

LOK SABHA DEBATES

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LOK SABHA

Saturday, February 28, 1981/Phalguna
9, 1902 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

SHRI HARIKESH BAHADUR (Gorakhpur) : We had given an adjournment motion regarding the Bangalore strike.

श्री रामाचतार शास्त्री (पटना) : कार्य-
स्थगन प्रस्ताव है ।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : There is some point,
gentlemen.

एक बात समझ लेनी चाहिए, हरिकेश बहादुर जी, कि स्थगन प्रस्ताव दे देने से ही अधिकार नहीं मिल जाता कि उस पर बोलें । या तो आप यह कहिये कि जो कानून इस में लिखा है मेरे लिए, मैं उस पर चलूँगा । यह आप को बाध्य करता है और मुझे भी बाध्य करता है । पहले कालिंग एटेंशन हम ने इस पर दिया है । और तरीका हो सकता है, जिस में आप इस को ले सकते हैं और मुझे कोई एतराज नहीं होगा । आज भी बोलने की बात बनेगी, आप बोल सकते हैं उस पर ।

श्री रामाचतार शास्त्री : किस बात पर ?

अध्यक्ष महोदय : इसी बात पर लेकिन कोई भी मायला जिस को इस सदन में अच्छी तरह से उठा सकते हैं और तरीके से उठा सकते हैं, इस का यह मतलब नहीं है कि हम कानून तोड़ कर उठाएँ । मैं आप के साथ हूँ और इस हाऊस को साथ ले कर चलना चाहता हूँ । मुझे बाध्य न किया जाए, मैं आप का साथ चाहता हूँ ।
let us do it.

Yes; now Calling Attention.

श्री रामाचतार शास्त्री : कोई रास्ता निकालिये ।

3906 LS—1.

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SHRI R. K. MHALGI (Thane) : May I know one thing from the hon. Chair ? I have given notice of an adjournment motion regarding the Nagaland situation.

MR. SPEAKER : Not allowed, Sir. I did not give my consent to it. No. Now Shri Dharam Bir Sinha.

SHRI DHARAM BIR SINHA (Barh) : First things first : I have not received the copy of the statement. They have not given me the copy of the statement. By practice, I should have received it at least half-an-hour earlier.

MR. SPEAKER : A bit late.

स्वेचन छाबर नहीं था, इसलिए जगता है कि वे सो गये ।

एक मामलाय रुद्ध है जगता है कि सरकार सोई है ।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : सरकार तो नहीं सोई है ।

Now Calling Attention.

11.05 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER
OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

**Reported collision of a Pushpak
aircraft and an Indian Air Force
helicopter**

SHRI DHARAM BIR SINHA (Barh) : 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 :

"Reported collision of a Pushpak Aircraft and an Indian Air Force helicopter at Patiala in Punjab on 20th February, 1981 resulting in the death of some persons and injuries to others."

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN
THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI
SHIVRAJ V. PATIL) : Mr. Speaker,
Sir, on 20th February 1981, a Chetth

[Shri Shivraj V. Patil]

helicopter of an AOP (Air Observation Post) Flight (which is flown by Army Pilots) took off from Patiala airfield for a training sortie. At the same time one Pushpak aircraft landed and carried out a roller take-off. Immediately after take off at about 50 feet, the Pushpak aircraft initiated a turn to the left and in the process hit the helicopter from the rear. Both the aircraft crashed just outside the airfield fencing killing the two Army Pilots of the helicopter. Both the pilots of the Pushpak aircraft also died. One woman who was cutting grass near the crash site was also fatally injured.

A Court of Inquiry consisting of highly experienced personnel of the Air Force and other agencies like Director of Aeronautics, DTD&P (Air) and representative of DGCA was ordered on 20th February, 1981 to investigate the cause of accident.

In an accident of this nature, the time taken by the Court of Inquiry is approximately three months.

