

12.06 ½ hrs.

Title: Shri J.S. Brar called the attention of the Minister of Defence towards frequent crashes of MIG Fighter Aircraft.

SHRI J.S. BRAR (FARIDKOT): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Defence to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:

"Situation arising out of frequent crashes of MIG fighter aircraft in the country and steps taken by the Government in regard thereto."

डॉ. रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह (वैशाली) : हम रक्षा मंत्री की बात नहीं सुनना चाहते हैं। (व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : कुछ अच्छी बात हो रही है सदन में तो उसे होने दें।

...(व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : माननीय सदस्य चाहते हैं कि मंत्री जी उत्तर दें। कोई अच्छी बात होती है तो होने दें। आपको क्या दिक्कत है उसमें? वे आपकी पार्टी के सदस्य नहीं हैं।

...(व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : रक्षा मंत्री जी, आप उत्तर पढ़िये।

डॉ. रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह : हम लोग रक्षा मंत्री के जवाब का बहिकार करते हैं और सदन से बहिर्गमन करते हैं।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आप करिये, लेकिन जो जवाब सुनना चाहते हैं, वे सुनेंगे।

12.07 hrs.

(Shri Raghuvansh Prasad Singhand some other Hon. Members then left the House.)

श्री प्रभुनाथ सिंह (महाराजगंज, बिहार) : अध्यक्ष जी, हम आपसे एक आग्रह करना चाहते हैं। इटली की एक दुकान में जो मूर्तियां रखी हैं, उसके बारे में मैंने कई बार निवेदन किया है। (व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : वह विषय अभी मेरे सामने नहीं है।

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Nothing else should go on record except the statement by the Defence Minister.

...(Interruptions)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आपको भी समझना चाहिए कि एक अच्छी बात सदन में हो रही है। इसी पार्टी के सदस्य ने एक प्रश्न पूछा है और मंत्री जी उत्तर दे रहे हैं। उसे रिकार्ड पर आने दें।

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: The Congress Party Member has put a question and a number of Members are present in the House. Let him make a statement. It is quite a valid subject.

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES)* : Sir, the Indian Air Force (IAF) categorises accidents as Cat-I, Cat-II and Cat-III. Cat-I accident is that where the aircraft is totally damaged and beyond economical repair. In Cat-II the damage is between 30-50 per cent and in Cat-III between 10-30 per cent.

The root cause for fighter aircraft accidents can be broadly classified as Human Error (HE), Technical Defect (TD), Bird Hit (BH) and other miscellaneous causes such as adverse weather conditions, difficulties associated with harsh terrain of operations and foreign object damage. About 38 per cent of Cat-I accidents are due to HE and 37 per cent due to TD. BH accounts for about 15 per cent of the accidents while the rest are due to miscellaneous factors.

HE comprises of error on the part of aircrew on flying duty and/or ground personnel. Majority of HE accidents are caused due to error of skill, error of judgement, poor airmanship, non-compliance of instructions, lack of situational awareness etc.

..... Also placed in Library. See No. LT 7714/2003

Major Technical Defect factors responsible for aircraft accidents are rotor seizure, fatigue fracture, fuel contamination, over heating of turbine blades, hydraulic failure, engine failure, etc.

Indian Air Force has a number of squadrons of MiG variants, which are utilised in a variety of operational roles as well as for training. Every aircraft is certified fully airworthy before flight is undertaken. But, fighter flying, by its very nature, has certain inherent risks, which cannot be avoided altogether. Design aspects of MiG variants do not have a bearing on their crashes.

At present supersonic training is carried out on MiG-21 FL aircraft. The best possible training is given to IAF pilots and there has been no reduction in the standard of training.

Every effort is taken to reduce accidents and improve flight safety. This is an ongoing process. In this context, measures to enhance quality of training to improve the skill levels, ability to exercise sound judgment and situational awareness of pilots are being pursued. Constant interaction with Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL) at the highest level is being maintained with a view to reduce accidents due to Technical Defect. DRDO and other technical agencies are also being involved in all accident investigations to form a wider perspective to prevent accidents. Measures to reduce accidents on account of bird menace are also being implemented.

