

[Dr. K. L. Shrimali]

aware, was debated thoroughly in the Select Committee and it was after a great deal of discussion and consideration—I know that he was not agreeable to this; but it was after a great deal of thought and discussion that it was decided—that we came to the conclusion that the authors should enjoy the copyright for the life-time and 50 years after the death of the author.

**Shri Sadhan Gupta:** It was decided because of the Berne Convention.

**Dr. K. L. Shrimali:** The Berne Convention also has been approved by Parliament.

It was after a great deal of deliberation that we decided to have fifty years after the life of the author. I am afraid it will not be possible to reopen that question at this stage. India has always welcomed entering into international agreements which bring about greater amity and understanding among the peoples of the world. This is one of those measures which should be welcomed by this country and by this House because it gives us an opportunity to disseminate our works of creation to foreign countries and gives us an opportunity to receive works of foreign authors in this country. It makes intellectual intercourse easier, and it is through these intellectual intercourses that greater understanding can be developed in the world. I am looking at this Convention from this point of view. I would, therefore, appeal to the House to approve of this Resolution.

**Mr. Chairman:** I shall now put the Resolution to the House.

The question is :

"This House approves the Universal Copyright Convention and the Protocols thereto as adopted at Geneva on the 6th September 1952, and recommends that

the said Convention and protocols should be ratified by the Government of India".

*The Resolution was adopted.*

#### AIR CRASH IN NEFA AREA

**Shrimati Renu Chakravartty (Basirhat):** Mr. Chairman, Sir, the subject of aviation has been of intense interest to this House not only because in the first Parliament we took upon ourselves the task of nationalising the airlines and making the nation responsible for this very important public utility service, but also because the private operators were functioning in a way that was open to serious objection from the point of view of by-passing many of our safety regulations, over-working the personnel and in many ways manipulating the rules laid down by the Government to ensure correct flying standards and also because of the fact that almost all these companies were run at a loss and but for Government subsidies they could not operate.

Today the question as to whether there should be private operators or not does not arise, but when we come to the question of airlines various arguments like the difficulty of operating in certain areas are brought forward. Yet today nobody will debate that in places where there are no railway tracks some private companies should open a railway track. Yet in our nationalisation Bill we did leave a loophole and we did allow the existence of non-schedule operators. But I do not want Government to take shelter behind this because we have from time to time to review the workings as they come before us and that is why I have brought forward this particular discussion.

Now, Sir, unfortunately, a correct decision to nationalise the airlines has been brought to disrepute by many of the sins of the Indian Airlines Corporation and its management. The top-heaviness, the heavy expenditure, and other things have been debated

on the floor of the House on more appropriate occasions. Also we have raised the question of the recalcitrance of Government to allow the excise duty on petrol to be deducted because this is only a book transaction as far as Government is concerned. But that has not been allowed and at the same time we have heard vocal propaganda, insidious propaganda even within this House every year of private companies and I must say that so far as the ordinary public is concerned, when a company is going to give you a ticket for Rs. 30, for which the Indian Airlines Corporation charge Rs. 50, such propaganda falls on fertile ground. That is why the sneaking propaganda has found welcome from many sides.

Also the people of the Ministry have developed a partiality for giving over certain routes for non-scheduled operators. Of course, as the Government itself has replied this morning: "We have not yet finally decided." "Under consideration" is the reply given. But I heard that there are sections within the DGCA within the Ministry who are rather inclined to accept the position to give over certain of our routes to non-scheduled operators. However that may be the question which is being asked is how the different non-scheduled operators are able to quote lower fares and yet show a profit. This is a question on which everybody is interested.

Now without trying to minimise the sins of the IAC which still persist, which we will continue to criticise and correct, because we still believe that nationalisation is correct, we can say that private operators make up for this in several other ways which are dangerous, dangerous to the life of the community, dangerous to the pilots and the engineers who are working, dangerous to the aircraft which they fly. They also take away some of our income-tax, because they escape it. They can do it in many dubious methods which are pretty difficult to catch, because many of these non-scheduled operators have links quite high up. Every-

body knows it; the Indian Airlines Corporation knows it very well. They have made complaints on several occasions. But who is the authority that deals with it? It is the DGCA. The Indian Airlines Corporation will complain to DGCA. They cannot do anything more. What happens there? Something happens there, and things get clogged up there. I grant that it is difficult to get clear proof. But I will bring forward certain circumstantial evidence and I want the House to examine it. I want the Ministry to examine it; if necessary, I want the Estimates Committee to examine it, if it is within its purview.