SHRI DHARAM BIR SINHA :
Mr. Speaker, Sir, It is obvious that Patiala Airport is not a very busy Airport. It seems that there has been an obvious failure of Air Traffic Control System which is basically built round to avoid collision of aircraft. It ensures the safety of the aircraft the moment it begins to move on the aerodrome. It watches aircraft while landing and taking off for any outward sign of trouble. It is obvious that the Air Traffic Control System failed, because while it had permitted the helicopter to take off it had also permitted the Pushpak aircraft not only to land but also to take out a roller take off. Now obviously the two things could not have been done simultaneously because the collision took place only 50 feet above the ground; and again the Pushpak aircraft took to the left whereas it should have taken to the right, as the Manual says.

I want to know whether the pilots were competent persons; whether they held the requisite qualifications for flying; whether they were Pushpak aircraft pilots or Army pilots who were flying the helicopter. More than that, it is obvious that there had been entire callousness in this matter both in terms of human life and in terms of observance of the quality of Air Traffic Control system. Now there is a fall in the standard of professional quality and competence. We find collision not only in the railway but also with respect of aircraft.

I hold the Government responsible for going down of professional competence.

I would like the Government to clarify the points about their qualifications; whether there was anyone in the Control Room at that particular moment of time. If there was somebody, was he competent? What precautions did he take? Did he forewarn either the pilots of the helicopter or the pilots of the Pushpak aircraft not to take out roller take-off. If these things were not done, what action is taken? More than that, what action the Government is taking to see that the professional competence in such sensitive areas is not only maintained but upgraded?

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL : The Pushpak aircraft was a trainer aircraft. It was piloted by a pilot who had about 290 hours to his credit. That means, he was a competent and trained pilot. Along with him there was an NCC Cadet who was taking lessons in flying. The Pushpak aircraft had landed; and immediately after landing, it took off. While taking off it turned to the left and collided with the Cheetah Helicopter which had taken off from the same air-strip, but from a different air-strip. This has happened not because of the taking off from the same place. But we would not give any final judgement in this matter. A Court of Inquiry has been instituted and the circumstances and causes leading to the accident are all going to be inquired into and after we get the entire report, we will be able to fix the responsibility. The Pushpak aircraft is not having any communication system because it is a trainer aircraft. Of course, the Cheetah helicopter had taken off from a different strip and hence the accident took place. So, the accident took place not because of any technical defects because of pilot error or so. As things stand today, it seems that there was some error on the part of somebody and the accident had taken place. But this is not a final judgement. We can say, definitely who is responsible and what is responsible only after we get the report of the inquiry. (Interruptions).

SHRI DHARAM BIR SINHA : One question. He is contradicting. (Interruptions).

MR. SPEAKER : No contradiction. (Interruptions).

SHRI DHARAM BIR SINHA : He has given a contradictory statement. He is misleading the House. The air control tower not only look at one air-strip, it has to look at all the air-strips of the area. Here the airport is common to the two pilots. It is obvious that the mistake is of the air control tower. Even without the

permission the aircraft control tower the aircraft obviously cannot take off. The Pushpak aircraft, after it has landed,— cannot again take off without the permission of the aircraft control tower. What is the Minister trying to do? Whom is he trying to hoodwink? (*Interruptions*).

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL : To make the record straight, I would like to say that the aircraft had landed and immediately taken off. (*Interruptions*.) It was a trainer aircraft. (*Interruptions*).

MR. SPEAKER : That might be one kind of exercise. (*Interruptions*).

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL : Now, it has to be established whether the pilot has heeded to the instruction or not, whether he has taken off on his own, or not, all these things have to be established. Whatever information is available with me, it is before the House. Accidents to take place and this accident has taken place. Whether the pilot has carried out the instructions or not, or whether those who were working in the helicopter were at fault, that can be judged only after getting the report and not before that. Whatever information is available to me, I am putting before the House.