Although there is no direct relationship between lack of an Advanced Jet Trainer (AJT) and aircraft accidents, Government have decided to induct AJT to ensure smooth transition of trainee pilots on to the frontline fighter squadrons equipped with high technology aircraft. Government have been considering various options for procurement of AJT and it is expected that a decision will soon be taken.

In order to bring down the number of fighter aircraft accidents, Government of India constituted a Committee on Fighter Aircraft Accidents (COFAA). The Committee submitted its report in September, 1997. All recommendations of the

Committee have been addressed and are under various stages of implementation.

Due to the constant efforts and measures taken by the Ministry of Defence the overall number of accidents have come down. The Ministry is also phasing out as well as upgrading old aircraft and inducting new ones into IAF's fleet.*

MR. SPEAKER: Before the hon. Member starts speaking, I would like to thank the hon. Minister. On this issue I had also written a letter to him because of the number of accidents that have taken place. I am indeed thankful to the Government for the decision it has taken.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Thank you, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER: Now, Shri J.S. Brar.

SHRI J.S. BRAR : Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is one of the very grave situations for this country. With deep distress and regret, I have called the attention of the Minister.

I would just give points. I would not make a lengthy speech. I would like to make just five points.

Now, look at the alarming situation of MiG 23 major crashes, which are: April 6, 2003 – Ambala; April 4, 2003 – Halwara; July 5, 2001 – Jodhpur; June 26, 2002 – Halwara; March 12, 2001 – Halwara; May 10, 2000 – Halwara; April 25, 2000 – Patiala; March 25, 2000 – Kargil; February 2, 1999 – Halwara; October 1, 1998 – Halwara; October 9, 1997 – Halwara; May 8, 1997 – Halwara; March 9, 1997 – Halwara; June 5, 1996 – Jodhpur; December 26, 1995 – Adampur; March 20, 1993 – Jodhpur; September 10, 1992 – Adampur; April 3, 1993 – Jodhpur; May 17, 1989 – Ahmedabad; September 22, 1987 – Una in Himachal; November 28, 1983 – Tilpat Range; and December 26, 2002 – Srinagar.

I want to highlight this matter because it concerns the people of my State. They have won the major awards as *Paramveer Chakra* and *Mahaveer Chakra* for the country. They have sacrificed their lives. They are martyrs. The first question that I would like to ask the Minister is that are you aware that Halwara is a place which is just two kilometres away from the native village of Shri Nirmaljit Singh Saikhon who had won *Paramveer Chakra* for this country, who destroyed four cyber jets at that time and his thousand pieces of his body came to the soil of this country. They have made these sacrifices.

My second point of contention is that from 1965 to 2002, the Indian Air Force has lost 135 MIG-20s, either due to clashes or due to bird hits or enemy fire or due to other reasons. If we calculate this menace, the total inventory has been written off once forever without fighting a war. The Indian Air Force had lost close to 200 fighter pilots in the accidents. Hon. Speaker, Sir, we had lost 200 fighter pilots. I would like to add one thing to this point. I have read the statement of the Minister. It was around 1985 that the Defence Committee later on had recommended that the IAF should acquire the Advanced Jet Trainers (AJT), and acquisition of 66 aircraft was sanctioned in 1986.

Today, the Minister in his reply to my Calling Attention has said like this. I was surprised and shocked to learn this. I had heard them roaring when they were in the Opposition Benches in the Tenth Lok Sabha. Like a sea, they used to roar. But now they are empty totally. They are not worried about the nation's security. In this statement, he says, which I have underlined, that measure to reduce accidents on account of bird menace is also being implemented. Then, the second paragraph says, 'the Government have been considering--since 1986 to till now, after so many accidents have taken place--' various options for procurement of AJTs and it is expected that a decision will be taken soon.' Hon. Speaker, Sir, what is this answer?

