SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: Sir, it can be done. You just permit us because the Minister has to leave. (...) (Interruptions)...

उपसमाध्यक्ष (डा. सत्यनारायण जाटिया): यदि हाउस चाहता है और सबकी राय है तो इसकी इजाजत देने में मुझे कोई दिक्कत नहीं है। (...) (व्यवहार)...

कई माननीय सदस्य: ठीक है। (...) (व्यवहार)...

उपसमाध्यक्ष (डा. सत्यनारायण जाटिया): ठीक है, लेकिन यह एक precedent नहीं बनेगा। (...) (व्यवहार)...

SHRI MANOHAR PARRIKAR: I have already made my submissions. (...) (Interruptions)...

SHRI D. RAJA (Tamil Nadu): Sir, till what time, will we continue?

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (DR. SATYANARAYAN JATIYA): We will have full time, that is, 2 hours and 30 minutes (...) (Interruptions)...

SHRI D. RAJA: Till what time, Sir? (...) (Interruptions)...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (DR. SATYANARAYAN JATIYA): After this, we will continue.

SHRI SUKHENDU SEKHAR ROY (West Bengal): Sir, for how long will these clarifications go? (...) (Interruptions)...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (DR. SATYANARAYAN JATIYA): This is a small intervention. (...) (Interruptions)...

CLARIFICATIONS ON THE STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Missing IAF AN-32 Aircraft bound for Port Blair from Chennai

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA (Tamil Nadu): Sir, the loss of any life is very important, at the same time, qualified, selected and trained Air Force people are missing in a missing aircraft. Moreover, the families of those who are missing are much aggrieved and they are not able to find the reason. We don't want to come to a conclusion till the investigations are over. We realize our responsibility. But, at the same time, there are speculations floating in the media and in the social media that this could have been the reason, that could have been the reason. Even an apprehension of a sabotage is also being told. Sir, reasons are being attributed to the emergency or no emergency or no RT call. Sir, the situation may
have been so catastrophic that the crew was incapacitated and was unable to give an emergency call. Sir, 'request weather deviation to the right' were the last words of the AN-32 air crew at the Air Traffic Control at 8.46 a.m., before the aircraft disappeared from the radar at 9.15 a.m., with a rapid loss of altitude from 21000 feet. So, the last words from the aircraft were at 8.46 a.m., and the aircraft disappeared from the radar at 9.15 a.m., that means, in 30 minutes. I think the former Civil Aviation Minister, who is also a pilot, is here, he could know it, and the Defence Minister also knows it. In these 30 minutes, the radar could have given something. The communication was lost, but the radar should have given something. Since it disappeared, what happened, how it fell down? Had it spiraled or fell down or lost its speed or as the Minister has said in the other way, it dived into the sea or something or it exploded. There could be any reason. But the debris could not be found out since there were high winds. The debris would not been in the original place.

Sir, the aircraft did not transmit on the International Distress Frequency also. This frequency could have been received by the satellite ships or aircraft. Sir, I said that it is because of the high winds. The secondary radar picture in Chennai Air Traffic Control could clearly establish the pattern of rapid descend of the aircraft. If the aircraft had spiraled down, as I said, that would have eliminated some fire in the aircraft with a slow speed, whether it is a mechanical failure or something. Earlier also, an Air Force aircraft was missing, and some people say that the same technical snag which was detected...

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI MANOHAR PARRIKAR): It was Coast Guard.

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: Yes, Coast Guard. It is said that the two Emergency Located Transmitters, ELTs, were not triggered. This system should have transmitted an impact with water. Had there been a communication with the ELT, Sir, the system should have transmitted an impact with water. The Crash Data Decoder, CDRs, popularly known as black box, must be located to ascertain the high probability of the cause of the accident.