PROF. P. J. KURIEN (Mavelikara) : First of all, I should thank the hon. Speaker for having permitted this Calling Attention when there are other—I do not say more important subjects—but important subjects. The Minister was mentioning that a discussion on Defence will affect the morale of the defence services. But whatever may be, now he has come out with a statement—a statement anybody can get from any newspaper. I want to know from him to specifically how it happened that the Pushpak aircraft was allowed to take off when there was already another aircraft in the vicinity. There will be a radar system in the Air Force base, Patiala. They can inform the pilot of the helicopter that the Pushpak aircraft was taking off and warn the helicopter. Secondly, there is a civilian aircraft control system. What happened to that system and is it that they failed to give information to the pilot of the Pushpak aircraft not to take off when there was a helicopter in the vicinity of the aerodrome? So, two simultaneous failures are there, not one, and you are closing your eyes to the two simultaneous failures occurred. Or it is that there is no radar system in the air base. The Minister has no idea about these things. (*Interruptions*.) He is saying that "something is wrong somewhere." Everybody knows that something is wrong somewhere, that there is some mistake somewhere. I tell you, you go to Madam, and tell her that you do not know anything about this portfolio.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, last session you directed me to write a letter to him. He has not given a reply to that. After that again, *Indian Express* reports : "Another skeleton in the COD cupboard !".

MR. SPEAKER : You are going at a tangent.

PROF. P. J. KURIEN : Sir, Minister is not obeying even you. He has not replied to that letter. The *Indian Express* dated 14th February, 1961 reports : "Another skeleton on the COD cupboard"—front page news. He has not seen it. No action. You are not knowing what is happening in this country and what is happening in Defence. Have you enquired into what happened to the radar system in the air base? Have you got a report on that? If you have not done it and if you are not supplied with that information, what is the use of your staying there as a Minister?

SHRI M. M. LAWRENCE (Idukki) : He is only Minister of State. There is no cabinet Minister for Defence.

PROF. P. J. KURIEN : Let him go and tell Mrs. Gandhi that he is not able to control his Ministry. We can understand if a person travels in an aircraft, and accident takes place and he dies. But here a poor woman cutting grass was also killed in this. Whose fault is it? She was killed because the debris fell on her. Have you ever thought of the compensation you should give her? If so, what is the compensation? And also to the pilot of the Air Force? You are speaking of the morale of the Air Force man. Specifically tell me, what instructions have you given to compensate the family of the pilot of the Air Force and also those who were piloting the Pushpak aircraft? They are also technical personnel. What compensation are you going to give them? What is the compensation you are going to give to the woman who was cutting grass? These are the things I want to know. Can you give these details? If not, I am sorry. These are the things we wanted to know in the calling attention. But his statement is a ditto from the newspaper.

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL : There are some questions which my learned Friend has put? I do not know why he is angry with me, but I would not be angry with him.

PROF. P. J. KURIEN : You are not doing things properly.

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL : An accident has taken place....

MR. SPEAKER : You please placate him!

SHRIMATI PRAMILA DANDA-VATE (Bombay North Central) : It is such an important question. Why is the Prime Minister not here? She should be here when we are discussing this matter when a woman was killed.

MR. SPEAKER : Are you satisfied with our assistance and sympathy?

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL : There are two air strips. On one air strip Pushpak aircraft landed and took off. There was another place a little away from the same place, from where the helicopter took off. Here is a case in which the aircraft landed....

PROF. P. J. KURIEN : My question is, how is it possible when there is a radar system?

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL : Please hear me. If you are not satisfied with my explanation, I can give you more explanation afterwards if you are not allowed to ask a second question.

MR. SPEAKER : He wants to know is it not possible to inform through telecommunication or something to the Cheetah?

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL : I was explaining that. There are two air strips. From one air strip the Pushpak had taken off and it landed. Immediately after landing, it did not wait but again took off. This is one position which has to be borne in mind. There is another airstrip from where the helicopter took off. These are two different places. After the helicopter took off, the Pushpak had taken off. Since there are two airstrips it would not be necessary to tell them whether they should take off or not. This Pushpak aircraft having taken off, should have gone upto a distance of about 300 feet and then it should have turned to the left or to the right whichever the direction was. But instead of going upto the distance of 300 feet it had gone upto the distance of 50 feet only and then it had taken a turn to the left. When it was taking a turn to the left, it collided. On the left side, there is another airstrip from where the Cheetah had taken off. If the pilot who was flying the Pushpak aircraft had gone to the distance of 300 feet and then turned to the right, probably this accident would not have taken place. But we have to bear in mind the fact that the Pushpak is an aircraft which is used for training. There was another person sitting there getting training. All these things are to be borne in mind. Accidents do not have any logic. If they have any logic, there would not have been any accidents. In these circumstances, accident had taken place. Whether the information was given to the