But this much I do say that by examining one non-scheduled air company, I want to draw public attention to this aspect and focus public attention. A Dakota aircraft of the Indamer Company on food-dropping operations crashed in the NEFA area on the 20th August. Eight men, five men who were in the crew, and five loaders lost their lives. I do not deny the operation is a very risky operation. That is a very risky terrain. Those who come from eastern India know this area. We know how risky it is. I do not deny it was a very difficult operation. I do not deny that any crash can be due to pilot error. If we were only to take these three factors into consideration, there was as good a chance of error by any scheduled operator as it was in the case of non-scheduled operator.

But, there is a little further story behind it which throws some light on the way these non-scheduled operators actually function. That is what I want this House to be seized of. This ill-fated aircraft VT-ARH, as the hon. Minister said, was a H.A.L. aircraft. It was taken on lease. Although it was a H.A.L. aircraft, the day to day inspection and up-keep of that depends on the company itself. I do not think the H.A.L. takes any responsibility for that. It had to do that with its own staff if it operates on the eastern zone or if it can get it done by the H.A.L. staff at Barrackpore.

[Shrimati Renu Chakravartty]

This aircraft was brought to the eastern zone in June 1957 for air drop operations in the N.E.F.A. The engineer of this company was stationed in Mohanbari. I want to ask the Minister, would he be so good as to find out who signed the certificate of the aircraft. Was it by any other engineer than the one that was stationed there to look after the servicing of the aircraft? What was the reason that it was not so? Is it because this particular engineer—this feeler has been thrown out to me already that he was incompetent, he was inefficient—is it because of that? Or is it because certain very important rules and regulations of the D.G.C.A. were not complied with by this aircraft? I want the Minister to tell me categorically whether it was not found that 1500 hour wing inspection which is necessary had lapsed by 300 hours and that it was in a dangerous condition and that is why it was not signed by the engineer who was asked to service the aircraft.

You know that every part of an aircraft has a life. It has to be checked after a certain number of hours. For example, there are mandatory rules of wing inspection after 1500 hours, 3000 hours and 4500 hours. The costs of these inspections are pretty high. It comes to Rs. 6000 for inspection and then, there is a loss of revenue during the time when the aircraft is grounded Altogether, it comes to Rs. 10,000. So, it is a fairly important and expensive operation. Then, again, there are other items of inspection: annual overhauling. This is done by the H.A.L. when it belongs to the H.A.L. There is the 16,000 hour doubler change, a very expensive operation the cost of which will come to Rs. 20,000.

For every instrument and accessory, there is a specified period of operation after which they have to be overhauled and they have to be renewed. All this entails a lot of expenditure. This is a very important thing which guarantees safety for which we have the entire D.G.C.A.

inspection staff maintained so that these regulations are complied with. Here is one of the methods by which the non-scheduled operators, certainly the Indamer Co. has made money at the cost of human safety by disobeying the law, with, I am afraid, a certain amount of acquiescence, I do not know who the particular person may be,—that is why I demand an enquiry—a certain amount of acquiescence by those entrusted to see that the law is followed.

In this ill-fated V.T.-ARH I am told, a certain other very serious defect had developed. The engineers said, according to engineering language, that a couple of stringers of the flap bay of VT-ARH near the centre section to fuselage attachment point were badly eaten away by inter-crystalline corrosion. It is a very difficult thing for an ordinary person to understand this. Moreover, it is too late. Where is the aircraft? How are you going to go into the jungles of Assam, into the most interior of places. Even the inspectorate staff has not been able to reach the place, because, we are told, the pilots have refused. I hope the pilots will listen to me as I am speaking on the floor of this House. No pilot has been agreeable to fly over to find out the dead bodies that are there. As a result of that, we cannot say exactly whether this major defect had developed or not.

But, this much is true—this is what I would like the Minister to tell me—that certain engineers including certain secretary of the union of aeronautical engineers met him on the 19th of August and told him about the state of the aircraft of this company. and I was very sorry to hear that the Minister did not give it the importance or the urgency which it necessitated. Of course, I grant it that even those who spoke did not know that the ill-fated aeroplane was going to crash the next day. They did not know it. That is true. Because, sometimes, you take risk and fly. Ten times nothing happens,

the eleventh time, it crashes. But, the point is that it was made light of. Many people come and complain; may be in his mind; these people are probably not in good favour with the company; they complain against the company. All that sort of feeling is there. It was not very much seriously taken. Unfortunately, the next morning, VT-ARH crashed.

