

[Shri V. B. Gandhi]

16.55 hrs.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

Another important thing that we should notice here is that it is proposed to omit the two provisos which enabled the court, in certain circumstances, for special reasons to be recorded in writing, to impose a sentence of imprisonment of less than one year. I do not want that once again what has proved through the years to be a fair and just measure of fair dealing should be taken away. I think it distorts the pattern of social legislation this Bill is supposed to be. Also, I feel there should be a more civilised and graduated form of fitting the punishment to the crime. Sometimes very minor and technical offences come to court, and unless these provisos are retained and the courts given the discretion to give lesser punishments, we shall be having a very unfair situation on our hands. We should, as far as possible, avoid this tendency to provide for severer punishments in our legislation. Fear of law should be enough and should serve as an important instrument to keep men on the right path. We should really try to avoid any tendency towards Fascism. I might repeat what I said here a few days ago while speaking on another Bill. I then said: "we can terrorise people, but we do not improve them."

16.58 hrs.

STATEMENT RE. AIR CRASH NEAR AGRA

The Minister of Shipping in the Ministry of Transport (Shri Raj Bahadur): Sir, with your permission, I have to make a small statement.

Further to my statement made in the House yesterday, I have to add that the aircraft was fitted with radar equipment and other navigational and

safety aids which are detailed in a statement placed on the Table of the House.

No snags were reported either by the Pilot or the engineering staff during the transit check up at Nagpur, which was required to be carried out after every landing.

Shri Indrajit Gupta (Calcutta South West): This plane was reported normally to be due at Palam at 4.30. At about 3.29 or 3.30 the pilot is said to have reported that up to that time he had been in wireless radio contact with Bombay, and that he was switching over to the Delhi station. Between 3.30 and 4.30 no message was received at Palam from this aircraft. According to the reports it was not till 5.30 that the Palam authorities seemed to have thought that something might have gone wrong. May I know what is the position because this report in the papers is very alarming.

17 hrs.

Shri Raj Bahadur: The facts are that unless there is some event on the flight after take off—take-off has been reported—the pilots normally, if there is some alteration in the situation, etc., then they report. Otherwise if the flight is eventless they simply report saying that they are crossing from one area to another area. It was done at 3.36 hours. After that there was no message. The message also said at 3.36 hours that he was going to land at Palam at 4.30. So, no message was expected. At 5 O'clock the Palam control office rang up the concerned officers. The officer who is in charge of the operations then made enquiries. They sent wireless message to the various airports whether an aircraft has landed in any one of them. They then started making preparations to send two aircraft for finding out what has happened; they had to collect the crew and all the other arrangements had to be made. As little time as possible was taken for these arrange-

ments. Meanwhile the IAF had had already flown their aircraft for location or search of the aircraft.

Shri Ranga (Chittor): Sir, we expect naturally to learn even from such unhappy incidents. I do not know whether Government have given any instructions—from what has been said by the hon. Minister it looks as if they have not given any instructions—at least every five minutes or at other proper intervals the aerodrome concerned, on this side or that side should make it its duty to remain in contact with the planes which are in flight so that there is not this kind of a vacuum or lacuna. For an hour and thirty minutes, Delhi did not know what was happening. Bombay did not know whether it had lost contact and they also did not know what was happening. In between this thing has happened unfortunately.

Shri Raj Bahadur: The facts are as follows. There is what is known as the RT system with which the aircraft is connected to the ground. On the radio telephone system any aircraft would at once report if there is the slightest wrong. It would not only report to one airport but to all the airports which are watching constantly to pick up any messages. There was no snag indicated when the last message was received.

Mr. Speaker: But Prof. Ranga is suggesting something else. Even if there be no risk or danger or anything of that sort, they should be asked to continue or intermittently contact the aerodrome, one aerodrome or the other.

Shri Raj Bahadur: Due notice will be taken of that suggestion.

Shri Sham Lal Saraf (Jammu and Kashmir): From Press reports we learn that when the plane switched off from Bombay, they tried to contact Delhi. Was Delhi contacted at all and was there any distress signal received at the Delhi airport?

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Shri Raj Bahadur: As far as I know no distress signals were received.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty (Ber-rackpore): This is one of the first Viscounts that have met with such an accident.

Mr. Speaker: Was it the first or the second?

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: After the first air crash many of the Viscounts were grounded and certain built in defects had to be looked into. I would like to know whether any such thing has happened and whether we are in contact with the manufacturers to find out if there was anything basically wrong which required greater attention.

Shri Raj Bahadur: I completely share the anxiety and I can assure the House that the slightest snag found out, detected, reported or indicated by the enquiry or any other source would be taken up at once by us. In fact the Viscounts manufacturers themselves, who are responsible for their manufacture, would themselves be anxious to know if there is anything of the nature indicated by the hon. Member. But we on our side can give the assurance that we shall leave nothing undone so far as precautionary measures in this respect are concerned. As I said earlier, it was the second crash.

Mr. Speaker: As a corollary to this, it might be suggested that where Viscounts are flying in other countries, those people may also be consulted.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: The manufacturers.

Mr. Speaker: Yes; whether there is any manufacturing defect that they have also discovered.

Shri Raj Bahadur: That will be taken full note of.

Shri Indrajit Gupta: What is the estimated flying time in the normal course from the approximate area or spot where the accident occurred to Palam? In the normal course, what will be the flying time to cover that distance?

Shri Raj Bahadur: That was indicated: 0336 to 0430 hours.

17.06 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Friday, September 13, 1963/Bhadra 22, 1885 (Saka).