

Pilots flag Air India exodus, warn loss of cockpit experience could turn into flight-safety risk

NEW DELHI, SEP 01: Warning that an exodus of experienced pilots from the Air India Group could develop into a flight-safety risk, the Airline Pilots' Association of India (ALPA India) has written to Tata Trusts chairman Noel Tata, flagging pilot attrition, fatigue, frequent fleet transitions and what it called a diminishing "experience gradient" in cockpits.

The pilots' body asked the Tata leadership to commission an independent review across Air India Group airlines, covering pilot attrition, remuneration and benefits, roster practices, fatigue data, grade-level fairness, cockpit experience levels, fleet-transition policies, training standards and the effectiveness of the group's safety management systems.

"The loss of experience must be arrested," ALPA said, warning that attrition, cockpit experience levels and frequent transitions between Airbus and Boeing fleets needed closer scrutiny.

The association linked its concerns to three incidents in 2026—a Boeing 737 MAX 8 hard landing at Phuket on March 26, an Airbus A321 tailstrike during a go-around at Bengaluru on May 21 and an August Phuket-Delhi A320 in-flight control event.

ALPA stressed that it was neither prejudging these incidents nor attributing them to pilot experience before formal findings. However, it said the "concentration of significant operational events" raised questions over whether the group's safety management system, flight operations quality assurance programme, training systems and manpower policies were adequately identifying risks created by attrition,



fleet transitions and diminishing command experience. In one of its strongest observations, ALPA said merely remaining within regulatory limits should not be considered sufficient for an airline aspiring to compete with the world's best. "Minimum regulatory compliance should not be the benchmark," it said.

The association argued that international safety principles recognise that remaining within prescribed flight and duty-time limits does not, by itself, eliminate fatigue.

It called for scientific fatigue-risk management that goes beyond scheduling pilots to the maximum permissible regulatory limits, besides stable rosters that allow pilots to plan family and personal commitments.

ALPA also sought adequate rest, professional respect and reasonable career progression, warning that uncertainty over seniority, fleet movement and promotions could weaken retention.

The association called for limits on operating near physiological limits and sought a "non-punitive safety and fatigue-reporting culture", under which pilots could raise concerns without fear of career consequences.

ALPA said pilot retention should not be viewed merely as a dispute over salaries, human resources or industrial relations.

"Retention of experienced pilots must be recognised as part of an airline's safety strategy," it said.

The association urged Air India and Air India Express to adopt a comprehensive retention framework, including competitive and periodically reviewed remuneration, predictable rosters, meaningful retirement benefits and transparent career progression. Exploring Travel Maps

It also sought fleet-transition policies that preserve cockpit experience, particularly when pilots move between Airbus and Boeing aircraft.

ALPA said global best practice increasingly treats pilot compensation, fatigue management, scheduling, leave, retirement benefits, duty travel and quality of life as interconnected elements of attracting and retaining experienced pilots.

Addressing Noel Tata, Capt Thomas said the Tata name carried expectations beyond quarterly financial performance and argued that the transformation of Air India could not come at the expense of cockpit experience.

"The fundamental question is simple: are we identifying and acting on the warning signs before they become accidents?" ALPA said.

It said that Air India's ultimate competitive advantage would be measured not merely by the number of aircraft acquired or destinations served, but by whether its safety standards and treatment of pilots could match those of leading global airlines.

Rain fury grips Uttarakhand; 7 dead, arterial highway blocked, rivers swell

DEHRADUN, SEP 01: Heavy rain claimed at least seven lives and triggered a series of landslides, house collapses and flash-flood-like situations across Uttarakhand on Tuesday, while falling boulders blocked the arterial Dehradun-Mussoorie highway and disrupted traffic, according to officials.

At least three people were killed after the walls of a house collapsed around 3 am at Odyuda village in Almora's Havalbagh block. The deceased were identified as Prema Devi (42), Kalpana Arya (19), and Manish Kumar (18), officials said.

One person, Gulab Ram, who was sleeping in a room outside the main house, managed to escape safely.

The administration and rescue teams rushed to the spot after receiving information.

An SDRF team led by Sub-Inspector Pankaj Dangwal also reached the site from the Sariyapani post and joined the rescue operation.

