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Indian scientists devise new technique to hasten rescue of air-crash victims

IANS Maharashtra,National,Science/Tech, Wed, 07 May 2014

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to not only predict the time a plane will hit the ground after losing contact but also the probable crash site. This finding is particularly relevant in the light of the mysterious disappearance of MH370, the Malaysian Airlines plane that vanished without a trace exactly two months ago with 227 passengers and 14 crew members.

"We have been working on this problem much before the MH370 accident," Thirumalachetty Harinarayana, director of the Gujarat Energy Research & Management Institute (GERMI) here, told a visiting IANS correspondent.

Details of the GEMRI study by Harinarayana and Manoj Siddhardha, an aerospace engineer at Coimbatore's Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, have been published in the latest issue of International Journal of Engineering and Technical Research (IJETR).

The system simultaneously alerts the district administration, hospitals and police stations in the vicinity of the crash site besides suggesting the best route for the rescue teams to reach the crash site - all within seconds.

"Our study is focussed on Gujarat, which has 13 airports," Harinarayana said. "Our model would enable quick location of the crash site in the event of an airplane disaster within Gujarat."

He said that in order to provide this "alert service" all that the system requires is the cruising altitude of the plane, its speed, its scheduled route and its last known coordinates before losing contact.

"These parameters - which are readily available with the air traffic controller monitoring the airplane - are used to calculate the time taken by the plane to reach the ground," he said.

In the next step, Geographic Information System (GIS) database is used to identify the probable crash site, Harinarayana explained.

The researchers report that their system locates a crash site "within a few seconds with good accuracy" making it more reliable and faster than the existing search-and-rescue method that relies on signals from special radio transmitters - or black boxes - carried on board airplanes.

According to Harinarayana, the new system has been successfully validated in four different cases of hypothetical plane crashes in Gujarat.

(K.S. Jayaraman can be contacted at killugudi@hotmail.com)

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