Another thing which I would like to point out here, which has worried me when I read the statement that the hon. Minister has made, is this. One helicopter of the Assam Oil Co. was taken by the Indamer Co. there. They went there. The pilot says that he risked his life thinking that maybe a brother may be still living. He brought back the dead body of the pilot. The rest of the seven, upto date, nobody knows where they are. I am told by certain people who met me, well, you know, when an air crash takes place, the bodies are flown or strewn here and there. I believe that pictures have been taken by certain people who went in the helicopter. I believe that our Inspectors, the D.G.C.A. staff have got pictures of that. In some papers in Bengal, a bit of news came on the 25th of August saying that the names of the five loaders who were on board the dakota of the Indamer Co. which crashed in a village in the N.E.F.A. were not released by even after the expiry of five days since the disaster. The Minister may tell me, after all the helicopter was small, it can only bring back one, it brought the pilot, nobody was prepared to go. He may tell me, there was a crash, everybody's body was burnt and lost. But, why this? The names of the five loaders were not made known; even after five days they would not say who were the people who were missing or who were dead. Repeated attempts made by the *Hindusthan Standard* at the Calcutta Office of the Indamer....

**Shri Ranga:** You do not know the names?

**The Minister of State in the Ministry of Transport and Communications (Shri Humayun Kabir):** May I interrupt for a minute? I gave the names in my statement. I do not know how the hon. Member says that the names were not given.

**Shrimati Renu Chakravartty:** I am reading what is given out in the *Hindusthan Standard*. I am not saying....

**Shri Humayun Kabir:** In the House I have given that information.

**Shrimati Renu Chakravartty:** I do not want the Government to identify itself with the Indamer Co. That is exactly what I don't want them to do. I am afraid they are going to do that.

**Shri Ranga (Tenali):** It is not their fault. I was afraid that was the fault of the Government. That is how it started.

**Shrimati Renu Chakravartty:** That is exactly my point. I do not want the Government to identify itself with the Indamer Co. I am afraid they are going to do that. We have heard it at the Telco discussion. I am terribly afraid I am going to hear it today. The point is, it is the suspicious behaviour of the company itself. I want the Government to find out whether it is a fact. I want the D.G.C.A. to find out. It is only a whisper which I have not yet checked that the names of the loaders that are in the register which has to be entered before anybody is loaded on the aircraft do not tally. This is what I wanted to find out. I leave it as it is. Government have given the names on the 27th or 28th, on the date on which the statement was made, on the 28th, if I am not mistaken. I think it was on the 27th.

**Shri Humayun Kabir:** 26th. This is on the 25th. So, I do not blame the *Hindusthan Standard* too much on that score.

Not only is it a question of this particular aircraft. I want this House to be seized of certain other aircrafts and the way they are maintained.

[Shri Humayun Kabir]

There is another aircraft, VT-DGR, which was doing supply dropping operations on 7th April in Silchar (Kumbhigram). Engineers were naturally sent to Silchar to maintain and service it. Again, who signs these certificates and inspection reports? The engine log book of this aircraft and the 50 hour scheduled operation on 7-4-57 were signed by a Mr. A. C. Sekhri, the Chief Engineer who happened to be in Calcutta looking after the aircraft in Calcutta. I suppose I will be told that Mr. Sekhri must have flown out there, or that the aircraft must have come back to Calcutta. Both these things can be checked up. I should like the hon. Minister to check them up.

Not only is there this manipulation in the log books maintained for entering the hours flown of an engine. Even for the premature failure of components and accessories, the number of hours flown has to be entered. I can give you so many examples. I can give you, for example, the example of how various components have been entered which a detailed check and enquiry will show are not very correct. What is more, I believe that two pages have been torn from the right hand engine log book, which is completely illegal. This is something which we can check up. There are many other things which we will never be able to check. I know Government will be convinced by the many things they are shown, but why is it that pages are torn from the log book? Does it not show certain things?

There are two other points I would like the hon. Minister to make enquiries about. There are two engine changes recorded by the same Mr. A. C. Sekhri on the 17th and on the 24th July for the right side of the same aircraft VT-DGR. In concurrence with this, propeller changes are also entered. Can this bear detailed check and enquiry?

Again, if we examine the aircraft's log entry book on 19th July there are

small things like starter change, high voltage regulator changed etc. These are also signed by the same Mr. Sekhri and by another, Mr. Bahl. If an enquiry is held, will they tell a tale or not?

Not only are pages torn out of log books, sometimes log books vanish and the DGCA is informed that it is inadvertently lost. He is there and he can find out. Suddenly a log book has been lost. Actually the tale is a very serious one. During the year 1955-56, the 3,000 hour and 4,500 hour wing inspection of VTCXR was due. It was found that within a very short time the CAO and 60,000 doubler change would also come up almost at the same time. So, instead of having the 3,000 and 4,500 hour inspections, they just carried out the two big inspections, thereby saving Rs. 10,000. But the question is, how was the aircraft allowed to fly 365 days before the CAO, which is an annual certificate, was given. I hope the hon. Minister who has sheaves of papers will be able to tell me that this is absolutely incorrect, and that everything was all right.

