

**Publication: The Star Online**

**Date: 5 January 2024**

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Removal work is underway at the site of a planes collision at Haneda airport in Tokyo on Jan 5, 2024. - Kyodo News via AP

Japanese workers began clearing the burnt wreckage of a passenger jet on Friday (Jan 5), three days after a near-catastrophic collision with a coast guard plane at Tokyo's Haneda Airport.

Five of the six crew on the smaller aircraft died in the incident on Tuesday but all 379 people on the Japan Airlines Airbus were evacuated just before it was engulfed in flames.

TV footage from Haneda, one of the world's busiest airports, showed diggers with cutting equipment sawing up the wings and the charred fuselage as planes took off and landed on adjacent runways.

A Japan Coast Guard spokeswoman said clearance work was also underway to remove the mangled remains of its plane, which had been heading to deliver aid to earthquake-hit central Japan.

The evening collision saw a ball of fire and black smoke erupt underneath the JAL airliner as it sped down the runway after hitting the coast guard plane on the tarmac.

Videos shot by passengers showed bright orange flames seen from the plane windows as babies cried and people shouted for the doors to be opened.

In one clip, a young voice can be heard shouting: "Please let us out. Please. Please open it. Just open it. Oh, god."

All 367 passengers and 12 crew escaped down emergency slides and were all off within 20 minutes, with only two suffering minor physical injuries, JAL said.

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Soon afterwards, the entire aircraft was an inferno and dozens of fire engines were trying to put out the blaze.

The cause of the accident is being investigated, with specialist teams travelling from France, Britain and Canada to help with the probe.

The flight recorder and voice recorder from the coast guard plane have been found, as has the flight recorder from the passenger jet.

According to a communications transcript released by the Japanese government, the Japan Airlines flight JAL-516 was cleared at 5:44pm by air traffic control to land.

On the tarmac, the coast guard plane was instructed 15 seconds later to "taxi to holding point C5" near the edge of the runway.

The pilot acknowledged the order immediately afterwards, the transcript showed.

Roughly two minutes later, the Japan Airlines plane landed and slammed into the coast guard's DHC-8, suggesting that the latter had proceeded onto the actual runway.

Broadcaster NHK said Friday that one of its cameras at Haneda had recorded the coast guard plane entering the runway from a taxiway, and stopping for about 40 seconds before the crash.

The coast guard plane's captain Genki Miyamoto, its only survivor, said immediately after the accident that he had permission to take off, NHK reported.

The JAL flight crew had no "visual contact" of the other plane, although one of them spotted "an object" just before impact, an airline spokesman told AFP on Thursday.

"After the plane landed and around the time when the front wheels touched or were about to touch the ground -- during those few seconds, they said they felt an impact," the spokesman said.

Experts said it was remarkable that the passengers appeared to have left their belongings behind on the plane, including at least one pet dog and one cat.

"Passengers seemed to have followed instructions in a textbook manner," Terence Fan, an airline industry expert from Singapore Management University, told AFP.

"This is exactly what evacuation policies are designed for -- the airframe itself is not meant to survive the blaze, ultimately." - AFP