

air crash of Indian Airlines plane near Imphal, Manipur on the 16th August, 1991.

**SHRI RAM NAIK :** Sir, it is rumoured that he is resigning taking moral responsibility of the accident.

#### STATEMENT BY MINISTER

##### Accident of Indian Air Lines Aircraft near Imphal

[English]

**THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA) :** Mr. Speaker, Sir, It is with deep anguish that I report to the House on the air crash at Imphal, Manipur on the 16th August, 1991 which claimed sixty nine precious lives. As the House was not in session till today, I could not make this statement earlier.

2. The illfated Boeing 737 aircraft of the Indian Airlines was on a scheduled flight IAC-257 from Calcutta to Imphal direct on 16th August, 1991. It was under the command of Capt. S. Halder with Capt. D. B. Roy Chowdhury as the Co-pilot. Besides four airhostesses, there were sixty two passengers and one infant on board the aircraft. The flight had left Calcutta on time at 11.52 hours and was scheduled to arrive at Imphal at 12.55 hours.

At 12.41 hours, the aircraft had been cleared by the Air Traffic Control (ATC) Imphal to make an Instrument Landing System (ILS) approach. The prescribed visibility minima for

ILS landing at the Imphal airport is two kilometres whereas the visibility at that time was seven kilometres.

At 12.45 hours, i.e. five to seven minutes approximately before the landing, the aircraft had reported to the ATC, Imphal that it was commencing procedure turn at 5000 feet for the ILS landing. This was the last contact between the aircraft and the Air Traffic Control (ATC) and thereafter no contact could be established by the ATC with the aircraft. The ATC had asked two other aircraft of Indian Airlines—an Airbus A320 which was just airborne and a Boeing 737 which was due to depart from Imphal at that time to establish contact with the aircraft, but they also could not do so.

In accordance with the prescribed procedure, ATC Imphal initiated search and rescue operations for the missing aircraft around 13.10 hours. The assistance of the Air Force and para-military organisations in the area was called for to search for the missing aircraft. However, bad weather conditions for helicopter operations and difficult terrain hampered the search and rescue effort. It was only around 17.00 hours that a wireless message was received from the State Administration that the aircraft had crashed in the Thangjing hills about twenty five miles South-West of the Imphal airport.

As night landing facilities are not available at the Imphal airport, I flew to Calcutta the same evening and from there reached Imphal by 7 a.m. on the 7th August 1991 by a special plane accompanied by senior officials of the

Ministry, DGCA and the Indian Airlines. We also took with us about 65 relatives and friends of the passengers of the accident flight. I stayed at Imphal for two days and have returned last night only after ensuring that all possible assistance has been given to the relatives and friends of the passengers and all possible steps have been taken to recover the dead bodies and hand them over to the next of kin.

Nearly 300 relatives and friends of the passengers had come to Imphal. Despite the limited facilities available at Imphal, special care was taken to provide them with proper accommodation to meet their other requirements. A control room was also established at the place of their stay to cater to their needs and to disseminate latest information on the progress of evacuation. Besides aerial surveys of the wreckage site and several visits to the base camp of the evacuation operations, I had frequent meetings with the relatives and friends of the passengers to keep them apprised of the evacuation efforts and to allay their apprehensions. I had also visited the families of some of the passengers in and around Manipur to offer my condolences.

I have surveyed the site of the crash from the helicopter as it is not possible for the helicopter to land in its vicinity. The wreckage of the aircraft is strewn over a very steep slope of the hills in a densely forested area. It is possible to reach the site on foot only after five to six hours of arduous trekking from the foot hills. Continuous rains

had also made the terrain slushy and difficult to negotiate. These factors rendered the evacuation of the dead bodies to Imphal a formidable task. While all the bodies have been recovered, some of them are difficult to be identified. I should commend the diligent efforts of the Air Force and the para-military organisations in the evacuation operations. I should also make a special mention of the help given by volunteers from the nearby villages and Imphal, including the students from the Mountaineering School in the evacuation efforts. The State Government also rendered valuable assistance.

In accordance with the existing regulations in the matter, Indian Airlines will pay a compensation of Rs. 5 lakhs for each adult deceased passenger and Rs. 2.50 lakhs for the deceased infant in the accident.

The accident aircraft VT-EFL was purchased by Indian Airlines on 28th November, 1977 and was fitted with Dash 17A engines of Pratt and Whitney. Till the date of the crash, the aircraft had logged 29,727 hours and 33,570 landings.

Capt. S. Halder, the commander of the aircraft, had joined Indian Airlines on 22nd May, 1985. Prior to the accident, he had 3533 hours of total flying experience of which 1115 hours was as pilot in command of Boeing 737 aircraft. Capt. D. B. Roy Chowdhury, the co-pilot, had joined Indian Airlines on 24th February, 1989 and had 1197 hours of flying experience as Co-pilot of a Boeing 737 aircraft.

The Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) of the aircraft has been recovered while the Flight Data Recorder (FDR) is still to be recovered.

In accordance with the Aircraft Rules, 1937, the DGCA has appointed an Inspector of Accidents to investigate the accident. The DGCA officials have visited the crash site. While the departmental investigation has thus been started, I have already announced that a Court of Inquiry under a sitting Judge of the Calcutta or Guwahati High Court will be appointed shortly to investigate the cause of the accident. Necessary action is being taken in this regard.

The sorrow we feel on this tragedy cannot be described in words. Our hearts go out to the relatives whose grief we share. I am sure the Hon'ble Members join me in these sentiments.

16.00 hrs.

**SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (Dum Dum):** How many bodies could be identified in the meantime?

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** No questions are allowed. You can have a discussion, if you want.

**SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (Dum Dum):** Calcutta airport falls in my Constituency. An air hostess has died who is my neighbour.

**SHRI MADHAV RAO SCINDIA:** Out of 60 bodies, 56 are identified. Nine are still on their way to post-mortem.

16. 01 hrs.

**Motions Re. Atrocities being Committed on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections of the society—contd.**

[Translation]

**SHRI SHIBU SOREN (Dumka):** Mr. Chairman, Sir, I rise to speak on atrocities being committed on tribals and Harijans. Incidence of Tsundur village in Andhra Pradesh, is not the first of its kind, but such incidents have occurred on many occasions in the past also and will continue to take place in future. This is the reason for continuation of debate in this regard for three days in the august House. Shedding of crocodile tears and speech making is not going to pull down curtain on atrocities on tribals. I am also a tribal and many times have been the victim of such atrocities. For sale of land in Santhal Pargana and Chhota Nagpur, SPT Act and CNT Act respectively are in force. These laws were enacted by the Britishers, but after independence the Government has not paid any attention to the land left under these laws. At the sites of mines and factories, outsiders forcibly take possession of land in collusion with the administration. Through notification the Government acquires 100 acres of land at a time by acquiring 1-2 acre of land of villagers. People are neither paid compensation, nor offered alternative source of employment. This is the main reason of resentment. Forests for cultivation are cleared by tribals and the cunning people become owner of that land