

response is, if this was the attitude of the banks and they were not opening bank accounts, then, how do we have 100 per cent coverage across India, which we have reported back? So, I find that I am puzzled by what he has brought out. If, indeed, there is an isolated incidence of this kind, I would request all hon. Members to get in touch with Banking Ombudsperson. Every bank in the country has an ombudsman person. You may please bring up your complaint there. If you have specific instances where banks are not doing their job, please bring it up to them. ...(*Interruptions*)... If you are not satisfied with that, if the hon. Members are not satisfied, they can please send me a letter. I will follow up and ensure that whatever problems they have they are addressed.

SHRI D. BANDYOPADHYAY: Sir, I just want to know whether, while you are talking of expanding the banking system, there is an attempt to just wind up Regional Rural Banks in West Bengal?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Can you repeat the question? ...(*Interruptions*)... Please repeat the question.

SHRI D. BANDYOPADHYAY: Is there any attempt to withdraw or restrict the functioning of Regional Rural Banks in West Bengal?

SHRI JAYANT SINHA: Sir, to the best of my knowledge, there is no such restriction that is being contemplated or is being put into reality.

Deaths of army personnel in helicopter accidents

*79. SHRI RITABRATA BANERJEE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that deaths of army personnel have increased due to the crash of helicopters during the last six months, if so, the details thereof; and

(b) the remedial measures initiated therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI MANOHAR PARRIKAR) : (a) and (b) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) Five army personnel have lost their lives in helicopter accidents during the last six months. The details are given as under:-

Date of Incident	Type of Helicopter	Total number of deaths
1st October, 2014	Cheetah Z-3209	03
11th February, 2015	Dhruv IA 1119	02
TOTAL		05

(b) All crashes are investigated by a Court of Inquiry to find out the cause of accidents and to recommend remedial measures to prevent accidents. Remedial measures suggested by the Court of Inquiry are implemented at various levels. Standard Operating Procedures are constantly reviewed and stringent training norms followed to minimize accidents. Detailed analysis of cause factors of the accidents in the form of 'Accident / Incident Compendium' are published regularly for spreading awareness. Regular interactions are also carried out with the Original Equipment Manufacturers to implement technical upgradations and modifications as recommended from time to time.

SHRI RITABRATA BANERJEE: Sir, in the last few years, in the last four-five years, the Armed Forces have lost 28 aircraft and 14 helicopters in crashes killing 42 people and incurring a huge loss. I just want to know from the Minister whether inadequate training to pilots, aging machines and shoddy maintenance, all combined, constitute a deadly mix for our Armed Forces and how the Government plans to confront this challenge.

SHRI MANOHAR PARRIKAR: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the question is regarding helicopters crashes resulting into deaths of Army personnel. I would like to tell the hon. Member that six months period which he has asked about is too small to compare. However, we have record for blocks of five years for the last 28 years and from that record we can find out that the number of accidents has come down, the deaths reported have also come down. For your information, from 1986 to 1991, there were 22 accidents, 19 deaths, 1991 to 1996, ten accidents, six deaths, 1996 to 2001, thirteen accidents, fourteen deaths, 2001 to 2006, ten accidents, five deaths, 2006 to 2011, eleven accidents, fourteen deaths and during the last four years, seven accidents and ten deaths. So, that is one aspect of it.

The second aspect is, we checked up because it is always better to have accident rate related with number of hours of flying. During past ten years also, prior to the current five years' period, that is up to 2010-2011, the number of accidents is 21 and the number of flying is 4,82,567 hours making it. 44 accident per ten thousand flying hours. The current last four years' data indicates .37 accidents per flying hour. As for the point raised

by the hon. Member, I would only like to say that the years, the age of helicopter fleet is increasing. We are trying to correct the serviceability and reliability, both of which are the factors. For the purpose of serviceability, the Ministry has given a direction to HAL to work out depot and store management at Srinagar as well as Misamari. So, they will have a better store available for better servicing. Reliability is also being looked into.

