where he worked, and his parents had planned a more elaborate function when he returned next.

It was not to be, as the Air India flight carrying him and 241 other passengers and crew crashed soon after take-off from the Ahmedabad airport on Thursday afternoon, killing all but one. The newly-wed Bhavik was one of the victims. Bhavik's father Arjun Maheshwari fought back his tears as he spoke to media persons a day after the tragedy.

When his son came to Vadodara two weeks ago on vacation, the family decided to get him married, he said.

"During his trip to his hometown, we arranged his marriage," said Arjun Maheshwari, his eyes swollen due to crying. Around 1 pm on Thursday, the father and son had their last conversation.

"He called me to say that everything was done and he was

ready for take-off. He asked me not to worry as he was going home. He had completed his studies and was working in London. After half an hour, nobody could make any sense of what happened," he said.

Members of the Maheshwari family, living in Vadi area of Vadodara, were inconsolable.

"Happiness came to the family two days ago because a beloved son got married. Bhavik was living in London for the last several years. He visited Vadodara for 15 days every year to spend time with us," said a relative.

When he arrived in Vadodara this time, family members told him to go back only after getting married and his wife could join him in London later.

They had a court marriage, a simple but solemn affair, on June 10.

Bhavik's newly-wed wife travelled to Ahmedabad with others to see him off. "She had not even reached home when the message came that the plane had crashed. It was as if a mountain of grief fell on us," said the relative.



Family members of one of the crew members of Air India flight 171 mourn at their residence in Thoubal Mayai Leikai near Imphal in Manipur, after the plane crashed in a residential area near the airport

## Indore woman advances London trip to celebrate husband's birthday, dies in Ahmedabad crash

PTI, INDORE: A woman from Indore in Madhya Pradesh who changed her plan to go to London on June 19 in order to be part of her husband's birthday celebrations was among the 241 who died on board the Air India flight that crashed in Ahmedabad on Thursday.

The flight crashed into a building in Meghaninagar in Gujarat's largest city soon after taking off from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport.

Harpreet Kaur Hora (28), an IT professional working in Bengaluru, was

going to London to meet her husband Robbie Hora, who works in an IT firm there, her father-in-law's brother Rajendra Singh Hora told reporters here.

"She had made plans to go to London on June 19. However, she booked a ticket on the ill-fated flight to celebrate Robbie's birthday, which falls on June 16.

The couple also had plans to tour Europe. Everything changed in a matter of seconds. It has been devastating for the family," he said.

## Family's excitement for Roshni's wedding turns into despair

PTI, THANE: Flight attendant Roshni Songhare was about to add a new chapter in her life as she was set to tie the knot with a merchant navy officer next year, and her excited family members had started making preparations for it.

But all that excitement turned into despair after the news of the London-bound Air India flight crashing in Ahmedabad on Thursday afternoon broke. Roshni, 26, was one of the crew members on board that flight.

This development plunged the Songhare family living on Rajaji Path in Dombivli town of Maharashtra's Thane district into numbing silence.

Roshni had left her home three days ago for duty excited, as always, to serve on international flights - this time from Ahmedabad to London. But the fatal crash of the aircraft snuffed out her dreams and left her family members - 50-year-old father Rajendra, mother Shobha and younger brother Vignesh completely shattered.

"She was the heartbeat of this home. We were getting her engaged in November and married in March," a close relative told reporters in a trembling voice. "Time played cruelly with her," he said.

A native of Mandangad in coastal

Ratnagiri district, the Songhare family had moved to Mumbai for work and shifted to Dombivli two years ago.

Roshni, a bright and determined girl, was the family's pride and pillar. Her father worked tirelessly to educate both his children, and Roshni, inspired by the skies, pursued and completed a flight attendant course. She began her career with SpiceJet and later joined Air India, where she opted for international assignments relishing every airborne mile, her family members said.

"She was so happy to be flying again. We were all looking forward to her wedding. Everything was going right," said her uncle Praveen Sukhdere, who has rushed Dombivli to be with the grieving family.

After the news about the plane crash flashed, the family members immediately tried to contact her. But when there was no response, panic gripped. Her father and brother immediately rushed to Ahmedabad, holding on to hope.

Roshni's fiancé, a highly educated officer in the merchant navy from Guhagar taluka, currently living in Thane, had met her through a family acquaintance.

"She was finally getting everything she had worked so hard for," a neighbour said tearfully.

## Teen boy sleeping near family's tea stall among those killed



PTI, AHMEDABAD: Fourteen-year-old Akash Patri was sleeping under a tree near his family's tea stall close to the BJ Medical College hostel building in Ahmedabad's Meghaninagar area when a cruel twist of fate pulled him in as a statistic in one of aviation's worst disasters. As Air India's Ahmedabad-London flight turned into a massive fireball some time after taking off from the international airport here at 1:39pm on Thursday, killing all but one of the 242 persons on board, among those who lost their lives on the ground was Akash. "Akash was sleeping under a tree near the tea stall, which is adjacent to the hostel building into which the aircraft crashed. His mother Sitaben was preparing tea at the time. First, a large metal piece fell on Akash's head and then he was engulfed in flames.

## Cabin crew from Manipur, Lamnunthem Singson, was only earning member of family

PTI, IMPHAL/ KANGPOKPI: Twenty-six-year-old Lamnunthem Singson, who was one of the two crew members from Manipur and killed in the Air India plane crash in Ahmedabad, was the sole earning member of her family, which had faced the brunt of the ethnic violence in the northeastern state.

She had last talked to her widowed mother over the phone on June 11, her cousin said on Friday.

Singson told her mother that she would fly to London on Thursday and wanted to sleep early the previous night, he said.

The third child among four siblings, Singson was the "only daughter and

their widowed mother had struggled much to raise all of them", her cousin Lun Kipgen said.

"The 26-year-old was the sole earning member of the family. Her eldest brother is unemployed and suffering from a chronic disease, while two other brothers are studying," Kipgen told PTI.

Though unwell, her eldest brother is already on his way to Ahmedabad, while another brother and a cousin went from Kangpokpi to Nagaland's Dimapur, and will go to the Gujarat city, he said.

Kipgen said, "We are devastated by the news. Her mother is in deep shock and refused to eat since the crash reports surfaced."

## A family reunion that could not happen: Couple was flying to meet son, daughter

PTI, AHMEDABAD: Ahmedabad-based Pinakin Shah and his wife Rupaben were all excited to go to the UK as their 30-year-old son Rushabh recently bought a house in Scotland's Glasgow city and organised a house-warming ceremony.

For them, their UK trip was also special for another reason as it was after a long time that the couple was going to spend time together with Rushabh's sister and her

two daughters.

But all their plans were reduced to ashes as the couple was on board the ill-fated London-bound Air India flight that crashed in Ahmedabad on Thursday afternoon, killing 265 people, including 241 passengers.

Pinakin Shah, 62, worked as a manager at a box manufacturing company in Ahmedabad, while 58-year-old Rupaben was a homemaker.