

S'pore Airlines tightens cabin safety measures after turbulence horror

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Singapore: Singapore Airlines said Friday it has tightened seatbelt rules on its flights after one passenger died and more than 100 were injured when one of its planes hit severe turbulence.

Passengers and crew aboard flight SQ321 suffered skull, brain and spine injuries when they were thrown violently around the cabin during Tuesday's terrifying high-altitude ordeal.

The London to Singapore flight carrying 211 passengers and 18 crew was forced to make an emergency landing in Bangkok, where at least 48 people are still being treated in hospital.

Flight tracking data shows the Boeing 777-300ER plunged 1,800 metres (6,000 feet) in just a few minutes, with passengers saying it happened so suddenly there was no time for many to fasten their seatbelts.

In response, Singapore Airlines said it has introduced a "more cautious approach" to turbulence.

"In addition to the suspension of hot beverage service when the seat belt sign is on, the meal service will also be suspended," the carrier said in a statement to AFP.

"SIA will continue to review our processes as the safety of our passengers and crew is of utmost importance."

Investigators from Singapore and the United States have travelled to Thailand to probe the causes of Tuesday's deadly incident.

But air safety experts have told AFP that passengers are often too casual about wearing seatbelts, leaving them at risk if the plane hits unexpected turbulence.

Scientists also warn that so-called clear air turbulence, which is invisible to radar, is getting worse because of climate change.

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