

**STATEMENT BY MINISTER RE  
ACCIDENT TO INDIAN AIRLINES  
FOKKER FRIENDSHIP AIRCRAFT VT-  
DOJ ON APRIL 21, 1969, NEAR KHULNA  
IN EAST PAKISTAN**

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION (DR. KARAN SINGH) : Sir, as honourable members are aware, Indian Airlines Fokker Friendship aircraft VT-DOJ, operating scheduled passenger flight IC-260 Silchar/Agartala/Calcutta on Monday 21st April 1969, unfortunately crashed at Dumria near Khulna, East Pakistan. All 40 passengers on board and the crew of 4 lost their lives.

The plane left Agartala at 7.16 P.M. and the pilot communicated to Air Traffic Control Dum Dum that his expected time of arrival there was 8.40 P.M. The last contact of the aircraft was with Calcutta Air Traffic Control at 8.29 P.M. Late that night at 11.37 P.M. a long range radio telephone message was received at Dum Dum from Dacca that the Pakistan International Airlines representative at Khulna had reported that an aircraft had crashed between Khula and Daulat-pur at 8.55 P.M. local time (8.25 P.M. I.S.T.). Subsequently, another message was received from Dacca confirming the earlier message, and a third message at 11.41 P.M. I.S.T. confirmed that the aircraft involved was the ill-fated Indian Airlines plane.

Our Deputy High Commissioner in Dacca reached the site of the crash at about 5.00 P.M. on 22nd April. He has reported that the accident took place at a place called Beelpapla about 15 miles from Khulna. It took about 5 hours to collect the dead bodies and load them on trucks, after which they had to be carried by boat for about three miles before they "could be brought to the main road. The Deputy High Commissioner took delivery of the bodies and proceeded to Jessore. The party reached the Indo-Pak border at Petrapol 2.00 A.M. on the 23rd, and completed the handing over process to Indian Airlines at 4.00 A.M.

The Pakistan authorities extended all assistance in this tragic situation. Indian Airlines made arrangements to transport the bodies from the border by road to Calcutta, a special flight was laid on for carrying relatives of the passengers from Silchar and Agartala to Calcutta, and free passages were arranged for addressees in distant parts of the country.

Information available at present indicates that the pilot was briefed before departure from Agartala, to the effect that bad weather was likely to be encountered en route. Weather information was passed by Dacca and subsequently by Calcutta during the flight. The Meteorological report indicated thunderstorm activity near the site of the crash.

In accordance with international practice, the State in which the accident occurs institutes an inquiry into the circumstances and the State of Registry is entitled to have an accredited representative on the inquiry. The inquiry is being conducted by the Pakistan authorities, and Shri V. N. Kapur, Controller of Aeronautical Inspection at Calcutta has been nominated as India's representative. Three officers of Indian Airlines, Capt. J. Joseph, Operations Manager, Capt. M.L. Gandhi, Air Safety Officer, and Shri N. S. Rajan, Assistant Chief Inspector, will act as Advisers to Shri Kapur. The exact cause of the crash will be known only after the inquiry is completed.

The aircraft, Series 100 F-27 Fokker Friendship, was acquired by Indian Airlines on 14th February 1962. Its insured value is Rs. 50 lakhs, the amount being recoverable from the Life Insurance Corporation. Indian Airlines are issuing press notices inviting claims for compensation from legal heirs of passengers involved in the crash. Compensation is payable for a passenger of more than 12 years of age on the date of accident at Rs. 42,000 and in respect of passenger below 12 at Rs. 21,000, which is also recoverable from the Life Insurance Corporation.

I am sure the house will join me in expressing our deep sense of grief at this tragic occurrence, and in conveying our sympathy to the bereaved families.

SHRI BIREN ROY (West Bengal) : Sir, as the matter is sub judice and an enquiry is going to be held, I would not ask other questions but only on one point that the hon. Minister has stated that whether forecast was given to the plane in flight. But we are given to understand, if I understand it correctly from Dacca and Calcutta, that though India and Pakistan are both members of the IATA and WMO, they do not generally give weather forecasts while flights are going on. Is that a fact or not. I understand it is not generally given and we have to assume that our airlines when they overfly Pakistan and also when Pakistan planes overfly India, they do not really get in-flight weather communications, but they have a radar sometimes and they might get some information from the radar. So I want clarification on this.