There is also this question of another entry of VT-DGP. Here again we find, if you look into it—I have seen it myself....

Shri Ranga: How?

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: I will tell you how if there is an enquiry. The 1,500 hours wing inspection was signed and it has been pasted on to the log book. All these things show that log-booking is carried out in a way which no Government concern can do. Government concerns cannot do it, and it is in this way that they save money.

I would also like to point out some other ways in which money is made. A friend of mine was asking me: "Oh, it is only Rs. 10,000 here and Rs. 5,000 there." Do you know that they carry overload to an extent which is never checked? This can

be easily verified, if sudden checks are made. For instance, recently on the 19th June an aircraft, VT-CXR, was found to be carrying 500 lbs. overload at Dum Dum airport. But why was no action taken? This is my point. If the Government can get up and say: "Yes on a certain occasion this happened and we took this action", I would be glad to know it, but it is widely known that whatever complaints are made to civil aviation authorities, nothing very much is done, at least nobody knows that anything has been done.

Then again, prohibited cargo is sometimes taken, which Government concerns cannot do. For instance, when a particular aircraft went to the HAL at Barrackpore for overhaul, they found in the belly of it mercury which is prohibited cargo. There was a hullabaloo about it, but the whole thing was hushed up.

The quantity of fuel hardly ever tallies with the figure in the manifest, and you know what an enormous amount is spent on each hour of flying.

Then I would like to ask why, for instance, scheduled operators are not allowed to fly over Pakistan while the non-scheduled operators fly regularly from Bagdogra over Pakistan. The IAC made several complaints, and I want to know....

Mr. Chairman: Order, order. Unless matters are specified clearly and precisely the hon. Minister will not be able to reply to all the points of the hon. Member. Under the rules it is only specific matters that have to be raised.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: Will you rule that what I am saying is unspecific?

Mr. Chairman: No. But she cannot expect a reply as to what is being done so far as Bagdogra airport is concerned.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: At least I will be very happy if the hon.

Minister says that he will order an enquiry and see that it will not be left only to DGCA, but that something more will be done about it.

But I just want to hurry up and say that they fly over Pakistan, and the IAC have complained against. The complaint has not been by me. If I complain they may say: "She is a Communist, she may be making it up", but I can tell you that the IAC has made several complaints, and nobody knows what has happened to them.

Sometimes we find that they do it in a very ingenious way. They come and use our scheduled routes very cleverly for this purpose. Let me give one instance. The scheduled route was from Calcutta to Chabua via Gauhati. Gauhati was allowed for re-fuelling. The particular pilot was clever enough. He said the plane had got bogged and he came to Gauhati, and refuelled there. Then he got bogged again and unloaded his cargo. Actually he was overloaded. That was the day McLeod & Co. had booked with the IAC. In spite of that, they took it over. The pilot got conveniently bogged and he had to unload, and he left the cargo at Gauhati.

I shall now take the question of under-logging of pilots' hours of flying. Pilot hours flown can easily be checked up if we go through the logbook of the pilot, the logbook maintained for the journey and given to DGCA for renewal of licence. But in each of these factors we are also losing income-tax.

I can say that there is an attitude in the Government, there is something going on in the Government. We have almost the Nepal route. The Nepal route is being given to Mr. Patnaik. Mr. Patnaik and the IAC seem to have come to some arrangement that they will be associates and share the business. I do not know what the position is regarding Afghanistan. I believe we will be losing that also. And now we are hearing

[Shrimati Renu Chakravartty]

that there is a talk of giving the eastern freight service which is the most paying and lucrative service. We are making a gross profit of Rs. 1 crore on it. If we give it over, the non-scheduled operators will almost make the same amount.

Now there is an attempt to amalgamate all the various small companies and there is an attempt to give it over to them. No decision has been taken; I do not say that a decision has been taken. But this attempt is going on.

So I say that there is a good case for nationalisation. I know it is very difficult for us to catch these people. The Indamer Company is a European concern with certain Indian associates. Mr. Baldwin is a very powerful man; he has his links high up.

I would say that not only is there a case for nationalisation but there is a case for inquiry. As you rightly pointed out, the Minister will not be in a position to give me an answer to all these points. But certainly an inquiry is required. The DGCA should also come into the picture besides the Indamer company.

Lastly, I do not want the hon. Minister to go away with the idea that because certain people have been retrenched, I am pleading on their behalf. These people have been retrenched because they have tried to see that the law of the land is implemented. It is the job of the Government to see that they are not retrenched. It is not only an individual matter, but it is a matter of national interest.

