

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT OF AIR INDIA

EXPRESS ON 07TH AUGUST 2020:

QUESTIONS FOR INTROSPECTION

Recent aircraft accident of Air India Express flight 1344 from Dubai to Kozhikode (India) on 07th August 2020 is briefly described here based on the facts available in public domain and eyewitness statements. An investigation is in progress and would take some reasonable time for the report to be published. Meanwhile, without jumping to conclusions, some facts serve as reminder to our operations and the same are discussed subsequently.

Air India Express flight #1344 was a repatriation flight from Dubai to Kozhikode, operated by Boeing 737-800 on 07th August 2020 which carried 185 passengers, two pilots and four flight attendants. 18 persons, including both the pilots died in the accident after landing since the aircraft could not be stopped on the runway and at the end of the tabletop runway, plunged into the gorge 35 feet deep and broken into several sections.

The flight was uneventful when the aircraft came overhead Kozhikode at 1851 hours local time. Initial approach was for runway 28 with visibility 2000 m in rain and wind 260/12 kts. There were scattered clouds at 300 and 1200 ft with some Cumulonimbus clouds at 2500 ft. The aircraft did a go round to do a teardrop approach for runway 10. The aircraft landed reportedly at 1000 m after touchdown point and failed to grip the runway properly. The aircraft could not be stopped before the end of the runway and plunged into a drop of 35-50 feet and broken into several sections. There is no Runway End Safety Area (RESA) for this tabletop runway on neither end.

In an earlier assessment report of the airport, the Regulator declared it to be unsafe due to rubber markings, absence of RESA and cracks on runway and operating surface. Now, the Regulator has restricted the operation of wide body aircraft to Kozhikode after this accident.

The Captain landed at least 27 times earlier on this runway and at least 10 times during the current year.

The investigation is in progress and it would be premature to draw any conclusion before the completion of the same. However, following questions come to one's mind:

- Why did the crew not divert, if the situation warranted so?
- Why did they not go around once again instead of touching down at 1000 m farther from the touchdown point on a tabletop runway without RESA, on a wet and contaminated runway?
- Did the Company carry out a risk assessment and defined the tail and crosswind limitations for Boeing 737 and was 12 kts tail wind a permissible figure as per their SOP?
- Was the CRM effective in assertive communication between the Captain and the Co-pilot?
- Were the brakes effective?
- Were the thrust reversers deployed and effective?
- Was the cracked runway surface a contributing factor?
- Were the runway inspections carried out as required and remedial actions taken by the airport operator?

Tail wind, rubber deposits and wet runway could be reasons behind the aircraft.

The above questions are posed to help ourselves for introspection.

Courtesy: The Flight Channel

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