

Standing Committee Report Summary

Issues related to Safety in Civil Aviation Sector

- The Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture (Chair: Mr. T.G. Venkatesh) presented its report on ‘Issues related to Safety in Civil Aviation Sector’ on March 31, 2022. Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
 - **Vacancies of Air Traffic Controllers (ATCOs):** The Committee noted that ATCOs play a critical role in ensuring safe aircraft operations. The Committee noted the backlog in filling vacancies of ATCOs. To keep up with the increasing requirement of ATCOs at upcoming airports, the Committee recommended addressing procedural issues in recruiting ATCOs.
 - **Airworthiness of aircraft engines:** The Committee observed that compliance with all safety, and maintenance regulations for aircraft engines was critical, from a safety point of view. To ensure airworthiness of aircraft engines, the Committee recommended making provisions to impose heavy penalty on airline operators, which are found to be violating rules in this regard.
 - **Navigation technology at airports:** The Committee noted that the Instrument Landing System (ILS) offers significant safety in landing aircrafts night time or in bad weather conditions. The Committee recommended installing ILS at all airports at the earliest. With regards to installing ILS at civil enclaves (dedicated area for civil aviation in a military air base), the Committee recommended the Ministry of Civil Aviation to coordinate with the Ministry of Defence to expedite permissions and clearances.
 - To ensure that previous accidents like the ones in Mangalore (May 2020) and Calicut (August 2020) do not recur, the Committee recommended that the latest technological instruments should be installed at all airports at the earliest. This will help ensure smooth and safe landing during thick fog conditions, when there is near zero visibility.
 - **Investigation of accidents:** The Committee noted that the budget allocation to Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) in 2022-23 (of one crore rupees) is lesser than the projected requirement of four crore rupees. The Committee recommended the Ministry of Civil Aviation to request the Ministry of Finance for higher allocation at the revised estimates stage.
 - Further, the Committee recommended the Ministry to ensure that the investigation methodology and technology used by AAIB, is at par with the global standards. This will allow correct identification of the causes for an accident, and corrective measures to be taken. The Committee noted that the report on aircraft accidents sometimes takes too long to be finalised. The Committee recommended prescribing a strict timeline for submission of final reports, since delays in the same can cause avoidable accidents due to similar reasons.
 - **Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS):** The Committee noted that the Drone Rules, 2021 empower the central government to notify safety features to be installed on an UAS, by persons owning it. Drones pose a safety risk to people in drone’s area of operation, especially if they are operated with malafide intentions. In this context, the Committee recommended the Ministry of Civil Aviation to notify the safety features that must be installed on drones, within a strict timeline.
 - **Safety of helicopter operations:** The Committee noted that there have been many fatalities due to helicopter accidents. To ensure safe helicopter operations, the Committee recommended the Ministry of Civil Aviation to: (i) formulate guidelines on safe helicopter operations in unfavourable weather, (ii) examine and strengthen the provisions for safety and airworthiness checks for helicopters.
 - **Bird hits:** The Committee noted the incidents of bird hits in many parts of India, especially in Thiruvananthapuram Airport. To minimise such incidents, the Committee recommended remedial measures to be taken at all airports across the country. Further, the Ministry of Civil Aviation may reissue the guidelines for compliance by the appropriate authorities.

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