

Plane should not have been cleared for take-off. (1995, September 17). *The Island*.

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COLOMBO, Sep. 16 — The Sri Lanka air force twin-engined Turbo propeller Antonov — 32 transport aircraft crash could have been averted if it had not been cleared for take-off by the air traffic control (ATC) tower at the Ratmalana airport which had been alerted by the pilot of an Air Lanka passenger plane approaching the Colombo International Airport, Katunayake, that there was a very bad weather patch west of the island. This had been confirmed by radar.

Air Force sources told Lankapuvath on Saturday

that the crash occurred while the ATC was warned of the squally weather at 0710 hours last Tuesday. The AN-32 (B) nosedived into the sea 34 kilometres off the coast of Kandana on Sri Lanka's northwestern seaboard 17 km from Colombo.

There were two AN-32s scheduled to take off from Ratmalana. A veteran flyer, Group Captain C.T. Gunawardena who was also off for Palaly before the ill-fated aircraft, had said the weather was not right for take off and he would wait till it cleared.

Preliminary investiga-

tions made by the air force revealed that the captain of the plane, Squadron Leader R. Pakiyathan, had reported squally weather as he hit the bad weather patch at around 14,000 feet and was trying to climb to its cruising height of 21,000 ft., when the captain radioed the ATC at 0722 hours, communicating that he was in the centre of a squall line and experiencing extreme thunder storm turbulence.

Evidently, the gyroscope had become faulty and although the pilot thought the plane was horizontal it was in fact

vertical and due to gravitation, the aircraft rapidly increased speed and nosedived and the navigator, Pilot Officer J.C. Martenstyn had kept calling out to the ATC that the rapid increase in the speed and called out 500, 600 and 700 kmph, before the plane disappeared from the radar screen and ceased radio contact.

Earlier, Sq. Ldr. Pakiyathan had reported having hit a navy squall and the ATC had advised him to turn right and come over land. Instead, the aircraft had turned left and nosedived 1,000 ft. into the sea.