SHRI RITABRATA BANERJEE: The point is that, as he has already mentioned, we have aging aircraft. Maybe, if you look into the helicopter sector, Cheeta and Chetak fleets are 1960's vintages. I just want to know, through you, Sir, whether these recurring corruption scandals in arms deal are working as a hindrance in getting our Armed Forces new helicopters and aircraft.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is about accidents.

SHRI MANOHAR PARRIKAR: It is about accidents of helicopters only. But, I would just like to mention that while some of the helicopters – Cheeta and Chetak – are aging, the ALH is a very new introduction. The Armed Forces also have the Defence Acquisition Council. The Defence Acquisition Council has permitted for 'Make in India' helicopters, required for Armed Forces, through joint ventures. So, while HAL will be supplying the attack version of light ALH – Dhruva and Rudra — to the Armed Forces, there is also a proposal for getting 'Make in India' through other route, that is, the private sector route, which will be a JV under the 'Make in India' proposal. We have already floated RFI for it.

SHRI SUKHENDU SEKHAR ROY: With reference to the last three lines of the reply given by the hon. Minister, I would like to know whether anything has happened after regular interactions, reportedly carried out with the original equipment manufacturers, to implement technical upgradations and modifications, as recommended from time to time.

SHRI MANOHAR PARRIKAR: Mr. Chairman, Sir, that is what I have mentioned. One of the problems, which was faced by the Armed Forces, was that every time serviceability was required. The spares had to be procured from the HAL, Bangalore. Now, we have asked the HAL to create a store and a depot...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI SUKHENDU SEKHAR ROY: What about upgradation?

SHRI MANOHAR PARRIKAR: Upgradation is a continuous process. If it is an old helicopter, you have to only overhaul it. So, there cannot be any upgradation of old helicopters. New ones are being made. But as far as the old ones are concerned,

serviceability is a very important aspect. And, for that purpose, spare availability has to be at the place where the helicopters are being used. So, Srinagar and Mismari are the two places where, in the coming months, store and depot of spares will be created so that the spares are available on the spot and the serviceability is improved.

श्री मनसुख एल. मांडविया: माननीय सभापति जी, सम्माननीय मंत्री जी ने अभी बताया कि हेलीकॉप्टर की उम्र बढ़ गई है, लेकिन हमारे यहां मिलिट्री में ट्रेनिंग के लिए जो मिग विमान उपयोग किया जाता था, उस वक्त मिग विमानों की दुर्घटनाओं में हमारे बहुत सारे पायलट शहीद हुए और हमारे कई पायलटों के शहीद होने के बाद जब उनकी जांच हुई, तो पता लगा कि मिग विमानों में टैक्नीकल फॉल्ट था, जिसके कारण एक्सीडेंट्स हुए और बाद में मिग विमानों को सर्विस से हटा दिया गया। मैं माननीय मंत्री जी के ध्यान में लाना चाहता हूं कि इस समय चीता और ध्रुव हेलीकॉप्टर हैं, जिनके एक्सीडेंट हुए। मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूं कि जो एक्सीडेंट हुआ, तब उसकी उड़ान क्या ट्रेनिंग के लिए थी या किसी और परपज के लिए थी? दूसरी बात मैं यह जानना चाहता हूं कि क्या उसमें कोई टैक्नीकल फॉल्ट पाया गया है?

SHRI MANOHAR PARRIKAR: Mr. Chairman, Sir, as far as the accidents, which have happened, are concerned, we have analysed the full data of 73 accidents, over the last 28 years. We found that, out of them, 36 per cent were due to human error of air crew; 3 per cent were due to human error of ground crew; 23 per cent were due to inclement weather; technical defect of the airframe and technical defect of aero-engine, together, constitute 23 per cent; 4 per cent were due to operational hazards; in 3 per cent, causes could not be identified and 8 per cent are under investigation. So, from that, you will make out that 62 per cent of the accidents were due to human error or weather. So, whatever are the reasons, for me, they are not exactly applicable here. One of the ways by which accidents could be reduced, in the 23 per cent bracket of technical errors, is by making availability of more helicopters to function, for which a decision has been taken recently to create store depots in Srinagar and Mismari so that quick serviceability can be achieved.

