# Pensford postmaster fights to save business while mourning father lost in Air India crash



Umang Patel, the village postmaster of Pensford in Somerset, is grappling with a profound personal and professional crisis following the tragic loss of his father in the recent Air India plane crash. Kirit Patel died when the flight, en route from Ahmedabad to London Gatwick, crashed during takeoff last week. Kirit was visiting the UK to support his son and daughter-in-law, Vaishali, as they ran the local Post Office and shop, an enterprise that forms the backbone of their livelihood in the small Somerset village.

The Patels' grief has been compounded by a looming threat to their business. Royal Mail has announced plans to close a small delivery office based within the Pensford Post Office. This closure, scheduled for September, is set to merge the delivery services into a larger facility in New Paulton, a nearby area. Royal Mail claims that relocating to a bigger, dedicated facility will improve working conditions for postal workers and enhance delivery efficiency. However, for the Patel family, this represents a significant financial blow: the small delivery office accounts for approximately 60% of their income, and its closure could undermine the viability of their branch.

The local community has rallied strongly around the Patels. Councillors have formally opposed the closure, highlighting the Post Office’s role as a vital lifeline for vulnerable residents, especially given the nearest alternative branch is three miles away. A petition to save the delivery office has garnered over 1,200 signatures, demonstrating broad local support. Following the tragedy of Kirit Patel’s death, villagers have been particularly motivated to assist the family. An earlier crowdfunding effort that raised £11,000 for the Patels after Kirit’s passing was taken down once immediate costs were covered, reflecting the family's desire not to be seen as taking advantage of community generosity.

The Post Office itself has expressed condolences and stated that an area manager is working with Umang Patel to mitigate the financial impact of the move. They are also exploring ways to grow the business, emphasising the couple’s decade-long dedication to serving the village and their strong community ties.

The Air India crash, which claimed the lives of over 200 people, occurred shortly after the Boeing 787 Dreamliner took off from Ahmedabad's Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport. The flight was bound for London Gatwick and carried 242 passengers and crew. Following the crash, emergency response teams were deployed promptly, and the airport suspended all flight operations indefinitely. Investigations into the crash have been initiated, with Air India and aviation authorities monitoring the situation closely. This devastating event has resonated worldwide, impacting families and communities like the Patels', whose personal tragedy is now interwoven with broader aviation and safety concerns.

The Patel family’s plight highlights not only the human cost of the crash but also the ongoing challenges of rural postal service provision in the UK. As small local post offices face closures or operational changes, the loss of such facilities can deeply affect isolated communities. While Royal Mail cites efficiency and improved conditions as rationale for consolidations, the local backlash underscores how such decisions can threaten community cohesion and economic viability for small businesses.

In sum, this is a story of personal tragedy intersecting with systemic challenges, with the Patel family striving to navigate their grief while battling to preserve a cherished village institution.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/air-india-crash-pensford-umang-patel-b2773353.html), [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/air-india-crash-pensford-umang-patel-b2773353.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/air-india-crash-pensford-umang-patel-b2773353.html), [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/air-india-crash-pensford-umang-patel-b2773353.html)
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* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/air-india-crash-pensford-umang-patel-b2773353.html), [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/air-india-crash-pensford-umang-patel-b2773353.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.moneycontrol.com/travel/air-india-plane-crashes-after-takeoff-from-ahmedabad-airport-operations-suspended-article-13113105.html), [[4]](https://www.lse.co.uk/news/more-than-200-killed-as-air-india-plane-crashes-after-take-off-in-ahmedabad-h3lwfjrlclzj0eb.html), [[5]](https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/ahmedabad-airport-shut-till-further-notice-after-air-india-plane-crash-101749720842644.html), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/12/air-india-plane-crash-ahmedabad), [[7]](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-57412345)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/air-india-crash-pensford-umang-patel-b2773353.html), [[2]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/air-india-crash-pensford-umang-patel-b2773353.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/air-india-crash-pensford-umang-patel-b2773353.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/air-india-crash-pensford-umang-patel-b2773353.html> - This article reports on Umang Patel, a village postmaster in Pensford, Somerset, who is grieving the loss of his father, Kirit Patel, in the Air India plane crash in Ahmedabad. The piece highlights the Patel family's struggle to save their Post Office business amid Royal Mail's decision to close a small delivery office, which constitutes 60% of their income. The community's support, including a petition with over 1,200 signatures, underscores the branch's importance as a 'lifeline' for vulnerable residents. Royal Mail plans to merge the delivery office into a larger facility, aiming to provide better working conditions and a more efficient service.
3. <https://www.moneycontrol.com/travel/air-india-plane-crashes-after-takeoff-from-ahmedabad-airport-operations-suspended-article-13113105.html> - This article reports on the crash of Air India Flight AI171, a Boeing 787 Dreamliner, shortly after takeoff from Ahmedabad Airport. The flight was en route to London Gatwick and carried 242 passengers and crew members. The crash led to the suspension of all flight operations at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport. Emergency response teams were deployed, and an investigation is underway. The article provides details about the flight's departure and the immediate response to the incident.
4. <https://www.lse.co.uk/news/more-than-200-killed-as-air-india-plane-crashes-after-take-off-in-ahmedabad-h3lwfjrlclzj0eb.html> - This article reports on the tragic crash of Air India Flight AI171, which resulted in the deaths of over 200 people. The flight, a Boeing 787 Dreamliner, crashed shortly after takeoff from Ahmedabad Airport. The article mentions that the airport suspended all flight operations following the incident. It also notes that the last fatal plane crash in India occurred in 2020, involving an Air India Express flight. The article provides context on the airline's history and the response to the recent crash.
5. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/ahmedabad-airport-shut-till-further-notice-after-air-india-plane-crash-101749720842644.html> - This article reports on the closure of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport in Ahmedabad following the crash of Air India Flight AI171. The airport suspended all flight operations until further notice. The article provides details about the crash, including the flight's departure time and the area where the plane crashed. It also mentions the response from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation and the immediate suspension of airport operations.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/12/air-india-plane-crash-ahmedabad> - This article provides an overview of the Air India plane crash in Ahmedabad, detailing the sequence of events leading up to the crash and the immediate aftermath. It includes statements from Air India confirming the accident and the deployment of emergency response teams. The article also discusses the impact on Ahmedabad Airport, which suspended all flight operations following the incident. It provides context on the airline's history and the significance of the crash in the region.
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-57412345> - This article reports on the crash of Air India Flight AI171, a Boeing 787 Dreamliner, shortly after takeoff from Ahmedabad Airport. The flight was en route to London Gatwick and carried 242 passengers and crew members. The article provides details about the crash site, the response from emergency services, and the suspension of airport operations. It also includes statements from Air India and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation regarding the incident.