

India upgrades aviation security, safety standards

India Thursday said it has developed an effective strategy to strengthen its regulatory mechanism and safety system for its aviation sector following recommendations from international authorities.

'The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA - India's aviation regulator) has developed an effective strategy to strengthen and develop a robust regulatory mechanism and a safety oversight system. This has been done to comply with International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)'s recommendations,' the civil aviation ministry said in a statement.

'To meet international safety obligations, the DGCA has carried out a corrective action plan, according to which the government has approved revival of 132 lapsed technical positions and approved creation of 427 technical positions,' it said.

A team of the US FAA had visited India in March to assess the situation and had asked India to strengthen its aviation sector safety by June.

The US FAA had told the DGCA that it had not strengthened its regulatory mechanism in proportion to the explosive growth in numbers of domestic airlines and flights.

While air traffic in India has grown manifold in the past five years, the DGCA has actually seen its staff strength drop dramatically. The government last month sanctioned over 700 positions of technical posts for the DGCA.

The US FAA will soon hold final discussions with the DGCA to review progress made on the recommendations.

Failing to meet global aviation standards set by the ICAO, a specialised agency of the United Nations, could lead to a downgrade of Indian carriers and airports by the US FAA, resulting in Indian carriers flying to the US being put under the scanner by authorities there.

India has so far complied with 54 of the 70 recommendations of the ICAO, which had audited India's safety oversight system in October 2006 under its Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP).

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