SHRI PAVAN KUMAR VARMA: Sir, the Minister's reply is a very routine reply, mentioning court of inquiry and human error. The fact of the matter is that there has been a long-delayed project to acquire 197 new helicopters from abroad. And this has been scrapped three times over the last decade due to technical deviations and allegations of corruption. The Minister seems to be relying on HAL, which, as we know, has been declared sick and it is nowhere close to supplying the 187 Light Helicopters it was supposed to make. Therefore, my question, Sir, is that in the absence of upgraded and new technology, in the form of new purchases, our pilots are flying in flying coffins! You cannot give a routine reply, Sir. You just only talk about Court of Inquiry and 0.44 percentage. Each death matters, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please read the question. It is a very precise question.

SHRI PAVAN KUMAR VARMA: I apologise, Sir, but I was reading from the question. The question is, “the remedial measures initiated therefor?” Sir, I am asking whether remedial measure is the acquisition of more helicopters.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right.

SHRI MANOHAR PARRIKAR: Number one, I have made it very clear that we have already approved in Defence Acquisition Council procurement of about 388, if I am not mistaken, helicopters for Army, Air Force and Navy application through “Make in India” project under JVs where latest technologies can be brought up. Process cannot be shortly stayed. Process is going on. RFI is called from various joint ventures. 31st March is the last date for receiving all these data. After that, as fast as possible, I am trying to speed up the acquisition process. I understand the concern of the hon. Member that the Air Force and the Army should get the best of the helicopters. But I would like to point out that 62 per cent of the accidents have not happened because of the fault of the helicopter or the equipment, at least 62. About 23 per cent were due to weather condition and 39 per cent are due to human error, which cannot be attributed to the helicopter. So, ‘flying coffins’ is a good word but I don’t think it is appropriate for this....(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI NEERAJ SHEKHAR: Pilots are not competent. ...(*Interruptions*)..

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please, please, don’t interrupt.

SHRI MANOHAR PARRIKAR: I mentioned that there have been 73 crashes over 28 years. I also indicated that from one per ten thousand hours of flying accident rates, it has come down to .37, that is, one-third over the last 28 years. So, you have to compare it with the number of hours of flight, not year-wise. In 1986, we had only 20 helicopters. So, hours of flying was hardly about 6,000-7,000. Now, we are flying almost 48,000-50,000 hours per year. So, as compared to hours of flying, the number of accidents have come down from approximately more than one per ten thousand hours to .37 per ten thousand hours. 62 per cent of the total accidents have happened because of human error or weather plus the number of accidents themselves have come down in number. That is why I mentioned very clearly that six months’ period cannot be a correct period for comparison. The period has to be five year slab for which I gave the figures, which very clearly indicates that the number has come down. I do not accept the word ‘flying coffins’ as appropriate. If there are some weaknesses, we are trying to strengthen them. At the

same time, we are also trying to get the modern, but helicopters are not toys. They have to be manufactured with proper technology.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Question No. 80.

Last minute cancellation of flights by private airlines

*80. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that during the last six months many private airlines have cancelled their flights suddenly at last moment of departure and due to this passengers faced lot of problems to reach their destination; if so, the details thereof;

(b) the steps taken by Government to warn these airlines about such last moment cancellation of flights;

(c) whether Government is considering to make the private airlines responsible for making alternative arrangements for the passengers to reach their destination on the same or next day; and

(d) if so, by when it will be implemented, and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ASHOK GAJAPATHI RAJU PUSAPATI): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) The details of the flight cancelled are given in the Statement (*See* below). Generally scheduled airlines operate their flights as per approved schedule. However, at times the flights are cancelled due to technical, operational, commercial, weather related and miscellaneous reasons.

(b) to (d) To ensure appropriate protection for the air travellers in case of flight cancellation, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has issued Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR), Section-3, Series-M, Part-IV on facilities to be provided to passengers by airlines due to denied boarding, cancellation of flights and delays in flights for all airlines to comply with wherein option of alternate arrangement have been provided.