Mr. Chairman: Let me ascertain from the Minister how much time he would require. This is a one-hour discussion. Then I can apportion time.

Shri Humayun Kabir: About 15 to 20 minutes. If there are more speakers, I will not take more than 15 minutes.

Shri Ranga: He will fly.

Mr. Chairman: There are only about 15 minutes left.

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao and Shrimati Lia Palchoudhuri rose—

Shri Feroze Gandhi (Rai Bareilly): Let all the women speak today.

Shri T. B. Vittal Rao (Khammam): The previous speaker has put all the points. I would like to know with regard to this Indamer Company whether any check up is done about the number of flying hours that has to be done by a pilot and the co-pilot, because I find from the information available to me that the co-pilot has been allowed to do more than 150 flying hours a month. Generally, this will be considered a very high figure because the normal flying hours are only 65 a month; here he is allowed to do 85 hours extra, making in all 150 hours.

We have before us only a statement made by the Minister. Beyond that, we do not have any other report to make this discussion fully profitable. The statement made by the Minister is not very exhaustive; not only that, it is a little vague. You can understand when he reads out the names of the crew who were there, three crew and the other five loaders. He says 'Devi', 'Sarinder' and so on. That shows that even the full names are not available. I mention this specifically because it has been mentioned in the Press that those who travelled in the ill-fated aircraft were not the same persons who had booked at the airport to fly in that. There is some discrepancy. Therefore, when the names are not given in full even by the Minister when he made that statement, it creates some suspicion in our minds.

The plane took off at 12:10 hrs. IST and it lost contact with the Air Traffic Control at 12:35 hours and crashed at 13:20 hours IST. The difference is nearly about 45 minutes.

between the time of the crash and the time when contact was lost. During this period, I do not know why distress signal was not sent by the aircraft. Did it happen all of a sudden? Generally when a 'plane is in distress, it naturally sends out certain signals under rules. This is a matter for investigation. There is no mention in the statement of the Minister about any distress signal having been sent out by the aircraft.

Coming to rescue operations, whereas the Indamer Company could assemble a helicopter and go to the spot and bring back the pilot's dead body, was it not possible for anyone from our side to go there? It is said that the Chief Inspector of Accidents could not go there. Then how were these people able to go there and bring back the dead body? I am told that some photographs and other things were taken, but there is no mention of that.

As regards the aircraft's air-worthiness, when was the certificate of air-worthiness given? By whom was it given? At what airport was this given? These are questions to which we would like to have answers.

Moreover, usually it is the practice when such accidents take place to give the number of hours flown by the aircraft, by the pilot and also by the co-pilot. All these things are missing, which make us rather suspicious.

The only thing worthwhile given is the all-up weight of the aircraft which was said to be about 26,845 lbs. including 205 imperial gallons of petrol. This is not enough. We would like to know whether this weight was in conformity with the standard required or whether the aircraft was overloaded, because we have come to know that generally these operators overload, and they were sometimes found out overloading. These are a few points on which I require clarification.

Shrimati Ma Palchowdhari (Nabadwip): Mr. Chairman Sir, the matter of the accident that has happened is one of deep regret to everybody, and I think we are all one with what the hon. lady Member opposite has said when she says that it is a very heart-rending accident. I do not think anybody can be happy about such accidents.

Having said this, yet, one must realise that regrettable as it is, accidents do happen. I would like to put forth a few facts that have come to my notice. I may be wrong and I am open to correction, but I would like to make known to the House some of the facts that, I think, are not totally wrong.

In the first place, the aircraft that crashed was not an Indamer aircraft. It belonged to the Hindustan Aircraft Factory; it was leased by that company and it was maintained and serviced always by the Hindustan Aircraft Factory. I think the company paid the Hindustan Aircraft Factory approximately Rs. 1½ lakhs per year for the purpose of hire. So I do not think it is entirely true to say that the company goes on heartlessly not maintaining any aircraft or doing any maintenance at all, because no private company is going to gain really by not maintaining its aircraft, the aircraft is its stock in trade. I think there are conventions and laws that compel them to maintain their aircrafts also.

However, I would like to point out to the Ministry that if these laws have been deviated from by any company, they should, in the national interest, look into the matter and see that these laws are properly enforced. That much one must expect from all Ministries.

That particular spot where this accident took place has always been declared a very dangerous spot. Even the Army has considered it to be so. The Army and the Indian Air Force had been in operation there for over a year ago. They themselves, regretfully, lost two aircrafts in that very



[Shrimati Ila Palchoudhuri]

spot, and they had to pull out because they were needed in Kashmir; otherwise, it was the Indian Air Force which was doing these food dropping operations. this is a line which can bring wealth to India and private enterprise can really do something for Government coffers, in this line.

