
India Train Crash Death Toll Hits 142

21/11/2016



The tragedy has renewed concern about poor safety on the state-run network.

Indian rescuers on Monday called off a search of the mangled carriages of a derailed train after pulling more bodies from the wreckage, taking to at least 142 the number of passengers killed in the disaster.

Sunday's derailment in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh was India's deadliest train tragedy since 2010 and has renewed concern about poor safety on the state-run network, a lifeline for millions that has suffered from chronic underinvestment.

Rescue teams worked through the night with cranes and cutters to disentangle the train before police halted the search of the 14 carriages that derailed in the early hours, while most passengers slept.

"The rescue operations are over. We don't expect to find any more bodies," said Zaki Ahmed, the police inspector general in the city of Kanpur, about 65 km (40 miles) from Pukhrayan, the crash site.

The crash came during India's busy wedding season and media said blood-stained bags of saris and wedding cards carried by at least one wedding party on board were scattered beside the wreckage.

[The derailment injured more than 200 people](#), at least 58 of them seriously, officials said, as relatives thronged hospitals in a search for survivors.

A railways spokesman said the train carried 1,000 people traveling on reservations, but 700 more were estimated to have squeezed into the unreserved carriages.

Aging Badly

The largely colonial-era railway system, the world's fourth largest, carries about 23 million people daily, but is saturated and aging badly. Average speeds top just 50 kph (30 mph) and train accidents are common.

The crash is a stark reminder of the obstacles facing Prime Minister Narendra Modi in delivering on his promise to turn the railways into a more efficient, safer network befitting India's economic power.

Modi this year pledged record levels of investment and has announced a new high-speed line funded by Japan, but the main network has made little progress on upgrading tracks or signaling equipment.

He has also shied away from raising highly subsidized fares that leave the railways with next to nothing for investment – by some analyst estimates, they need 20 trillion rupees (\$293.34 billion) of investment by 2020.

Modi on Sunday held a political rally about 210 km (130 miles) from the crash site in Uttar Pradesh, which heads to the polls early next year in an election his Bharatiya Janata Party is vying to win.

Politician Mayawati, who uses only one name, and is one of Modi's biggest rivals in the state, said the government should have "invested in mending tracks instead of spending billions and trillions of rupees on bullet trains," media reported.

Authorities are looking into the possibility a fractured track caused the train to roll off the rails on its journey between the central Indian city of Indore and the eastern city of Patna.

Sunday's crash is India's worst rail tragedy since the collision of a passenger and a goods train in 2010, which the government blamed on sabotage by Maoist rebels.

In 2005, a train was crushed by a rock and another plunged into a river, each disaster killing more than 100 people. In what was probably India's worst rail disaster, a train fell into a river in the eastern state of Bihar of 1981, killing an estimated 500 to 800 people.
