

## Air India bids adieu to 747 boeing

- A Monitor Desk Report

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**Mumbai: On Monday (April 21) morning, Air India staff at the city airport waved goodbye to one of their last 'Queen of the Skies' the iconic Boeing 747 aircraft that served the airline for almost five decades operating commercial, VVIP and evacuation flights.**

As the double-decker plane took to the Mumbai skies enroute to the US, a 'wing wave' maneuver also marked the end of an era for Air India, which started flying in 1932 and is now owned by the Tata Group.

'Wing wave' is a dip of the aircraft from one side to the other in the air that is generally done for retiring aircraft.

The Boeing 747 has operated various important flights for Air India, including two medical evacuation flights to Wuhan in China during the early days of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, according to officials.

Sharing a video clip of the Boeing 747 taking off from the Mumbai airport and doing a 'wing wave', Air India said it will miss the aircraft's iconic presence.

"Today, we wave goodbye to the first of our last 'Queen of the Skies', the B747, departing Mumbai. Thank you for an era of majestic flights. We'll miss your iconic presence," the airline said in a post on X.

The video clip shows the plane taxiing, taking off, many Air India staff waving at it and also the 'wing wave' maneuver.

The flight was one of the most tracked flights on flightradar24 website. Sharing the video clip on Monday on X, Mumbai airport operator said Air India's Boeing 747 takes its final flight from the airport.

"Catch a glimpse of this historic moment as it departs from your #GatewayToGoodness giving a perfect goodbye wave and leaving us all awestruck," it said.

Air India got the first Boeing 747 in 1971 and the iconic aircraft did its last commercial flight in March 2021 on a domestic route.

The Boeing 747, named Agra, which flew out from the Mumbai airport on Monday, was inducted into the then government-owned Air India in October 1996.

Recently, Air India sold the remaining four Boeing 747s.

Known as the 'Queen of the Skies', Boeing 747s have ferried Indian presidents, vice presidents and prime ministers for a long time before these aircraft were replaced by Boeing 777s.

The 747s in Air India's fleet had 423 seats, including 12 First Class, 26 Business Class and 385 Economy Class seats.

Boeing rolled out the first B747-100 plane on September 30, 1968, while the first 747 entered service on launch customer Pan Am Airlines' New York-London route on January 21, 1970.

Air India was one of the early customers for these planes, inducting the 500-seating capacity aircraft in the fleet as early as in 1971. Besides using them for commercial operations for a little over 50 years, Air India also used two of these planes for flying the VVIPs, President, Vice

President and Prime Minister which were replaced with two refurbished B777s in October 2020.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) deregistered all four 747s that Air India and later Tata Group, in November 2022, decided to sell them.

In July 2020, after running the iconic jumbo aircraft programme for nearly 52 years, the aircraft maker announced it will end production of the 'Queen of the Skies' by the end of 2022 due to market preference.

Atlas Air was the final 747 customer with an order of four 747-8 freighters, according to Boeing. The last B747 was rolled out from the production facility on December 6, 2022.

In the 55-year period, Boeing built a total of 1,574 B747 aircraft with four engines for over 100 customers, including Air India.

Loss-making Air India was taken over by the Tata Group in January 2022.

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