Sir, every one of us remembers that the Air France Flight 447 from Rio de Janeiro to Paris crashed over the Atlantic Ocean on June 1st, 2009. The French Investigation Agencies located the black box at the depth of about 3.5 kilometres on the sea bed and the cause was ascertained. What I would say is, this Aircraft, which is also missing, is supposed to be lying on the sea bed much deeper, maybe around three-four kilometres. When the French agencies had already detected the black box of the missing Air France Flight, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government is employing
such agencies to find out the missing aircraft. We are very much concerned, and we are
very confident of the efforts the Government is making. But at the same time, I would
like to say that hereafter such things should not be repeated. When an Air Force Aircraft
is missing like this, what could have been the reason? As I said earlier, all those who were
there in the aircraft were very, very important people. They were trained and were serving
in the Air Force. Sir, their families are very much aggrieved. Keeping all these reasons
in view, I would like to know from the hon. Minister the steps they have taken. What are
the other things he knows which we don't know? Kindly cast away the aspersions that
are floating on the media. The FLT, no emergency call, all these reasons could be kept
in mind and such a thing should not happen in future. Would the Government employ
agencies of other nations, like that of France, who are experts in getting deep into the sea
and recovering the black box, which alone will ascertain the cause and avoid any further
accidents like this in future? Thank you very much, Sir.

SHRI A. NAVANEETHAKRISHNAN (Tamil Nadu): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir,
I think, the Central Government is taking appropriate steps. ...(Interruptions)... I am
not wasting the time by giving any lecture. I hope, the Central Government is taking
appropriate steps. I pray God that some evidence is found. Thank you, Sir.

SHRI T.K. RANGARAJAN (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I fully join and appreciate our
colleague, Mr. Siva's arguments. I would like to know whether the Government is
thinking of deploying any foreign agency to help us. If so, which country you are going
to call. Would it be useful? He suggested the French agency. Our sea is not as deep as the
Atlantic Ocean. I think, this sea bottom can be reached easily. Still, why are you not able
to locate?

My second question is: What was the age of that aircraft? Was it very old? If it was
very old, why did the Ministry of Defence not change the aircraft? How long can you
continue with the old aircraft? There is an apprehension that this aircraft was outdated
that it had lived more than its time. So, why our Ministry of Defence did not modernize
or purchase a new one? I am told that some American aircraft are going to be purchased
by us, to be employed for this type of work. Is it right? What is the Government's position
on all these things?

SHRI MANOHAR PARRIKAR: Sir, I would like to explain about the points raised.
But, before that, I appreciate the anxiety of the Members. In fact, I am also quite disturbed
with such a sudden disappearance. I spoke to many experts, the Air Chief and many other
senior Air Force personnel. They also are puzzled by this sudden disappearance. Yes, the
aircraft was on radar, but it was on the secondary radar. That is the passive radar. The Air
5.00 P.M.

Force keeps the primary radar up to a certain distance. As the distance exceeds, it is kept on the passive radar of the Ministry of Civil Aviation at Chennai. It was almost at the end of the range of the passive radar. In fact, in another 8-10 minutes, it would have crossed the limits of the radar. There is an area of about 150-200 nautical miles where there is no radar coverage either from Chennai or Port Blair. Two factors before this: every week, three times minimum, the same AN-32 aircraft does a routine sortie called 'courier sortie' to Port Blair and back. This has been going on for a number of years. It is the same set of aircraft. This particular aircraft had undergone the first overhaul where all equipments and additional equipments were added. After the first overhaul, it becomes quite new because a lot of things are changed or replaced. It had already flown for about 279 hours. It is not that something new was employed and it happened the next day. This particular pilot also had put in around 500 hours on this route. These are experienced pilots. The only thing which was recorded was, 'because of cumulus cloud', which normally no aviator would like to enter into because it is a very charged heavy cloud. They had said, 'We are deviating to the right.'