As far as the cost factor is concerned, I would like to make one more point. While the cost of each aircraft, as the reports have come, is about Rs.100 crore, the cost of the training of pilots is about Rs.23-45 crore per pilot. This is in volume III, page 1921 of the Fifth Pay Commission Report. Thus, the loss of a pilot, apart from being a human life lost with all its tragic consequences, is a heavy cost to the exchequer. Hon. Speaker, Sir, the Defence Committee has said that in this period since 1st April 1993, India had incurred a loss of Rs.10,000 crore on account of the cost of the aircraft lost and another Rs.2,250 crore on account of the loss of the pilots. Hon. Minister, what is the cost of the new AJTs which you are going to acquire? Why is it delayed? Why is this deliberate delay on the part of the Government?

Hon. Speaker, Sir, the next point that I would like to make is that there has been a report in the newspapers and I have got a cutting of the report. This report says that the certified quality spares imported from Russia were being re-exported by the HAL to Algeria and Vietnam while the Indian Air Force was being supplied with the cheap and uncertified spares picked from the former Warsaw Pact countries in Eastern Europe and CIS countries. Has the Minister any answer to this?

Hon. Speaker, Sir, there is one more revealing point. In some cases, the planes were a product of cannibalisation with the front portion being picked from one country, wings from another and, on the whole, the engine from another country. Three parts are being picked from different countries. I would like to know from the hon. Minister, how can we expect that these type of accidents and the loss of pilots will not take place in future.

I have got the report of the mother, Shrimati Gadgil of Versova. They have even set up a website. Four thousand mails have gone to that mother that these accidents have taken place due to the criminal negligence of this Government and due to corruption in this Department.

With your permission, I would like to make only two more points. This matter is of a grave importance and I know the outcome of all this also. We feel and the people of those families feel that these are the sons of sorrow, Mr. Minister, and you are the sons of joy; and between our sorrow and your joy, there is a deep ravine falling with tears and blood. What is the cause of this tears and blood? It is that after making at least 15 to 20 statements when you have been a Minister, there has been no purchase of new aircraft that you have ordered.

Now, I come to the last point I would like to make. My colleagues have walked out. ...(*Interruptions*) I charge this Government of criminal negligence. This Government has become a frozen corpse. This Government has no regard to the martyrs and those who have won gallantry awards. I charge this Government of criminal negligence. They should immediately purchase new aircraft so that the Indian Air Force is equipped with this material.

SARDAR SIMRANJIT SINGH MANN (SANGRUR): Sir, I want to bring two facts to the notice of this hon. House. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: I am not permitting a discussion. You can ask some questions, if you want.

SARDAR SIMRANJIT SINGH MANN : I am going to ask a question.

During the course of the America and Iraq war, the Americans lost only three aircraft during the whole war. During the same period, India lost two aircraft without going to war. ...(*Interruptions*)

Israel became independent in 1948; India became a sovereign State in 1947; Japan was totally devastated and Germany was totally devastated after the World War II. All those countries have healthy aeronautical industries and they are capable of producing fighter jets and warplanes. We talk of Indian nationalism. We are proud of Indian nationalism. I want to ask the hon. Minister what he has been doing or what the country has been doing since 1947 that we have not been able to produce any aircraft till now and why are we dependent on foreign countries for these aircraft.

SHRI KHARABELA SWAIN (BALASORE): If there are countries in the world that have not been losing fighter planes, how are they managing that? How is it that they have been managing it whereas we are not able to do so?

MR. SPEAKER: It is a question of national importance. I am sure, the hon. Minister would reply.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Sir, first of all, let me make a point that no one could be more concerned about these accidents and the consequences thereof than the Ministry of Defence and the Air Force.

The tragedy that visits the homes of those whose sons die as pilots is shared by everyone in the country and also be the Ministry of Defence and the Air Force.

