

Three Singapore doctors save mid-flight cardiac arrest patient on Sydney-bound flight

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dhaka: Three senior emergency doctors from Singapore delivered critical, life-saving treatment and saved an Australian passenger who suffered a cardiac arrest mid-flight aboard a Singapore Airlines (SIA) flight on March 25. The incident received widespread attention recently following coverage by a prominent international media outlet.

The patient, believed to be in his mid-sixties, went into cardiac arrest approximately three hours after the flight departed Singapore. Kanwar S. Lather, an emergency doctor with nearly 20 years of experience, seated one row ahead of the patient, responded immediately.

Lather's companions, Ian Mathews of the National University Hospital and Michael Fung of Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, rushed over from further down the cabin upon hearing of the incident.

The three colleagues were traveling together to Sydney for a medical conference.

The doctors took turns performing CPR and set up an intravenous infusion while preparing medication. They also attached an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) to the patient. Since the device indicated a shock was not necessary, the team continued CPR before administering medication.

Fortunately, the Singapore Airlines aircraft was stocked with necessary medical equipment and oxygen cylinders, which Lather described as resembling "a mini hospital." Four or five flight attendants trained in CPR also assisted throughout the resuscitation.

Close to 45 minutes into the resuscitation, the patient achieved a sustained heart rate and was able to breathe independently.

Earlier, the doctors had recommended an emergency landing. Then the pilots decided to divert the flight to Adelaide, which was still roughly five hours away.

The doctors remained beside the patient throughout, monitoring his condition and communicating with his wife, who revealed he had a history of heart problems and had previously undergone bypass surgery.

The plane, an Airbus A380, landed at Adelaide Airport shortly after 06:00 local time. The doctors handed the patient to an ambulance crew before resuming the journey to Sydney.

"I think this guy survived because we were on him within the minute of his cardiac arrest starting," Lather said.

The incident reaffirmed the doctors' commitment to emergency medicine. Mathews noted that the experience served as a reminder of the difference their specialty can make, even in unfamiliar and challenging environments.

The doctors also encouraged the public to learn CPR and AED operation, emphasizing the value of being prepared to respond in emergencies.