This was probably 7-8 minutes before it came down. At the time of coming down, it actually tilted towards the left and descended very fast from 23,000 feet. In a few seconds, it disappeared from the radar. Two things happened. One was the range of the radar signal and that too it was passive where you don't actually get very active signals. You just keep track of it and two, there is no SOS, there is no transmission of any frequency of whatsoever nature. It just disappeared. So that is a worrying part. As far as search operation is concerned, we have been using all types of techniques. Yes, what you say is right. There is a beacon which normally should emit signals if it hits the water, but that is with at least 2.34 force. If it hits the water with 2.34 force then only the signal is activated. Otherwise, the signal is not activated and in the earlier Coast Guard case also it had not activated. The impact is, when 2.34 force is coming, that means it is coming down heavily and directly. If it dives inside it is very difficult that it will be actually activated. I can't speculate because we are searching for it and I would not like to speculate, but I can only say this much that the possibility -- though we are checking all angles -- of any sabotage is comparatively very less because they have standard operating procedure. In fact, all the people were from Defence Forces. Even the civilians were part of the Naval Armament Depot. So, they had all links and the procedure was well established. Let us hope we find it. So far, the efforts put in is about 505 hours of various types of aircraft flying over the area and searching for any type of clue. Twenty-three different items were noticed by different
a aircraft. Twenty-three inputs have been reported and we have received some glimpse of visual sighting of 17 objects and six transmissions. That means six signals of electronic nature. All have been checked up. Indian survey ship Nirupak is now undertaking seabed search operation using side scan sonar system. That means it is sending signal for the seabed and trying to find out if there is something at the bottom of the sea. Submarine Sindhudwaj, the same submarine which ultimately, on 33rd day, managed to locate the Coast Guard Dornier, is carrying out underwater search in designated area, 45 nautical miles South-West of the Datum. In that area, within 45 miles it is searching for the ship. Round the clock air surveillance is maintained. There are, at this moment, something like ten Indian Navy ships in the area Jyoti, Rajput, Investigator, Nirupak, Sukanya, Kora, Karnuk, Kuthar, Kamorta and Bangaram and Submarine Sindhudwaj capable of diving up to 300 metres. So they are virtually checking up everything.

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: What would be the depth of the sea?

SHRI MANOHAR PARRIKAR: It is between 3300 and 4000 metres. It is very deep, but the problem is, if we locate something then we will be able to pick up from that depth. I can't search. There is no equipment available to search 120 nautical miles by 120 nautical miles, which we are searching. We have to actually locate it within say, 100 to 200 metres. Then we can send deep water equipments to pick it up. Special vessels have already been summoned besides this. One is Samudra Ratnakar. This is the Geological Survey of India's ship. A vessel which was at Mangaluru Port has already been called in the area. It is deep water, shallow water, multi beam surveys system, sub bottom profilers up to 4500 metres depth. ROV Vessel can go up to 3000 metres, acoustic doppler current profiler which completely profiles all the currents inside, a single beam eco-sounder, a side scan sonar, synthetic aperture sonar and underwater camera. All these are on the ship. It is reaching there in one or two days. Besides that, we have already put in our systems into operation. These are special ships. Sagar Nidhi which was in Mauritius, we diverted it back on the same day. We called it back. It is probably reaching on the 1st of August. It has 60 tonne winch which can go up to 6000 metre depth. Sub-bottom profiler is 6000 metre depth and ROV can go up to 6000 metres. But we have to locate it because at this step you cannot go on scraping the bottom. We have to come very close to it. Then we will have cameras which will show the exact area and then we can bring it up through the winch. So, we have used the best equipment. We have also asked, besides taking help from our own satellite imagery, the USA for their imagery for detection of emergency frequencies through space-based assets. So, we have also asked foreign countries for their help. I only hope that our efforts succeed. I can tell you this much that I am personally monitoring. And, Sir, it is not only that I went there, but I get SMS once in every 2-3 hours
with details of what is happening. I feel, we owe that much to the people. Not only that,
I have seen, an Army or Coast Guard or Navy officer is in touch with every family as
you might have noted. Let us hope that we track it down. Whatever it is, I can assure that
maximum efforts will be made to support. If you also find anything or if you have any
problem or if you require any information, you can contact me any time. I will see that
Navy or Coast Guard will provide you that information.

श्री नरेन्द्र बुझुनिया (राजस्थान): महोदय, मैं मंत्री महोदय से सिर्फ एक बात जानना चाहता हूँ
कि क्या जब यह प्लेन राजस्थान से उत्तर हुआ, उस वक्त पायलट की तरफ से हमेजेसी का कोई संकेत
मिला या नहीं?