**An Hon. Member:** And have more accidents.

As regards the question by the hon. Member whether the aircraft sent out any message while it thought it was perhaps in difficulty, I think it did. At a height of 8,000 ft. it sent out a radio message to say that it was approaching the terrain and that it was descending. As everybody knows, where the accident happened, they had a very difficult terrain. It has got hills 16,000 ft. high on two sides, and another in front at a height, I think, of 9,000 ft. One has to go right into the valley making a tight circle and come out again. It is a very dangerous and a very clever operation that one has to do. I think if the pilot had any doubt about the aircraft being out of condition, he could not have been in any way justified in taking that risk. After all, his own life was at stake. Why should he take this risk if the aircraft was not in condition. He can always fly back! That is always possible!

**Shrimati Ila Palchoudhuri:** Accidents can happen anywhere; accidents have happened in trains. Do we do not regret that? It might have been one of our own boys. There is no woman who will not regret an accident. This is a peculiar attitude to take, that if there are accidents in trains we should not travel in trains. It is a fallacy!

16 hrs.

It is also true that the pilot concerned was a very well-trained pilot. He had an experience of 6,000 flying hours to his credit; he was a pilot trained in Hamburg and he was considered to be very efficient.

When we speak of the Indian Airlines Corporation and the nationalisation of air lines, there is one thing to be said about private enterprise also. It is not always as black as it is painted. If there have been discrepancies like log-books being lost as the hon. Member has said, it is for the Ministry to find out how these discrepancies and things which should not have happened have happened. These are things to be looked into. But, that is no argument for not allowing private enterprise to work.

I will say that private enterprise when it goes in for air service should be encouraged because after all Government is not in a position to nationalise all routes and there are trade routes that can be taken up by private enterprise. If private enterprise is allowed to operate in the field where it wants, it would bring the maximum revenue and will also help our cottage industries because it can go to places like Tripura and Manipur and bring back 6,000 lbs. of stuff and take that even to America and other places quickly.

It is said that their fares are less. It is a fact that anything that Government takes up does cost somewhat more because their functions cost more and their overhead charges are more. The fares are less not because everything is inefficient in private enterprise, but because they can work with less overhead charges.

I would certainly say that if there is any rule or anything which has to be emphasised or tightened, let the Ministry do that by all means. But, surely, it cannot be accepted that private enterprise is entirely at fault, and is the cause of accidents!

People in India, and our young boys in particular are adventurous and

**Sardar A. S. Saigal (Janjgir):** I only want to put some questions to the hon. Minister.

Is it a fact that in the same NEFA area during food dropping operations by Indian Air Force we lost two aircraft?

Is it a fact that the Indian Airlines Corporation refused to undertake this job because the pilots struck and the pilots even went so far as to get a Calcutta High Court injunction restraining the management from ordering the pilots to do this difficult job?

I hope the hon. Minister will answer these questions in his reply.

**Shri Humayun Kabir:** Sir, it is an occasion when all sections of the House will speak with a sense of sadness and, I hope, with a sense of due regard for the unfortunate lives which have been lost. I do not think it is an occasion where there is any reason to bring in any heat or any sense of discord or difference between the different sections of the House. We are all united in our grief for the lives that have been lost. We are all united in trying to ensure that Indian aviation makes good progress and that every care is taken to ensure that the aircraft are properly maintained, our pilots are properly trained and all the operations go through as successfully as we possibly can make them.

Therefore, I was a little sorry when the hon. mover of the motion tried to give a slightly partisan character to the thing. Government as such are no less concerned than all other Members of this House about the affair which can be regarded almost as a kind of national tragedy and a matter for regret for everyone.

Government have certainly nothing to do with the operations of private companies beyond ensuring that they operate according, to the regulations on the one hand and, on the other, that so long as they carry on their operations according to regulations, they get fairplay. Beyond that the Government have no other function.

And, the functions of the D.G.C.A., as I understand them, are to act as an

umpire and to see that the regulations are enforced and all the safety precautions are properly taken.

I will first deal with some of the questions asked about this particular aircraft. It has already been stated by one of my colleagues that this was not the aircraft of the Indamer but it was the property of HAL and the overhauls were carried out there. The last complete overhaul was carried out on the 12th November, 1956, and the certificate was valid for one full year. After that time, since the last major overhaul, the aircraft had flown 880 hours and 20 minutes.

The hon. mover of the motion referred also to the question of certain other inspections. There also, according to information available, the 1500 hours inspection was carried out on 22.3-1957.

**Shrimati Renu Chakravartty:** By whom?

**Shri Humayun Kabir:** By Mr. George, A.M.I.E. Licence No. 581, category A. Since then it had flown about—I do not have the figures—it was well within the permissible limit.

