

RAJYA SABHA

Wednesday, 31st July, 1985/9 *Sravana*,
1907 (*Saka*)

The House met at eleven of the clock.
Mr. Chairman in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Improvements in the Chetak Helicopter

*121. DR. LOKESH CHANDRA:†
SHRIMATI USHA MALHOTRA:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state what steps Government have taken or are taking to implement recommendations of the French experts from the Aerospatiale Company for improving the maintenance and operational procedures in the Chetak helicopter?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO): The recommendations of the team of French experts from M/s. Aerospatiale, regarding maintenance and operational procedures of the Chetak Helicopters have been implemented.

DR. LOKESH CHANDRA: After the recommendations of the Aerospatiale Company a number of committees were appointed including the La Fontaine Committee. What were the recommendations of the La Fontaine Committee and other subsequent committees and have the suggestions of these committees been implemented?

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: This has nothing to do with the La Fontaine Committee. I have a long list of recommendations. If the House is prepared to hear me I am prepared to read out the whole thing....

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you want that, Dr. Lokesh Chandra?

DR. LOKESH CHANDRA: He need not read out all of them here; he can give their gist, a general idea.

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: I can send them to the honourable Member and I will give him a general idea now.

†The Question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Dr. Lokesh Chandra.

It may be noticed that this team came here in connection with a particular difficulty which was being faced by the Chetak helicopter in its flight over a given altitude. At that altitude, after reaching that altitude, beyond that, was getting some vibrations, vibrations and stiff movement. So this team came here particularly to see that defect and recommend certain remedial measures if possible. It so happened that they visited almost every centre of overhaul, etc. They made their own inquiries and unfortunately it was not possible for them to tell us anything specific about the particular difficulty in connection with which they had come. Even so they gave certain general recommendations, how to improve the maintenance, how to keep the flights within the range given in the manual, etc. etc. All those have been implemented. They said something about a vibrometer being fixed. That is being done. So there is nothing else that we can do in pursuance of what they recommended. But I have to say that in spite of all that, the vibration continues, the difficulty of vibration continues. Therefore, what the Indian Air Force has done is to scale down the parameters so that the flight is always, almost always, within the safety limits. This is what has been done. As regards the details I can send them over to the honourable Member. But I may say that they are all of a very, very, general nature.

DR. LOKESH CHANDRA: In spite of the recommendations having been implemented the Government is reported to have invited the West German team from NDD for developing an advanced helicopter as being a more reliable craft with a higher safety margin and payload capacity. May I know from the Minister whether the Chetak helicopter would be phased out in preference to the NDD helicopters and whether these helicopters would come into operation before the next seven years because during the next seven years there is going to be a leapover in technology and whatever we plan today may be outdated by the time it comes into operation?

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: If the honourable Member is referring to the ALH, that is a separate project altogether. There is no question at present of phasing out the Chetak.

SHRIMATI USHA MALHOTRA: Is the Government aware that there is acute shortage of technical manpower and that only 60 per cent of the needs are met? There is pressure on pilots and...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not relevant.

SHRIMATI USHA MALHOTRA: I am coming to my question. The rate of accidents is ten times higher...

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is not relevant. The question relates to Chetak.

SHRIMATI USHA MALHOTRA: I would like to know what the Government is going to do to remedy this shortage of manpower to look after this.

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: Sir, this question does not arise from the main question. But I have noted the question, the supplementary put by the honourable Member. I do not think that there is any real shortage. I shall nevertheless look into it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Mr. Jaswant Singh.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Sir, I heard the suggestion made by the honourable Defence Minister that as the Chetak faces difficulty beyond a certain altitude, the Ministry of Defence has now decided not to fly that particular helicopter beyond that altitude and he has said it is one of the suggestions. So, we need to define the parameters, a bit better. Apart from the Chetak, which mounts Alouette-III engine we have the Chetak which is a subsequent thing. I think this helicopter is specifically advantageous for high-altitude flying. Therefore, when the Minister suggested that they have resolved the issue by curtailing the altitude at which this helicopter should fly, I do find it difficult to reconcile the whole thing. Alouette-3 is going out of production even in Aero Spatiale and within the HAL, we are not manufacturing Alouette-3 unless there is a specific order placed. Would the honourable Minister, therefore, reconcile this thing that when this particular helicopter is especially for high-altitude flying, how

this problem gets resolved, which we are faced with and for which we are calling the French technicians, by not flying at a high altitude?