SHRI MANOHAR PARRIKAR: Sir, it is totally blank, एक भी सिग्नल रिकॉर्ड नहीं है,
that is the reason and this is why हम अमेरिकन डिफेंस फॉर्स के साथ contact कर रहे हैं, अगर
उनके space satellite ने कुछ सिग्नल फिक अप किया है। सर, सैटेलाइट का एक और प्रावधान रहता
है कि उस समय cloud cover था, काफी हद तक heavy clouding था, तो जब तक आप synthetic
aperture radar use नहीं करेंगे, तब तक आप आप cloud penetration नहीं कर पाएंगे और normal
imagery equipment से काम नहीं होगा। It requires a particular type of radar on the satellite
only then you will be able to look into it. So, we were having cloud. That is one
problem.

Secondly, satellite passes over the area after a certain fixed time. So, it need not be
there at that time. Sir, American satellite system is much denser, तो उनके कुछ सिग्नल
मिला है। हमने उनको भी request की है कि आप अपना रिकॉर्ड चैक कर के हमें बता दो।

SHRI T.K. RANGARAJAN: Sir, I have asked about the age of aircraft. What is the
age of aircraft? Is it very old?

SHRI MANOHAR PARRIKAR: Sir, I don't know the exact age of this aircraft. I
will provide you that information. But, it is well within its airworthiness. Normally,
aircraft undergo two overhauls. This has undergone the first one. There were a lot of
replacements in the aircraft and it is almost as good as a new one. क्योंकि उनका क्रेम
लाइफ 15,000 अबर्स होता है, इंजन लाइफ होता है। It was absolutely safe. These aircraft met
with only two accidents so far. So, they are considered as one of the safest aircraft.

SHRI ANUBHAV MOHANTY (Odisha): Sir, thank you for giving an opportunity.

Accident is always an accident, definitely. I cannot blame you. But, Sir, as hon.
Member Shri Rangarajan was asking, how old was this aircraft? I believe, it must be that
old or that ill-equipped, maybe not that fully-equipped and that is why we are unable to
trace the aircraft till now even after having so many searches and taking help of technology. The people who are missing not only belong to my State of Odisha but also there are people who belong to other States. So, the nation is concerned. I believe, hundreds of aircraft cannot be equal to a single missing person's life. So, will the hon. Minister assure that the other aircraft in our country are well equipped? Of course, accidents cannot be avoided. But, yes, technically, can you assure me that no further such missing accidents will occur or missing situations arise in the nation.

SHRI MANOHAR PARRIKAR: Sir, I can assure that maximum efforts would be made to ensure that accidents are reduced. In fact, excluding this, this year, the ratio of accidents is the lowest in the history of the Indian Air Force -- it is 0.23 for every 10,000 hours of flying. But, to reach the international level, I think, it should be .23; we should improve further. Sir, this issue is also being monitored. We are also looking into service aspect, providing proper technical support, etc. But, I can assure you one thing. If an aircraft or helicopter is not fit for flying, we don't fly it. That is the basic rule. So, first of all, we don't fly any aircraft unless and until we are sure that it is perfect for flying. Sir, the Indian Air Force does about 2,80,000 hours of flying every year. So, you can understand the quantum of flying. So, no aircraft will leave airport unless it is 100 per cent certified to be fit for flying.

उपरामायक (डा. सत्यनारायण जटिया): मैं समझता हूँ कि सारी बातों का ...(व्यवहार)... अब हर एक को बात करने के लिए अलग-अलग मौका नहीं मिलेगा। यह हो गया है। ...(व्यवहार)...

SHRI NARENDRA KUMAR SWAIN (Odisha): When was this aircraft purchased?

SHRI MANOHAR PARRIKAR: Sir, it was purchased between 1984 and 1996, इस पौरिखड़ में खरीदे हैं।

उपरामायक (डा. सत्यनारायण जटिया): सुखेन्दु शेखर राय जी चर्चा कंटीन्यू करेंगे। आप बाद में कहना। ...(व्यवहार)... इन्होंने शुरू कर दिया था। ...(व्यवहार)...

श्री मनोहर पर्रिकर: इस परिकृतार एयरक्राफ्ट का मुझे मालूम नहीं है, लेकिन मैं यह बोल सकता हूँ कि वे एयरक्राफ्ट्स, मंतवय, जैसे नए लेकर किया गया था।

Sir, one point was raised about the signals. I can assure the hon. Members that we have decided to further check-up whether we can improve the signaling system. Thank you.