

India's air safety, passengers at risk: says report

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Dhaka: India's flight safety systems and passengers are at serious risk, a parliamentary report has warned, citing critical staff shortages at the national air safety regulator.

The review by lawmakers of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) came after the June 2025 crash of Air India Flight 171 in Ahmedabad, which claimed 260 lives. The panel found a "profound and persistent shortage of technical and regulatory personnel," with recruitment gaps reaching up to 50pc.

Ironically, with India's aviation sector undergoing fast growth and as carriers acquire newer, more modern aircraft, the country's airport infrastructure is struggling to keep up. "This deficit is not a mere administrative statistic," the report signalled, explaining: "It is a critical vulnerability that exists at the very heart of India's safety oversight system, occurring precisely at a time when the sector's unprecedented

growth demands more, not less, regulatory vigilance and capacity.”

Part of the staffing issue, the report found, stems from a “slow and inflexible” recruitment process that is outsourced to an agency, and a lack of enforcement over working time limits from the Airports Authority of India (AAI).

With the lack of staff putting existing workers, some of whom are under-trained, under pressure, burnout is high and retention low, and the risk of controller error is increased, the MPs note, going as far as to say the shortage is an “active and ongoing threat to the safety of the flying public.”

Speaking to the agency in July, the chief of the DGCA defended India’s aviation safety record. “If you look at global safety metrics, such as those published by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which track the number of accidents per million flights, India consistently performs better than the world average,” he said.

But the post-Ahmedabad review insists that “the current mismatch between recruitment and training capacity, coupled with operational overload, poses a direct and ongoing threat to airspace safety”, even attributing India’s high incidence of runway incursions and bird hits to the issue.

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