

INDIA: MID-AIR COLLISION

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The disaster

All 351 people on board were killed when a Saudi Airlines 747 and a Kazakh Airliner collided on the evening of Tuesday November 12. The crash, which took place 75 kilometres west of Delhi was one of the worst air disasters ever.

At 6:40 pm local time the Saudi Boeing 747 which had taken off at 6:33 pm from Indira Gandhi Airport collided with the incoming Kazakh Airliner due to land at the same airport at 6:45 pm. Apart from Indians and Kazakhs, nationals from Nepal, Pakistan, America, Britain, Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia were also on board. Debris from the two aeroplanes are spread over eight kilometres in the two districts of Rohtak and Bhiwani in the state of Haryana.

Government Action

Airport officials, local police and administrative officials immediately rushed to the spot to clear the debris and transport the dead bodies to the nearest hospitals. Fire fighters found it difficult to reach the fields where flames could be seen. The Prime Minister convened an emergency Cabinet Meeting and has ordered an inquiry into the tragedy.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

Red Cross officials and workers were quickly at the scene with ambulances and other available vehicles. In Rohtak district 37 bodies from the Kazakh Airliner have been retrieved, identified and taken to local hospitals by Red Cross ambulances. Their luggage has been handed over to the police and Kazakh Embassy staff are in Rohtak to transport the corpses home. "Four people with grievous injuries were recovered by us in the fields but unfortunately died shortly after admission to local hospitals" said Red Cross Branch Secretary, Mr. J. N. Gahlot. "We are providing coffins, ice, etc, to facilitate in the moving of the bodies", he added.

In the adjoining district of Bhiwani where debris of the Saudi Airliner is scattered all the dead bodies are still being identified and transported to a hospital at Sirsa. Red Cross relief teams are providing ambulance services and playing a leading role in consoling the relatives and friends of the victims. The Embassies of Kazakhstan and Saudi Arabia have voiced their appreciation for the efforts of the local Red Cross staff.

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