

S Korea orders installation of bird detection machines at all airports

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Seoul: South Korean authorities have announced that all airports across the country will be required to install bird detection cameras and radars following the deadly Jeju Air crash that claimed 179 lives.

On December 29, a Boeing 737-800 en route from Thailand to Muan, South Korea, with 181 passengers and crew, made a belly landing at Muan Airport. The plane exploded in a fireball after crashing into a concrete barrier.

This tragic incident marked the deadliest aviation disaster in South Korea's history.

At the moment of the accident, the pilot warned of a bird strike before pulling out of a first landing attempt. The plane crashed on its second attempt when the landing gear did not emerge.

South Korean and US investigators are still probing the cause of the crash, which prompted national mourning with memorials set up across the country.

The new plans were announced as part of a nationwide special safety inspection of airports - along with a comprehensive survey of facilities that particularly attract birds.

"All airports will be equipped with at least one thermal imaging camera," said the Ministry of Land in a statement, adding that they aim to begin the rollout next year.

Mobile sonic devices will also be implemented mainly to deal with "medium and large sized birds".

"Bird detection radars will be installed at all airports to enhance early detection of distant birds and improve response capabilities for aircraft," the ministry added.

The radar will detect the size of the bird and its movement paths, and this information will be relayed to air traffic controllers who, in turn, will communicate with the pilot.

The ministry also said they will "establish legal basis" to move facilities that attract birds - such as food waste treatment facilities and orchards - away from airports, and impose new distance restrictions on new facilities.

"The top priority is to establish comprehensive reform measures across aviation safety to prevent the recurrence of aircraft accidents," said deputy minister for civil aviation Joo Jong-wan.

Feathers were found in both engines of the Jeju Air flight, according to South Korean media reports, with a bird strike being examined as one possible cause.

The investigation of the crash was further clouded when the transport ministry said the black boxes holding the flight data and cockpit voice recorders for the crashed flight stopped recording four minutes before

the disaster.

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