

Report: Jeju air accident caused by bird strike

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 27 January, 2025



Seoul : Korean investigators have confirmed that evidence of bird-strike was found in both engines of the Jeju Air Boeing 737-800 involved in the fatal landing accident at Muan airport.

The report has identified feathers and other debris as belonging to the Baikal teal, an East Asian duck species that typically weighs around 400g.

The December 29 incident killed all but two of the 181 passengers and crew on board after the plane belly landed, overran the runway at Muan International Airport, then crashed into an embankment and exploded into a fireball.

An analysis of communication shows how quickly the incident unfolded.

Air traffic control staff warned the Jeju Air pilots about the risk of birds one minute before the plane issued a mayday emergency declaration for

a strike.

The aircraft's flight data and cockpit voice recorder stopped recording around the same time, when the jet still had 498 feet of altitude and was traveling at 161 knots.

It crashed about four minutes later.

The report is the first official run down of South Korea's deadliest aviation disaster, which shocked the world and rattled the country's longstanding reputation for safety.

The incident has sparked a sprawling examination of the nation's infrastructure and will see authorities alter airport designs and remove embankments found at several other airports.

Still, the gaps in flight data mean investigators are missing key evidence. The report noted the jet's landing gear didn't deploy, but it's unclear why. It's also unknown why the cockpit crew didn't extend landing flaps and slats that would have helped slow the incoming aircraft or why the pilot, undertaking a so-called go-around after his first landing attempt, didn't make a full circle and instead was cleared to land in the other direction of the runway.

South Korea pledged an "all-out investigation" to determine the cause of the accident, the report said.

Countries are required to produce a preliminary report within a month of an air accident and have one year to produce a final report under International Civil Aviation Organization rules.

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