pilots in the helicopter and in the Pushpak aircraft, whether they had acted in any other manner, all these details would be known after the inquiry. After the accident had taken place if you ask me to go and inquire into it, get some report and put before the House, it would not be all right. It is something technical and scientific. This will not be easily understandable by a layman. We may understand something but not all the details. We are asking for the report. That report will be available after three months. Experts are appointed as members of this committee. They would be collecting the information. They would give the report. After we get the report we will be able to form the correct judgment and not before that. We do not want to apportion the guilt. We do not want to say that this man is guilty or that man is guilty or this system is guilty or that system is guilty. That we will do only after the inquiry and not before the inquiry. This is all about accident.

PROF. P. J. KURIEN : The question is very simple which any layman can ask and understand. When there is an air traffic control tower in the civilian airport and a radar system also in the Air Force Control Room, how is it that both of them had failed simultaneously or both of them did not operate? How is it that coincidence of two errors had occurred? For that you need not wait for any inquiry.

SHRIMATI PRAMILA DANDA-VATE : The Prime Minister should be here. (Interruptions).

PROF. P. J. KURIEN : Yes, the Prime Minister should come here. The Prime Minister should remove this Minister also. He is not concerned about the death of persons. I know that. You can simply ask the officer incharge or the air base and know how the radar system had failed. If it did not fail at all, then what happened? Any layman can understand that. For that no inquiry is required.

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL : I have tried to explain that the accident had taken place because of the environment, technical defect.... (Interruptions)

PROF. P. J. KURIEN : Here is a better answer. He should be made the Minister. (Interruptions).

MR. SPEAKER : Send your recommendations to me. I will forward them. (Interruptions).

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL : Accident may take place because of the technical defect. It means, technical defect of

the communication system, of the machine also. It may take place because of the pilot's judgment.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (Basirhat) : The Minister has come with a badge. (Interruptions).

MR. SPEAKER : He is your old colleague. You should treat him with certain respect. (Interruptions).

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : What is that badge? He is defying your directions.

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL : That is why it has to be established by the inquiry whether it was a failure of the radar system, engine, the capacity of the pilot or the environmental condition which was responsible for this accident. Before the inquiry report is available, it would be difficult to pinpoint who is responsible for that.

A question was asked about the compensation to be paid to the pilots.

PROF. P. J. KURIEN : And also to the woman cutting the grass.

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL : I may inform the House that we have a system under which compensation is paid to the pilots who meet with accident while flying. About two lakh of rupees would be paid to the family of the pilots of the Cheetah helicopter. An *ad hoc* payment of Rs. 2,000 has been made. The papers are being made ready and within one month's time the entire amount would be paid, as far as the pilots are concerned.

As far as the woman is concerned, instructions have gone. They have to find out under what law compensation can be paid. I am told that under the Workmen's Compensation Act the compensation can be given. About Rs. 6,000 would be made available. As far as civil aviation pilots are concerned, the position is different.

About the Prime Minister being present here. I do not think it is necessary for her to be here always when there is a Minister to answer the question.

MR. SPEAKER : You have to be very clear about the compensation to the family of the woman.

SHRI RATANSINH RAJDA (Bombay South) : It is in the fitness of things that the Prime Minister should come here and give full satisfaction to the House.

SHRI S. M. KRISHNA (Mandya) : It is an unfortunate accident where five precious lives were lost. I presume they are seasoned pilots of the Air Force; a couple of trainee pilots were also there. I must say that the Minister has made a very comprehensive statement at this stage. A court of inquiry will go into the causes of the accident.

None of us is very happy in this House about the quantum of compensation sought to be paid to the family of the unfortunate lady who died. By a coincidence, the name of that lady is Mrs. Krishna.

AN HON. MEMBER : You can claim compensation.

SHRI S. M. KRISHNA : I would not claim compensation as long as I have my wife with me.

The hon. Speaker has also very rightly referred to this point.

MR. SPEAKER : It was no fault of hers.