We have been having these MiGs since 1971-72. In the very first year of their procurement, that is, in 1971-72, there were ten MiG 21 crashes; in the second year of their procurement, that is, in 1972-73, there were eight MiG 21 crashes; and in the third year, that is, 1973-74, there were 11 MiG 21 crashes. I can go on reading this list till 2003-04 in which year there was only one so far as MiG 21 crash is concerned. I am mentioning this to make the point that it is not this Government, this NDA Government, this Defence Minister who has to take responsibility for what is happening. There are a number of factors which have created this situation. In 1982, it was felt necessary to acquire an Advanced Jet Trainer (AJT). India never had an Advanced Jet Trainer. Let us face it that our Air Force is as old as this country and, as a nation, we have never had an Advanced Jet Trainer.

What is happening is that after the preliminary training or that amount of training that is necessary to handle an aircraft, the pilot goes straight into a Jet Aircraft – a MiG 21 Jet. Now, I have it on the words of not one but two immediate, past and the present Air Chiefs that the MiG is the demanding Aircraft.

The then Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal, A.Y. Tipnis, when he became the Chief of Air Staff, the first thing he did was to get into a one-seater MiG-21 and cover every Air Force base in the country. When I asked him 'why are you doing this', he said: 'to make the point that the machine is not wrong, the machine is not that is failing, but the failure is somewhere else'. When he was due to retire and when he wanted to go to every Air Force Base to say bye-bye to his men and officers, he again did the same exercise only to demonstrate that the MiG-21 aircraft is not a flying coffin or any kind of a coffin.

Unfortunately, these things do not draw our attention. Unfortunately, anything positive is propaganda for the media and anything negative is news and it is the negative, therefore, that is constantly drummed into the ears of the people. Therefore, either we refuse to face the reality or we have been led into situations where we never get to know the reality.

Therefore, Sir, let us be very clear on this that this Aircraft has been the mainstay of our Air Force and it is still today the mainstay of our Air Force and will remain so for a few more years till we have acquired the latest, modern, very expensive aircraft, which are now coming in. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI J.S. BRAR : Hon. Minister, this loss is much more in respect of money and cost factor. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI GEORGE FERANANDES: I am sorry, I did not get you.

SHRI J.S. BRAR : As far as the cost factor is concerned, you say that this is very expensive and, for the time being, this is going to remain and your statement also is there that there is no technical snag in this MiG-23 and MiG-21. But the question is that the cost-factor till today, the losses that you ultimately account for are to the tune of Rs. 10,000 crore.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : Sir, this Government came into being five years back and from the first day onwards we have been on this AJT. There have been various reasons why it has taken time. Even as the Price Negotiating Committee completes its job, from various quarters come letters, come petitions, come newspaper stories that a lot is wrong about the purchase of the AJT; the Central Vigilance Commission has to examine it and the whole process has to be started once again. Even as we have been now negotiating and finalising the purchase of the aircraft, there have been newspaper advertisements, advertisements carried as news that there are more aircraft that need to be examined, that there are more aircraft that must be looked into.

Sir, examining an aircraft, putting it for tests and trials, negotiating the price – all this, in the normal course, would take anywhere from two to three years. Even today we are under pressure of such a nature.

Therefore, it is not that there has been any kind of inordinate delay insofar as this Government is concerned. It would be wrong to say that. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI J.S. BRAR : Mr. Minister, are you aware of the memorandum submitted to the hon. Prime Minister by more than 150 M.Ps. regarding the delay in the acquisition of this AJT aircraft? Are you aware of it, hon. Minister? This is now one year back.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : Sir, I am aware of my duties and I have been doing my duties. The Government is aware of its duties and the Government has been doing its duties. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI J.S. BRAR : Sir, I am sorry to say that *â€¦(Interruptions)*