The team had to proceed on foot after finding the road blocked by debris about three kilometres before the site. Carrying necessary rescue equipment, the personnel coordinated with local residents, the Fire Service and district police to search through the rubble and recover the bodies.

The bodies were handed over to the district police for further necessary action and have been sent for post-mortem.

The relentless downpour also wreaked havoc on roads, rivers and residential areas, with the Dehradun-Mussoorie highway among the worst affected as repeated landslides and falling boulders blocked and narrowed stretches of the arterial route, disrupting traffic near Mussoorie.

In another incident in Almora town, two Nepalese labourers were killed after a wall of an old house collapsed in the Dharkituni area. SendMoney Overseas

The District Control Room



received information about the incident at 11.36 am on Tuesday.

On reaching the site, the SDRF personnel launched a swift rescue operation and cleared the debris to retrieve the two men. However, both had already died.

Their bodies were handed over to the district police. The deceased, believed to be around 30 and 35 years old, were of Nepalese origin and their identities were still being established.

The latest incidents have taken the rain-related death toll in Almora district to at least five, with incessant rainfall since last night triggering several disaster-related incidents.

In Dehradun, a rain-swollen current swept away a car near Kandoli Bridge on Poundha Road in the Lower Kandoli area under the Prem Nagar police station on Monday night.

Two women and a man were travelling in the vehicle when it was swept away by the strong current. An SDRF team from Dakpathar, led by Assistant Sub-Inspector Suresh Tomar, immediately launched a search and rescue operation after receiving information.

The operation continued throughout the night despite adverse weather and strong currents.

'New Education Minister goes where a rapist is welcomed': Dipke, Das take swipe at Govt after protest FIRs quashed

NEW DELHI, SEP 01: The Supreme Court's decision to quash the FIRs and subsequent call-off of the scheduled September 5 India Gate march prompted activists Abhijeet Dipke and Saurav Das to turn their attention from mobilisation to a broader critique of the government, questioning what they described as selective efficiency in handling protests and governance.

Speaking during an Instagram Live on Tuesday, the two said the decision to call off the proposed march followed the fulfilment of their demands. The conversation, however, quickly moved beyond the immediate development, with both taking potshots at the government's handling of protests, appointments and the response to issues across states.

Dipke questioned the government's priorities, arguing that authorities appeared capable of acting swiftly when dealing with protests but failed to demonstrate similar efficiency in areas where, according to him, it was required.

"Compensation is like bare minimum. Immediately, people should get it. But look at the efficiency," Dipke said, before referring to the use of pellet guns and the mobilisation of security personnel during protests.

He also referred to troops being brought in from different locations during protests, saying they had been "airlifted" when required. "Where you should show efficiency, you don't show it. You show it in the wrong things," he said.



turned to the composition of the government and the appointment of ministers, with the two activists questioning the quality of the pool of people being chosen for key positions.

Das said the government appeared to have a limited "pool" of people to choose from, while Dipke suggested that the preference was for individuals who could be more easily controlled.

"If you don't have people, why don't you bring subject-matter experts?" Das said, arguing that people with substantial experience in education should be brought into the Education Ministry and experienced economists should be considered for finance-related responsibilities.

The two also took a swipe at the newly appointed Education Minister. Referring to the minister's alleged political record, they said he would go to places where there was a controversy over the "welcome" accorded to an accused rapist, rather than being deployed to address pressing issues concerning education.

They further argued that people who had devoted their careers to the education sector had been sidelined from the system.

The two then joked about the cancellation of the September 5 programme, with Dipke saying some people had already booked train and flight tickets and were angry with him because the protest had been called off. He quipped that the government should compensate those who had incurred expenses after being "forced" to take to the streets.

"Everybody, people, don't worry about it. The government will give you enough reasons," Das responded, suggesting that the cancellation of one protest would not mean an end to public issues. The discussion also touched on criticism from sections of social media that Dipke and Das should have travelled to other states where protests were taking place.

Addressing those questioning why they had not gone to Jharkhand, Bihar or Manipur, Dipke said the objective of their movement

had never been to personally lead protests everywhere. Instead, he said, the aim had been to create "ground-level awakening" and encourage people to emerge as leaders of their own movements.

"That is what is happening, across the country," he said.

