

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. : 3039
(TO BE ANSWERED ON THE 6th August 2026)

HELICOPTER ACCIDENTS IN HIMALAYAN REGION

3039. SHRI ANURAG SINGH THAKUR

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION

be pleased to state:-

(a) the number of helicopter accidents reported in Himalayan States during the last three years, State-wise;

(b) whether the Government has conducted any technical/safety audits of helicopter operations in high altitude, difficult terrains of the Himalayan region and if so, the details and the findings thereof;

(c) the details of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), special flying guidelines mandated by the Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) for helicopter operations in these areas, including weather forecasting, terrain-mapping, pilot training, nightflying restrictions;

(d) whether the Government has taken steps to upgrade helipads, communication infrastructure, real-time weather monitoring systems in Himalayan States to minimize accident risks and if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether the Government proposes to introduce/mandate use of advanced safety technologies such as Terrain Awareness and Warning Systems (TAWS), Health Usage Monitoring Systems (HUMS), satellite-based navigation for helicopters flying in Himalayan region and if so, the details thereof; and

(f) the measures being taken by the Government in coordination with States and Defence Forces for strengthening search and rescue in case of helicopter accidents in high-altitude regions?

ANSWER

Minister of State in the Ministry of CIVIL AVIATION (Shri Murlidhar Mohol)

(a) to (c): During the last three years i.e. 2023 to 2025, a total of 06 accidents have occurred in Himalayan states at Uttarakhand.;

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During the year 2025, 08 special audit of helicopter operators operating in high altitude, difficult terrains of the Himalayan region were carried out by DGCA namely.;

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(i) M/s Transbharat Aviation Pvt. Ltd.

(ii) M/s Himalayan Heli Services Ltd.

(iii) M/s Arrow Aircraft Sales & Charters Pvt. Ltd.

(iv) M/s Aryan Aviation Pvt. Ltd.

(v) M/s Thumbby Aviation Pvt. Ltd.

(vi) M/s Kestrel Aviation Pvt. Ltd.

(vii) M/s Pawan Hans Ltd.

(viii) M/s Global Vectra Helicorp Ltd.

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The details of findings are attached as Annexure 'A';

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The Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) regarding flying in Pilgrimage Operations in Himalayan Region are placed in Operations Circular (OC) 02 of 2023.;

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(d): DGCA has implemented the following safety measures to minimize accident risks:

(i) Strengthened operational safety by mandating enhanced pre-flight checklists covering crew competency, aircraft maintenance and fitness, load and trim, weather briefing, mandatory pilot familiarization and competency requirements, deployment of trained manpower, and improved helipad safety and security measures.

(ii) Introduced operational controls by restricting aircraft weight at high-altitude helipads, limiting hourly shuttle flights, capping daily charter operations, restricting the number of helicopters at shrine helipads, and implementing AAI-promulgated Kopter Routes.

(iii) Enhanced regulatory oversight and monitoring through Special Audits, deployment of DGCA officials for field surveillance, operation of the Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC), mandatory satellite-based heli-trackers, Automated Weather Observing Systems (AWOS), and enhanced CCTV/weather camera surveillance.;

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(e): DGCA has mandated the use of the following advanced technologies :-

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(i) Automated Weather Observing System.

(ii) Satellite based heli-tracking system with real-time updates.

(iii) Kopter routes that require GPS usage for effective navigation.

(iv) Weather cameras with live feed of real-time weather conditions available online and on web-based mobile apps.

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As the operations in hills / mountains are primarily undertaken by single engine helicopters in Visual Flight Rules (VFR), therefore Terrain Awareness and Warning systems (TAWS) / Enhanced Ground Proximity Warning System (EGPWS) and Health Usage Monitoring systems (HUMS) are not mandated.;

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(f): Heli-trackers (satellite based real-time tracking) have been made mandatory for all helicopter flights undertaking Char Dham operations, tracking data of the same is monitored in real-time at ICCC Sahastradhara. In case of any accident the latest position of the helicopter is known to the control center.

The state authorities are responsible for conducting search and rescue activities by either requesting Defence helicopters and/or utilizing State Disaster Relief Force (SDRF).

Salient Findings

- Effective monitoring of Flight Duty Time Limitation was not ensured.
- Effective implementation of OC 02/2023 was not ensured by the operator.
- No standardized procedure followed in closure of Maintenance package by certifying staff.
- Operator did not ensure that the calibration agency meets the requirement of CAR.
- The internal safety audit reports along with the ATR are not being forwarded to the DGCA
- The ERP of Guptkashi doesn't contain the emergency contact details and the disabled aircraft removal procedure.
- Slot allotment timings for flying operations were not maintained.
- Airborne Image Recording System data was not analysed on few occasions.
- It is observed that there is no designated place at Sahastradhara heliport to carry out the BA test, as the pilots are undergoing the BA test near helicopter.
