Beat: Travel

37 killed when passenger bus falls off bridge in western India

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USPA News - A speeding passenger bus crashed through a guardrail Tuesday and plunged off a bridge in western India, killing at least 37 people and injuring more than a dozen others, police officials said. It was the country`s deadliest road crash in recent months.

The accident occurred at around 3:30 a.m. local time on Tuesday when the luxury passenger bus veered off the road on a bridge in the district of Ratnagiri in Maharashtra state, located in the country`s west. The vehicle smashed through a guardrail and plunged into the Jagbudi River. A local police official, speaking on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized by his superiors to publicly discuss the incident, said rescue workers recovered the bodies of 37 people. Fifteen survivors, including the bus driver, were rushed to area hospitals where some remained in a serious condition. Investigators believe the bus, which was heading towards Mumbai from Goa, was speeding when the driver lost control of the vehicle while attempting to make a steep turn. The luxury bus dropped about 40 feet (12 meter) as it dropped off the bridge, causing it to land on a dried-up patch of land next to the river`s water. All of the victims were Indian nationals, except for one Russian woman who suffered non-life threatening injuries. It was not immediately clear how many people were on the bus, but officials indicated the vehicle was not overloaded as it had a capacity of carrying up to 55 passengers. India, the world`s second most populous nation with more than 1.2 billion citizens, is often the scene of deadly road accidents, many of which are attributed to reckless driving, aging vehicles and overloading. India overtook its neighbor China to top the world in road fatalities in 2010. According to India`s National Crime Records Bureau, more than 136,800 people were killed in road accidents across the country in 2011, an increase from 134,000 deaths in the previous year. Deaths as the result of road accidents account for up to 40 percent of the country`s deaths due to unnatural causes.

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