I cannot say anything about the defect which was mentioned by the hon. mover because there is still to be an inspection on the spot. Whether that particular defect had been revealed before or not is more than I can say or anybody else can say. But I would like the House to consider one point here. If these defects could be known to an outsider like the hon. Member or anyone else in Calcutta or me, is it likely that these pilots, who were going to risk their lives, who were going to fly these planes, would remain unaware of these defects? If they knew the defects in the plane, is it likely that the pilots would risk their lives in an operation which is recognised by all as risky and hazardous?

**Shrimati Renu Chakravartty:** Is it not very highly paid?

**Shri Humayun Kabir:** It may be very highly paid and even then I

[Shri Humayun Kabir]

would be very surprised if a pilot knowing that there was a defect in the engine or in the airframe would still risk an operation of this type, where the slightest mistake or the slightest carelessness would mean not merely some damage but also loss of life. In this matter, as I said, I cannot say anything categorical till it has been examined. I shall certainly ask the D.G.C.A. to see that full inspections are carried out.

If what the hon. mover said about the log-book being lost or pages being torn from the log-book can be substantiated, all necessary action will be taken. The hon. mover can rest assured that Government will take full cognizance of any deviation that has taken place at any time and will ensure that such deviations are not permitted.

The hon. mover also referred to certain people who saw me the other day, a day or two before the accident, and said that I did not pay proper heed to their warning. I had asked them to place their facts in writing. After the accident took place, it so happened that one of the senior officers of the Directorate of Civil Aviation was in Calcutta. I asked him to make an enquiry into the whole affair; and all those people who made these complaints were contacted. But, unfortunately they were not prepared to give anything in writing at this stage, giving as their reason that they had made certain representations to, I think, the Labour Commissioner of the Government of West Bengal and if they were dissatisfied, then only they would go to the D.G.C.A. This is a little queer. If the complaints are about the maintenance or about defects in the engine, I do not see how the Labour Commissioner comes into the picture. In any case, I will assure the hon. mover that since this matter has been raised and it was referred to even before in the House by 4 or 5 Members, I have asked that a thorough enquiry into the whole affair be made.

Some hon. Members said that so far as the Indamer Company is concerned, their aircraft are not properly inspected and that action is not taken against them. I have a statement here showing the action taken against them. On three occasions during the current year, I find that it was detected that they had overloaded. I may add that they are not the only culprits. There are other private operators who also overload at times. Whenever it is detected, immediately steps are taken to ensure there is no repetition. In certain cases, severe punishment is given. In one particular case, I find that it happened on 7-3-1957; the pilot's licence was suspended for two weeks for carrying 304 lbs. of overload. In the other two cases mentioned by the hon. Member, one was an overload of 515 lbs. and the other was 263 lbs. In these two cases the matter is under examination. These took place in the end of June and middle of July and I may assure the hon. Member that appropriate action will be taken.

As I said earlier, it is not Government's intention to condone any faults. On the other hand, wherever these companies are plying, we should play fair so that they are also given a proper opportunity for working. There should not be any undue interference and certainly not a spirit of suspicion.

The hon. Member objected that I had certain sheaves of paper. Certainly, she could not expect that I could carry these details about air-worthiness or when the certificates were issued, etc. in my head. After all, if I am to reply to the debate and if I have to have certain papers with me, that should not be a ground for accusation or complaint.

**Shri Ferose Gandhi. (Rai Bareilly):** Ministers get into difficulties. Sheaves of paper sometimes cause trouble to Ministers.

**Shri Humayun Kabir:** I have not had the trouble. I have had the experience of all kinds of sheaves and

remains of papers. Fortunately, I have had no difficulty and if the hon. Member herself did not refer to her papers over and over again, perhaps she would be more justified in taking me to task.

One hon. Member asked questions whether it was a fact or not that the IAF lost two aircraft in this very operation. I regret very much to say that according to the information available to me this is a fact. I also understand that regarding these operations, some of the pilots of the IAC did not agree to carry on these operations as they were too risky. It is also a fact that the matter did go up to the High Court. The result is that with the exception of a very small number of pilots of the IAC, the rest are not willing to undertake this work. It is precisely the reason why it was given to Indamer, a private operator. If the IAF or the IAC were able to carry on the entire burden the question would not have arisen at all.

I think I have dealt with almost all the questions raised by the hon. Members. There is one more point about the log-book. The log-book is signed and certified by the engineers in the employ of the different operators of the companies. Just as the IAC has its own licensed engineers, the private operators also have engineers who certify the air-worthiness. All major inspections including the 100 hours inspections come up to the DGCA for surprise checks and thus he comes in the picture. So, we cannot say that the certificates given by the certified employees are not to be trusted. All over the world, it is the practice and whatever we do here is according to the regulations which had been passed and accepted after considerable discussion, in the light of the experience of other countries as well.