The two also criticised the government over the choice of ministers and questioned why subject-matter experts were not brought into key ministries.

"If you don't have people, why don't you bring subject-matter experts?" Das said, arguing that people with substantial experience in education should be involved in the Education Ministry and experienced economists in finance-related policymaking.

The conversation then became more sharply political, with Dipke alleging that governments prefer individuals who are easier to control and are less likely to take independent decisions. He argued that centralisation of power made it difficult for ministers to operate independently.

The two also discussed what they described as the limited autonomy available to Union Ministers, including their ability to call press conferences independently. They claimed that even such decisions required clearance involving multiple ministries.

They contrasted this with a viral episode involving a young boy speaking to the media during protests in Bihar. Calling the boy's (Aditya) interaction with the media "epic", Dipke said the child appeared highly articulate.

Kavitha gets emotional over Delhi excise case, says 'ED, CBI troubled me for 4 years'

HYDERABAD, SEP 01: TRS chief K Kavitha turned emotional while talking about the Delhi excise policy case against her in which she was jailed in 2024, alleging that she was troubled though she committed no wrong.

Addressing a public meeting at Nizamabad on Monday, the Telangana Rakshana Sena (TRS) leader said she was sent out of the BRS (led by her father K Chandrasekhar Rao).

Kavitha had earlier served as a Lok Sabha member from Nizamabad. Observing that she was elected as MP and MLC with people's blessings, she said she does not hanker for power.

"But, I made a resolve. Why was I put in Tihar jail in



Delhi? It is not our language, not our people there. What mistake have I committed? I am the daughter-in-law of this district. I was put in Tihar jail. But I did not lose courage. ED and CBI trou-

bled me for four years. But on every occasion, I said I did not make any mistake and that I am like fire," she said.

She claimed that the court had observed that there should be a probe against the

officer who investigated the case in which she faced allegations.

It is the only such case where the court made such an observation, she said.

Kavitha favoured achieving a "Bahujana Telangana" dedicated to qualitative transformation in the lives of the common people.

She alleged that despite spending Rs 1 lakh crore on the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme built during the BRS regime of her father K Chandrasekhar Rao, not a single acre in Nizamabad received water.

She outlined her promise of 'Panchajanyam', which includes free education, free healthcare, agriculture and farmers' welfare, massive job creation and social justice.

Nepal: Indian forensic team begins DNA analysis to identify flash flood victims

KATHMANDU [NEPAL], SEPTEMBER 1: A 19-member Indian forensic team has begun analysing DNA samples alongside forensic experts to assist in identifying people affected by the recent flash floods in Nepal, the Indian Embassy stated on Tuesday.

The team has commenced the analysis at the Nepal Police Central Forensic Science Laboratory and the National Forensic Science Laboratory in the Khumaltar area of Kathmandu Valley.

The Indian experts are working with their counterparts to speed up the processing of DNA samples collected from flood-affected areas and help establish the identities of victims and missing persons, according to the Embassy.

"The deployment of the Indian forensic team is part of ongoing efforts to support Nepal in the aftermath of the recent flash floods, which caused significant loss of life and left several people unaccounted for," the Embassy said.

Nepal Police said 1,068 bodies had been recovered by Tuesday evening, of which



400 had only partial remains, complicating the identification process.

With the death toll continuing to rise following last week's deadly floods, authorities have collected DNA samples from several unclaimed bodies to support identification efforts in the future.

Chitwan district has reported the highest number of recovered bodies so far. Authorities have buried hundreds of bodies in open spaces along riverbanks after collecting DNA samples for future identification.

According to Nepal Police, 4,606 people remain unaccounted for, including 583 foreigners, raising concerns that the death toll could increase further.

Authorities said efforts are continuing to trace people who remain unaccounted for at various hydropower projects along the Bhotekoshi and Trishuli river corridors in Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts.

At the request of the government, India and China have deployed technical teams to support search and rescue operations inside hy-

dropower tunnels. History Meanwhile, Nepal's Prime Minister Balendra Shah said in a Facebook post on Tuesday that the bodies of people who lost their lives in the floods and those who remain unidentified are being managed in accordance with the law and through scientific procedures.

"The government is managing only those bodies that are found in an unidentifiable condition, while preserving DNA samples and other evidence that could assist in their identification," he said.