HELO EMS SET TO TAKE OFF IN INDIA WITH NEW POLICY

News / Business aviation



Long overlooked, helicopter emergency medical services (HEMS) in India will get a boost through a civil aviation requirement to be issued by the country's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) in mid-April. This is the first time separate regulations are being set for the HEMS industry in India.

Issues to be addressed include eliminating the requirement for HEMS operators to file a flight plan and allowing helicopters to fly point-to-point without prior air traffic control clearance in airspace below 5,000 feet and outside of prohibited or restricted areas. The Ministry of Civil Aviation is simultaneously working on a plan to coordinate with the National Highways Authority of India, hospitals, insurance companies, on-ground ambulance services and airports to facilitate rapid medical evacuation.

"HEMS is critical for India, which has a poor road infrastructure. There is no dedicated HEMS operator in India, whereas worldwide it comprises 15 to 20 percent of total helicopter operations," CAV Aero Services CEO Vishok Mansingh told AIN.

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HEMS also presents opportunities for investors. For example, an MoU was recently signed by India's largest private air company, Global Vectra Helicorp, and Houston-based transport operator Era Group to jointly developHEMS for the Indian market.

"We believe that the recent regulatory initiatives will facilitate the development of the emerging HEMS market in India by experienced operators like Era and Global Vectra," said Paul White, senior vice president for commercial at Era Group. An earlier HEMS effort in early 2013 stalled, despite India's Aviators Pvt Ltd. signing a firm order for an initial batch of seven Eurocopter H135s. It is likely that project could be revived with the introduction of the new policy.

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