DR. KARAN SINGH : Sir, I do not at this moment have definite information with regard to what our arrangements are with the Pakistanis but as far as I know, when our planes are actually in flight, they can surely 'call upon the weather broadcasts of other countries also. For example, Pakistani planes fly over a huge stretch of Indian territory. Surely it could not be that they are deprived of any weather information during this period. My impression, subject to correction, is that this sort of information is made available as part of a general international practice. But certainly I can make further enquiries and inform the hon. Member.

SHRI M. P. BHARGAVA (Uttar Pradesh) : I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether any distress S.O.S. message was received at Dum Dum.

DR. KARAN SINGH : No, Sir. I have got here the transcript of the exact radio signals that took place.

There was no S.O.S. received. The last message received was : "We are unable to check our position. We are maintaining 300 now." This was the last message received and after that the plane went dead.

श्री राजनारायण (उत्तर प्रदेश) :

श्रीमान्, हमारा एक सीधा सा सवाल है और वह यह है कि कलकते के डमडम हवाई अड्डे में मौसम खराब था, इसकी जानकारी कब हुई ? विश्वसनीय सूत्रों की जो जानकारी है वह यह है कि करीब 6.20 पर डमडम हवाई अड्डे से अगरतला को सूचना दी गई कि यहां पर मौसम बिल्कुल खराब है। उस समय दो जहाज वहां से उड़ान भरने वाले थे। एक पायलट ने तो उड़ान भरने से इन्कार कर दिया क्योंकि उसने कहा कि मौसम खराब होने की सूचना आ गई है, इसलिए मैं इस समय, हवाई जहाज लेकर नहीं जाऊंगा। ऐसा लगता है कि जो दूसरा पायलट था वह कुछ तेजस्वी था और उसने पहले जहाज के 11 पैसंजरो को लेकर उड़ान भर ली। वह उन पैसंजरो को बिठलाकर 7.20 पर रवाना हो गया यह जानते हुए भी कि वहां पर मौसम खराब है। हमारा प्वाइन्ट यह है कि जब डमडम हवाई अड्डे से मौसम खराब होने की सूचना भेज दी गई थी कि यहां पर पूरे तौर पर मौसम खराब है और यहां पर कोई जहाज न आये, तो इस जहाज को उड़ान भरने की इजाजत क्यों दे दी गई जब कि पहले वाले पायलट ने उड़ान भरने से इन्कार कर दिया था। उस जहाज को पहले जहाज के 11 यात्रियों को बिठलाकर ले जाने की तथा उड़ान भरने की इजाजत क्यों दी गई ? यह मुख्य सवाल है और जिसमें सम्पूर्ण इयर लाइन्स दोषी है। जिन लोगों की जानें गई हैं उनके लिए इस विभाग को दोषी समझा जाना चाहिये और इसके लिए उसे पश्चात्ताप

[श्री राजनारायण]  
करना चाहिये। इसलिए मैं इस बारे में पूरी जानकारी जानना चाहता हूँ।

डा० कर्ण सिंह : जो दुर्घटनाग्रस्त हो गये हैं उनके लिए पश्चात्ताप करना कठिन है क्योंकि अब हम उनके लिए कुछ नहीं कर सकते हैं। माननीय सदस्य ने बहुत सी बातें विस्तार से कहीं, लेकिन मैं यही कहना चाहता हूँ कि जब इस संबंध में इन्क्वायरी होगी तब ही ये चीजें सामने आयेंगी। हमारी जानकारी यह है कि अगरतला में भी वैदर वाणिग की व्यवस्था है। जब जहाज उड़ा था तो उसके 16 मिनट पहले पायलट को दिखाया गया था। वैदर वाणिग के बारे में हमेशा से यह कायदा है कि जब पायलट उड़ान भरता है तो पायलट काकपिट में जाता है और देखता है कि वहाँ वैदर की क्या स्थिति है। तो वहाँ वे गये और उनको दिखाया गया कि यह वैदर फोरकास्ट है। इसमें बात यह होती है कि जो केप्टेन होता है उसको यह अख्तियार दिया जाता है कि वह उड़े या न उड़े। हमारे यहाँ सैकड़ों फ्लाइट्स रोज होती हैं देश के कोने कोने में और हमारे नियमों के तहत पायलट का यह दायित्व होता है कि वह देखे कि मौसम खराब है तो वह नहीं उड़ेगा या वह रिस्क लेगा। बहुत दफा हम यह देखते हैं कि हमारे काश्मीर का मौसम खराब होता है और पायलट को यह सोचना पड़ता है कि वह उड़े या न उड़े। अब जैसा कि माननीय सदस्य ने कहा कि वह तेजस्वी था या उनका मिसकालकुलेशन हुआ या उनकी भूल हुई, इसके बारे में हम क्या कह सकते हैं। इसके बावजूद कि उनको वैदर इत्यादि के बारे में बताया गया, उन्होंने कहा कि मैं उड़ूंगा और जब उन्होंने कहा कि मैं उड़ूंगा तो वे उड़ गये। इसमें दोष किस का है यह जब इन्क्वायरी होगी उसके बाद पता चलेगा।