श्री लक्ष्मण सिंह (राजगढ़) : मंत्री जी, जगमीत सिंह जी जो कह रहे हैं, यह सही बात है। एक साल नहीं, कम से कम तीन साल पहले डेढ़, पौने दो सौ सांसदों ने उस पर हस्ताक्षर किए थे कि हमको एजेटी खरीदना चाहिए। आपने बार-बार कहा कि प्रैस नेगेटिव है, प्रैस नेगेटिव है। आप देश के रक्षा मंत्री हैं, देश की सुरक्षा की जवाबदारी आपकी है। आगे बढ़िए, हम सब लोग आपके साथ हैं। दुश्मनों को मुंहतोड़ जवाब दीजिए। *â€¦(व्यवधान)* आप परवाह मत कीजिए। *â€¦(व्यवधान)*

श्री जे.एस.बराड़ : यह देश का सवाल है, इसे गंभीरता से लीजिए। *â€¦(व्यवधान)*

श्री कीर्ति झा आज़ाद (दरभंगा) : मैं विशेष रूप से बधाई देना चाहता हूँ कि ये अपने साथियों से अलग हैं क्योंकि जब कभी रक्षा मंत्री जी बात करने आए, यही लोग रोड़ा अटका रहे थे। *â€¦(व्यवधान)*

श्री जे.एस.बराड़ : हम जवाबदेह हैं। *â€¦(व्यवधान)* हमारे लोगों की जानें गई हैं। *â€¦(व्यवधान)*

श्री मुलायम सिंह यादव (सम्भल) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, सदन शान्ति से चल रहा है और कांग्रेस के लोग बहिष्कार कर रहे हैं। जो साथी देश के महत्वपूर्ण सवाल पर बैठे हुए हैं, अगर ये उनको डीमौरलाइज़ करेंगे तो कैसे काम चलेगा। *â€¦(व्यवधान)*

अध्यक्ष महोदय : मुलायम सिंह जी, आपकी बात सही है।

â€¦(व्यवधान)

श्री मुलायम सिंह यादव : जब धीरे-धीरे बहिष्कार बंद हो रहा है तो ये खुद बहिष्कार करवाना चाहते हैं। *â€¦(व्यवधान)*

श्री प्रभुनाथ सिंह : उनको बधाई दीजिए। *â€¦(व्यवधान)*

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : Sir, a petition signed by 120 or 125 M.Ps. was referred to. I was not the Minister of Defence at that time and it did not come in my hands. I am only aware that there was a petition.

SHRI J.S. BRAR : You were a member of the NDA at that time. You were the Convenor of the NDA.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : The NDA is not running the Government. The Government is run by the Cabinet. There is a Cabinet here which is sitting. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI T.M. SELVAGANPATHI (SALEM): Sir, if the petition is not given to the hon. Minister, he will not act on the petition. Is that what he means?

MR. SPEAKER : Inference is not true. Mr. Minister, you go ahead.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : Thank you, Sir. a point was made about spares being exported by HAL and sub-standard spares being given to the Air Force. Sir, this is not true. HAL produces the spares for the Indian Air Force and what remains thereafter, or if there are special orders from any other source, HAL exports. HAL does not initially produce for exports. Whatever it produces is for the Indian Air Force. If there is surplus, that is exported and what is exported is the same that the Indian Air Force is first one to procure. That lie needs to be nailed.

SHRI J.S. BRAR : Hon. Speaker, Sir *â€¦*

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Brar, I have already given you enough opportunity.

SHRI J.S. BRAR : Sir, to authenticate my viewpoint, I will lay paper on the Table.

MR. SPEAKER: You can send the paper to the Minister.

SHRI J.S. BRAR : It is not a lie. It is a hard fact brought about by the defence experts and the media.

MR. SPEAKER: You go ahead. You need not heed to it.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: He spoke about corruption in the Department. I wish the hon. Member sends me whatever information that he has on the subject so that immediate action can be taken on that.

Sir, the name Halwara figures again and again. The MiG-21 base is in Halwara and therefore, it is inevitable that when a MiG-21 crashes, Halwara should figure in it. So, it is not that Halwara has been suffering.

SHRI J.S. BRAR : When Halwara was the main place of accident, what did the Government do? Was there any committee constituted? Did the Minister visit any family? Did he go to Halwara?

