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Air India to conduct internal enquiry into crash

Staff Reporter

Manufacturer of the aircraft will also be probing the matter

The Air India would be conducting its own internal enquiry into the accident at Mangalore, apart from the one conducted by the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

The enquiry would be led by the Executive Director (ED) of flight safety, Harpreet A D Singh, coordinator of emergency operations and general manager, Quality unit, said here at a press briefing on Saturday.

A team of DGCA officials from Mumbai who left for Mangalore in the afternoon have already begun their investigation. "There will be a joint enquiry. The Air India flight safety investigation team will be conducting it. The manufacturer of the aircraft would also be probing the matter with its team," Ms. Singh said.

When asked if the airline had ruled out the possibility of sabotage, she said, "We cannot rule out anything."

Air India spokesperson K. Swaminathan told journalists that the flight's co-pilot and first officer H S Ahluwalia had 3,500 flying hours to his credit. On the other hand, the commander of the flight Capt. Z. Glusica had completed 10,000 hours of flying time out of which 7,500 hours were "in command."

"The aircraft was also fairly new, inducted in January 2008," Mr. Swaminathan said.

While the airline did not comment on the weather conditions at the time of the incident, Anup Srivastava, Director, Personnel, said it had started to rain just as the aircraft was about to land. He did not answer questions related to the cause of the tragedy stating that it was "a matter of investigation."

The Air India despatched two flights to Mangalore carrying rescue, recovery and flight safety teams, and relatives of some of the passengers. A finance team carrying "cash" to support the families and a trio of doctors for medical assistance were also sent. The airline scheduled flights for families, including one from Dubai.

Ms. Singh assured, "at this stage, our priority continues to be towards all passengers who were on the flight and their families. Each family member is being contacted by our special 'angel team' and all support is being offered to them for their travel and other arrangements. Whatever needs to be done will be done. We have been sending aircraft since morning, including corporate jets. We are planning to send another team tomorrow morning. Air India will take care of everything. Whatever needs to be paid for will be paid. We will not back out of our responsibility."

The airline has also sought assistance from a U.S.-based disaster management company Kenyon International Emergency Services. "A team of four persons from the company will be arriving tomorrow to assess the situation. We have briefed them about the incident," she said.

Mr. Srivastava said all the passengers and crew were Indian with the exception of the commander. There were eight survivors.

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