श्री राजनारायण : मेरा कहना है कि दो जहाज उड़ने थे, मगर एक पायलट ने इनकार किया। तो जब एक पायलट ने इनकार कर दिया उसी मौसम के आधार पर तब दूसरे पायलट को भी उड़ने से वहाँ के लोगों को रोकना चाहिये था। मेरा प्वाइंट यह है।

डा० कर्ण सिंह : दूसरे जहाज की बात नहीं है। हर एक जहाज के केप्टेन का दायित्व है कि वह इसको देखे। कई दफा ऐसा होता है कि दो पायलट होते हैं और उनमें से एक पायलट कहता है कि मैं चला जाऊंगा और दूसरा कहता है कि मैं नहीं जाऊंगा। इसमें उनको रोकने का प्रश्न नहीं आता है।

श्री बी० डी० खोबरागडे (महाराष्ट्र) : पैसेजर्स की जान का भी तो सवाल आता है।

डा० कर्ण सिंह : पायलट की जान का भी तो सवाल है। कोई जानबूझ कर मृत्यु के मुंह में जाना नहीं चाहेगा। उसने सोचा होगा कि मैं चला जाऊंगा और अगर मौसम खराब होगा तो मैं लौट आऊंगा। लेकिन दुर्भाग्य से वह उसमें ग्रस्त हो गया। इसमें हम क्या कह सकते हैं। जब इन्क्वायरी होगी तब पूरे तथ्य निकलेंगे।

SHRI M. PURKAYASTHA (Assam): Sir, I express my deep sorrow at the loss of 44 precious lives most of whom were personally known to me. In this connection I want to know from the Minister this point. When the new timings of the Indian Airlines were introduced in Silchar and Calcutta line since November last, there were protests from the pilots as well as the public that the new timing for this line would not suit both the pilots and the public because due to the late journey of these planes the visibility becomes poor and that may be one of the causes of accidents because bad weather continues in that region for

a long time. Will the honourable Minister be pleased to state what steps have been taken to establish normal functioning of the Indian Airlines in that route because it stands suspended since the date of the accident and whether the Indian Airlines propose to change the timing so as to suit the pilots as well as the public?

DR. KARAN SINGH : Sir, it is true and the position is this. In 1965-66 and 1967 the plane used to leave in the afternoons. In 1968 it was changed from the afternoon timing to the morning time. But in 1969 in order to get maximum utilisation of the aircraft the afternoon timings were reintroduced. In other words, in the last five years for four years the timing has been in the afternoon. Only last year it was in the morning. I made enquiries because this came out in the papers also and some Members spoke to me as to why this timing was again put in the afternoon and why it does not continue to be in the morning. I have told them that this was done so as to maximise the utilisation because as you know these planes do not do only one round. It is a whole net-work of utilisation from the morning and various other stations have to be covered. And in working out their schedules the Airlines thought that a greater utilisation of the plane could take place if the timings were in the afternoon. For the last four years it was in the afternoon . . . (Interruptions) Now what is happening is a service is going to be operated starting from Calcutta at 9 O'clock in the morning. It will be the morning time...

(Interruptions)

SHRI LOKANATH MISRA (Orissa) : May I know what the rate of compensation is which is paid to the relations of the passengers ? They must be paid compensation.

SHRI CHITTA BASU (West Bengal) : They are giving, Rs. 42,000 and Rs. 21,000.

SHRI LOKANATH MISRA : Are you paying them?

DR. KARAN SINGH : I said that in my original statement. Rs. 42,000 for a person over 12 years and Rs. 21,000 for one less than 12 years. This is not on an ad hoc basis. This is according to certain international regulations.