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: Sir, I have to go into some technical details since these question have been raised. The altitude at which it is now allowed to fly and not go beyond unless there is some emergency like bringing some casualties from high areas, etc., is 17,500'. Normally they are asked not to fly beyond 17,500'. And Sir, 17,500, the honourable Member would agree, is not a small altitude. It covers almost all the normal duties which the Chetak has to perform and we are also looking for a much bigger helicopter which could go to higher altitudes. We are very hopeful of getting it in the near future and there is the ME-8 which is being used. ME-8, as the honourable Member knows, is being used for high-altitude flying. All our supplies for high-altitudes are flown by this successfully and there is no question of any work or any task being delayed or not being done as a result of this. This is only for the sake of safety.

Another point which I would like to bring to the notice of the honourable Member is that this team told us in so many words that there may be vibration at that height, but that vibration really does not entail any lack of safety. It does not have any accident-proneness as we might call it. But, even so, the Indian Air Force has thought it fly to fly it within those parameters and not to take the risk although, according to the experts from France, there is really no risk involved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Mr. Kapur.

SHRI H. L. KAPUR: Sir, is it a fact that the Aero Spatiale Team that came here had suggested that the auto-rotative landing carried out by Chetak may be the cause of this extraordinary vibration because vibration in a helicopter can come due to many reasons, not particularly because of any specific factor? The question is... (Interruptions).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Kalpana Rai, it is not proper to read newspapers in the House.

SHRI H. L. KAPUR: The question is that the Chetak will not be allowed to fly beyond 17,500'. The Cheetah helicopter, which is a variant of the Chetak, is a lighter one. Are you intending to use the Cheetah helicopter for high-level operations where the Chetak cannot go for bringing some casualties on account of incidents that occur at that altitude, beyond 17,500'?

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: As I said earlier, we are using ME-8 for higher altitudes. As for the outer ground effect charts referred to by the honourable Member, yes, we have given instructions to fly only according to the outer ground effect charts and not come down to the inner ones because it was pointed out by the team that it is always safe to fly according to the outer ground effect charts.

SHRI VISHWA BANDHU GUPTA: Sir, once this problem of vibrations has been identified, it is a problem. I would like to know from the Minister that since Aerospatiale Company is not able to help us in this matter, would he consider getting experts or expert advice or R&D from some other country so that we know as to how to solve this problem for our future designs?

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO: Future designs have nothing to do with it. We have got Chetak. We are manufacturing it. These are our collaborators and they are the first persons we go to in order to remove difficulties. They have told us that this is no difficulty impinging on safety. We did not want to take any risk. Therefore, we have scaled down the parameters subject to which the flights are undertaken. There is no point in going to some other manufacturer. That would be neither here nor there. In fact, our own experts would go into it and they are doing it. They are going into greater details and trying to find out if there is any remedy which they can think of.

Representation from the Rajkot Small Unit Diesel Engineers Association

*122. **SHRI CHIMANBHAI MEHTA:** Will the Minister of IRRIGATION AND POWER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact the the Rajkot Small Unit Diesel Engines Association has

made a representation to his Ministry that prevailing "Q" mark system should continue for safeguarding the interests of small units;

(b) what is the difference between 'ISI' and 'Q' marks;

(c) whether it is a fact that 'Q' mark and 'ISI' mark engines do not differ in vital aspects;

(d) whether it is a fact that 'Q' mark engine is cheaper as compared to 'ISI' mark engine; and

(e) if so, what are the reasons for Government's reluctance to continue 'Q' mark for some time more?

THE MINISTER OF IRRIGATION AND POWER (SHRI B. SHANKARANAND): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(e) Does not arise at present.

SHRI CHIMANBHAI MEHTA: Sir, the hon. Minister has said that the information is being collected. The matter relates to small producers of engines for agriculture use. That is known as 'Q' mark. It is cheaper compared to the other 'ISI' mark by Rs. 1000. The price of 'Q' mark is Rs. 3700 and that of 'ISI' mark Rs. 4700. The 'ISI' mark is being manufactured by Kirlosker, Bajaj, Voltas and big units and 'Q' mark engines are being produced by small manufacturers who were formerly skilled workers and because of the loans that they got, became small entrepreneurs. If the information is not available, the hon. Minister should enlighten us on one point. Why did they derecognise the facility that was being given to the 'Q' mark? What was the facility available for the 'ISI' mark and 'Q' mark engines? If the farmers buy engines, banks advanced loans to them against those engines and the Government gave subsidy to these farmers against the purchase of these engines. Now, from 1st July onwards, the 'Q' mark engine has been disallowed and they can't get this