SHRI S. M. KRISHNA : In the case of the death of any air passenger, the family gets about Rs. 50,000 by way of compensation. In these days when inflation is reigning high, Rs. 6,000 is a ridiculously small amount. If nothing can be done under the rules, I am sure that some amount could be earmarked from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund to the family of this very unfortunate lady, who died in this accident.

The hon. Minister stated that normally an inquiry of this kind takes about three months. We would appreciate if the inquiry could be hastened and we could get the report of the inquiry in about a month.

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL : There are two questions. One is about the payment of compensation to the family of the lady. The hon. Member wants that something should be given out of the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. Well, I am not competent to say anything about it. I would certainly convey the feelings of the hon. Members to the hon. Prime Minister so that she could take action on that.

Regarding the period of the inquiry, the maximum period is three months within which the report has to come. We will see that it is expedited.

SHRI HARIKESH BAHADUR (Gorakhpur) : Sir, this Defence portfolio is with the Prime Minister. If she had been here, she would have told us whether she was going to give some compensation to that lady who has died in the crash out of the Prime Minister's Relief Fund or not. But the hon. Minister, who is replying on behalf of the Defence Ministry and who is also Minister of State for Defence, should have at least consulted the Prime Minister and he would have let us know whether the Prime Minister's Relief Fund is being used to give compensation to that lady or not. Anyway, I would like to say that such a plane crash had taken place in the past also. Actually there was no collision, but there had been a crash in which one of the hon. Members of this House, Shri Sanjay Gandhi had died and an Inquiry Committee had been set up. Similarly, an Inquiry Committee was set up on this crash also, but nobody gets the findings of the inquiry. Therefore, I would like to request the hon. Minister that at least whatever Inquiry Committee has been set up, its report must come to us. We must come to know what is the report of that Inquiry Committee. Even in respect of the previous accident we did not receive any Inquiry Committee Report. Therefore, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he is going to lay that Inquiry Committee Report on the Table of the House or not when that report comes. At the same time, what are the steps which are being proposed by you to see that such accidents do not take place in future ?

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL : Sir, the Prime Minister's Relief Fund is operated by the Prime Minister as Prime Minister and not as the Defence Minister.

About the second question regarding the Inquiry Committee, may I bring to the notice of the hon. Member that nobody is as concerned as the officers in the Air Force are about the accidents. The reports of the inquiry go to them and they take all the steps that are necessary to help those who have suffered in the accident and their dependents also. So, to call for the report here in the Parliament and to discuss, I do not know how it is going to help us. In the past we have not laid such reports on the Table of this House and I think it would not be necessary to lay this report on the Table of this House. But if any assistance is to be given to those who have suffered, that is better done by those people who are manning the Air Force than by us who do not understand all the complications of the Air Force. So, you can rest assured that everything that is necessary would be done.

22.35 hrs.

ANNOUNCEMENT RE. PRESENTATION OF THE GENERAL BUDGET

MR. SPEAKER : I would like to inform the House that as is customary, the House would adjourn for half-an-hour at 4.30 P.M. today to re-assemble at 5 P.M. for the presentation of the General Budget.

SHRI KRISHNA GHANDRA HALDER (Durgapur) : Sir, I have given notice of an adjournment motion regarding the failure of the Government to meet the demands of the workers of Bangalore based public sector undertakings.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : I have not allowed it.

22.37 hrs.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND WORKS AND HOUSING (SHRI BHISHMA NARAIN SINGH) : With your permission, Sir, I rise to announce that Government Business in this House during the week commencing 2nd March, 1981, will consist of :—

- (1) Consideration of any item of Business carried over from the Order Paper of today.
- (2) Discussion on the Resolutions seeking disapproval of the following Ordinances together with consideration and passing of Bills in replacement of them :—
 - (a) The Life Insurance Corporation (Amendment) Ordinance, 1981.
 - (b) The Special Bearer Bonds (Immunities & Exemptions) Ordinance, 1981.
- (3) General discussion on the General Budget 1981-82.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (Basirhat) : Sir, regarding this Business for the next week, I would plead with the Government, and through you with the Minister that right in the beginning priority should be