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India Investigates Train Crash that Killed Hundreds

June 05, 2023

India has launched an official investigation into a train crash that killed at least 275 people and injured about 1,200.

Officials said they believe a signal failure may have caused the crash, or collision. The accident happened Friday in the district of Balasore, in the eastern state of Odisha.

One of the passenger trains hit a stopped **freight** train first. This caused the passenger train to collide with another passenger train passing in the opposite direction.

Family of passengers killed in the crash lined up Monday at a medical center in the city of Bhubaneswar to try to identify bodies. Officials said that as of Monday, only 45 bodies had been identified, while 33 had been turned over to relatives.

"It's the first time I have dealt with something like this," said Dr. Utkal Keshari Suna, an official at Bhubaneshwar hospital. "It's been a very difficult experience. I am in **forensics**, so I am used to dealing with dead bodies, but nothing like this," he added.

Suna noted that the identification process was getting more difficult as time passes, and the bodies **decompose**.

Some trains started running again Sunday night on the line where the crash happened, after non-stop efforts to rescue survivors, clear and repair the track.

The crash was one of the worst railroad disasters in India's history. One of the passenger trains was the Coromandel Express, which was traveling to Chennai in Tamil Nadu state. Officials said the other was the Yesvantpur-Howrah Superfast Express, which was traveling to West Bengal state.

At least 123 trains were either canceled or delayed after the crash. The accident led to higher prices for airline tickets. India's civil aviation ministry, however, warned airlines not to charge higher prices.

Usman Ansari traveled from Bihar to collect the body of his brother-in-law, Kasim Mia. He told The Associated Press that he spent 24 hours on the road along with two friends. But after reaching the site of the crash, they were told the bodies had been moved to Bhubaneswar.

The group borrowed a car to drive to the hospital, where Ansari was able to identify and collect his brother-in-law's body. "Kasim used to say he wanted to do everything for his children," Ansari said. He added that assistance promised by the federal government would help take care of the man's four young children.

The crash happened as Prime Minister Narendra Modi pushes government measures to modernize India's **freight** railroad network.

India has more than 64,000 kilometers of train lines, 14,000 passenger trains and 8,000 stations.

I'm Bryan Lynn.

The Associated Press and Reuters reported on this story. Bryan Lynn adapted the reports for VOA Learning English.

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Words in This Story

freight –n. products that are being transported by vehicle, such as by train, truck, airplane or ship

forensics – *n.* scientific methods used to solve crimes

decompose – *v.* when a dead person, animal or plant decays and the body is gradually destroyed

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