SHRI JOACHIM ALVA (Nominated) : The honourable Minister is aware that Assam and the surrounding regions have the highest rate of fatality in the Indian Airlines and pilots normally do not take off on those lines especially when the weather is foul and extra inducements are offered to the pilots to take their flights. In view of this, may I know whether there is any rule in the matter of discretion of pilots to take off especially when the weather is dangerous? As my honourable friend, Mr. Khobara-gade mentioned, the lives of other passengers are also involved. When there are 20 to 30 passengers only one pilot, one daring man, is piloting the plane. He goes ahead while the safety of so many passengers is involved. May I ask the honourable Minister whether the custom or the practice followed in the early '50s or during the last decade, of associating Members of Parliament with the inquiry committees, will be followed by the honourable Minister ? The reason, Sir, is we are laymen. We are not authorities on aviation. But we learn a lot. We acquire a lot of knowledge when we—the Members of Parliament from both the Houses—are associated with the inquiry committees. We acquire a lot of knowledge in the course of an inquiry. Whether we like it or not, we learn, we acquire, a lot of knowledge and that knowledge would be at the disposal of either House of the Parliament in case of an emergency or crisis.

DR. KARAN SINGH : Sir, I do not think it is correct to say that Assam has got the greatest number of fatalities. In fact, Sir, I may say that in the last two years, 1967-68 and 1968-69, it was a unique record. Not a single fatality took place in the Indian Airlines. Of course, this is not a good occasion to say this. But according to the international standards our safety factor in the Indian

Airlines is among the highest in the world. I am just putting it on record. I am not justifying this crash. But certainly this question of discretion of the pilots is something which we have often considered because I happen myself to be a pilot. I had become a Minister only two years ago. For 18 or 20 years I have been flying to Kashmir and every time this problem arises whether I should take off or I should not take off. But a certain amount of discretion is always given to the pilot. Certainly I will look into this matter again and see what guidelines there are that have been laid down in this connection...

SHRI JOACHIM ALVA : Make it mandatory.

DR. KARAN SINGH : I will look into the matter. Then, as for the suggestion that Members of Parliament be associated with the inquiry, this is a very highly technical matter and usually the practice is that experts of the Airlines and of the DGCA are put on that. However, the reports of these inquiry commissions, when they are completed, are always available to such M.Ps. who would like to increase their knowledge and expertise about this. And I suggest they can read the reports. I do not think we will be justified in imposing upon the M.Ps. to this extent to get them involved in the inquiry.

SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN (Andhra Pradesh) : May I know the measure of compensation the pilots and other servants of the Indian Airlines get?

DR. KARAN SINGH : Sir, this is a good point. I am not sure whether the pilots and others are covered by the same rules as for the passengers. I presume that they are covered by the rules of the Corporation. But they too will get their compensation. Whether they are covered by the same rules or by the Corporation rules, I do not know. Probably they are covered by the Service Rules.

# STATEMENT RE THE RESULT OF MARKET LOAN FLOATED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA IN APRIL, 1969

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI JAGANNATH PAHADIA) : Sir, on behalf of Shri P.C. Sethi I beg to lay on the Table a statement indicating the result of Market Loan floated by the Government of India in April, 1969.

## ANNOUNCEMENT RE GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE (SHRI JAISUKHLAL HATHI) : Sir, with your permission I rise to announce that Government Business in this House during the week commencing from Monday, the 5th May, 1969, will consist of:—

(1) Consideration and return of the Appropriation (No. 3) Bill, 1969, as passed by the Lok Sabha;

(2) Consideration and return of the Finance Bill, 1969, as passed by the Lok Sabha.

## REFERENCE TO ALLEGED STAR- VATION DEATHS IN RAJASTHAN

श्री सुन्दर सिंह भंडारी (राजस्थान) :  
उपसभाध्यक्ष जी, चेयरमैन महोदय ने मुझे सदन के सदस्यों के सामने एक महत्त्व के प्रश्न को रखने की अनुमति दी है। मैंने यहां पर पहले भी दो विवादों में राजस्थान के अकाल के प्रति सरकार का और सदस्यों का ध्यान आकर्षित किया है। समाचारपत्रों में ये खबरें आई हैं कि दस हजार से अधिक लोगों की मृत्यु हुई है। अब यह विवाद का विषय हमेशा बनाया जा रहा है कि मृत्यु कितने हुई। किन्तु सरकारी सूत्रों ने भी मान लिया है कि कालरा और ब्रेकिश बाटर