Mr. Chairman, I do not want to take any more of your time. I feel that everyone in this House regrets this accident. We want that there should be a full enquiry. The difficulty has been the terrain. It is so risky that the captain of the Helicopter refused

to go there; in his own words, not for all the gold in the world, would he undertake that flight a second time. We tried to see if an IAF helicopter could be made available but it was not available. We attempted to send a man on foot. But, the NEFA authorities have advised that the paths were so risky that no one could go there during the monsoons.

We have not, however, given hope. Even now, we are trying to find out whether anyone can get even within ten miles of that area. If we can do that, someone will go and inspect it on the spot. It will take about fifteen days to go on foot and fifteen days to come back. The House will, in the light of these difficulties, appreciate that in spite of our best efforts, we have not been able to send the Chief Inspector of Accidents or any other Inspector. As soon as weather conditions permit, someone will go there. I can assure the House that every effort will be made to see that we minimise the risks. But no one can eliminate altogether the chance of accidents, especially in operations in such areas. Even the most careful pilots sometimes make mistakes and we do not know what happened here. We do not know the details.

Different theories have been advanced by other pilots operating in that area. These are all conjectures. I do not wish to place before the House any information based on conjecture. I will conclude by saying that as soon as a full report is available, we shall place it before the House.

Sardar A. S. Saigal: I put the question as regards the pilots' strike.

Shri Humayun Kabir: I have mentioned it already. The IAC pilots did not want to fly in this area and they went up to the High Court.

Shrimati Bena Chakravarty: I am happy that an enquiry has been ordered by the hon. Minister. I hope that this enquiry will be undertaken

[Shrimati Renu Chakravartty]

not only by the Inspectorate of the DGCA but that the Minister himself will take an active interest in the proceedings. He should look into the proceedings because of certain other factors which I mentioned in my speech.

**Mr. Chairman:** You can ask questions; no more new points can be raised.

**Shrimati Renu Chakravartty:** I am not making any new points. I am just winding up the debate which is my right. The other point which I would like to answer is the point mentioned about the pilots of the IAC not having accepted these risks. If we had dealt with the IAC a little more tactfully, if it had been agreed to give insurance and other benefits which naturally the pilots would want, the matter could have been dealt with quite amicably. We would have then made available our aircrafts and our pilots for this very important operation. We would have also made some good money. From all these points of view, I hope that this matter would be looked into by the Minister himself and that he would tighten up the Inspectorate staff so that it may not be possible to circumvent these things. I would like all these matters to be gone into by the Ministry.

**Mr. Chairman:** The discussion is concluded. We will now take up the discussion on explosions.

#### EXPLOSIONS IN RAILWAY WAGONS AND SHEDS

**Shri Feroze Gandhi (Rae Bareilly):** Shri Ramaswami should explode first.

**Shri S. V. Ramaswami (Salem):** He will assist, Sir

**Mr. Chairman:** I find so many hon. Members' names and I do not know how many are desirous of speaking.

**Shri Feroze Gandhi:** I have not sent my name because it appears in the list as No. 2.

**Shri Tangamani (Madurai):** I have also not sent my name as it appears there.

**Mr. Chairman:** How long will Shri Ramaswami take?

**Shri S. V. Ramaswami:** Fifteen minutes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Then, the rest shall have ten minutes each.

**Shri S. V. Ramaswami:** Mr. Chairman, Sir, it is very unfortunate that three explosions have taken place almost in quick succession within the space of one month. There has been loss of life. About 22 persons have been killed in all the three explosions. There has been loss of property also. As a result of these explosions all traffic in these fire-works has been held up resulting in loss to the Railways.

The report that has been placed on the floor of this House this morning reveals certain things. One thing seems to be clear and we are happy about that. Enquiries made so far, however, do not indicate any sabotage or mischief. To that extent we are glad that this decision has been arrived at. With regard to each of these explosions certain results emerged as a result of the enquiry.

With regard to the first explosion at Asansol the report says:

"The entire lot of amorces (paper caps) was destroyed in the explosion but some portion of other fire-works were found in the debris and an analysis of these showed that they contained no prohibited or unauthorised composition."

Later on it says:

"With regard to the Asansol explosion the Inspector of Explosives is of the opinion that the accident could have arisen from either the boxes having been dropped on to the wagon floor or some of the boxes having been dropped on loose amorces which had come out of a broken package or by a box of amorces having been knocked violently against the door