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Sir, it was against a large number of accidents that were taking place that a Committee was set up by the Government back in 1975. The Committee gave its Report in 1977. In 1996, it is that Committee's Report that has been implemented and continues to be implemented.

Now, the point is that we need to have the AJTs. I have said in my statement that we are on the threshold of procuring the AJTs. When I say that we are on the threshold of procuring the AJTs, it means that we are taking a decision in that direction. It will take a couple of years for the AJTs to come since these aircraft are not available off the shelf. Once the Government has decided and placed the order, it is then that these aircraft will be built and these aircraft will become available.

We have, as Government and as the Air Force, been doing everything that needs to be done to see that accidents are minimised, and the fact is that if one looks at the profile of the last three to four decades since these aircraft have been in service, one will discover that there has been a steady fall in the number of accidents that have taken place. As Government, we shall be continuing to do all that is in the hands of the Government to see that the accident rate is reduced, that better training facilities are made available and that such equipment that may be needed for better training also is procured. It will be our endeavour to see that the situation as it prevails today is changed and there is no room for this kind of a complaint.

I do not wish to say anything more on this. I thank you for this opportunity.

MR. SPEAKER: Now, we will take up 'Zero Hour'.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI J.S. BRAR : Hon. Speaker, Sir, there is a contradiction in the statements given by the Minister and the Air Chief Marshal.

MR. SPEAKER: There is no provision in the rules to speak now.

SHRI J.S. BRAR : Hon. Speaker, Sir, there is a contradiction in the statements.

MR. SPEAKER: Now, I am taking up 'Zero Hour' please. I now give the floor to Shri Khagen Das.

...(Interruptions)

डॉ. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा (दक्षिण दिल्ली) : जवाब तो हो गया, लेकिन कांग्रेस पार्टी और कम्युनिस्ट पार्टी का यह जो तरीका है, यह सही नहीं है।

MR. SPEAKER: Before taking up 'Zero Hour', there are two Bills to be introduced.

डॉ.विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : यह बहुत महत्वपूर्ण विषय है कि रक्षा मंत्रालय पर कोई बहस नहीं हो सकती। इनकी पार्टी ने मंत्री जी का वाकआउट किया है इसलिए कोई डिस्कशन डिफेंस मिनिस्ट्री पर नहीं हुआ। इतना अनडैमोक्रेटिक और इर्रिस्पॉन्सिबल बिहेवियर नहीं होना चाहिए।

श्री लक्ष्मण सिंह : आप हमारी चिंता छोड़िए, अपनी पार्टी की चिंता करें। (Interruptions)

SHRI J.S. BRAR : Sir, we are not satisfied with the reply of the Minister. Therefore, I am staging a walk out.

12.41 hrs.

(At this stage, Shri J.S. Brar left the House.)

डॉ.विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : यह बहुत गम्भीर मामला है। प्रधान मंत्री जी ने रक्षा मंत्री को नियुक्त किया है। ये कहते हैं कि हम इनको रिकोगनाइज नहीं करते हैं। जब भी कोई रक्षा मंत्रालय से सम्बन्धित प्रश्न आता है तो ये वाकआउट कर जाते हैं। यह काफी गम्भीर मामला है। आप इसको देखें कि यह कौन सा तरीका है। इतनी जिम्मेदारी वाली पार्टी है, 114-115 साल पुरानी पार्टी है। इनको ऐसा नहीं करना चाहिए।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : मेरे सामने जिस माननीय सदस्य ने प्रश्न उठाया था, वह यहां बैठे हैं। उन्होंने सवाल पूछा और मंत्री जी ने उत्तर दिया। It is a good step and you must welcome it.

â€¦ (व्यवधान)

श्री रामजी लाल सुमन (फिरोजाबाद) : जब स्थिति सामान्य हो रही है, श्री बरार यहां बैठे हैं तो फिर कोई दिक्कत नहीं होनी चाहिए। (व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: There are two Bills for introduction and I am going to take up that.
