Standing Committee Report Summary
Review of Safety in Civil Aviation Sector

- The Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture (Chair: Mr. Sanjay Kumar Jha) presented its report on 'Overall Review of Safety in the Civil Aviation Sector' on August 20, 2025. Key observations and recommendation of the Committee include:

- **Enhancing regulatory autonomy and capacity**: The Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is primarily responsible for regulating aviation safety in the country. The Committee observed that DGCA faces critical staffing issues, with nearly 50% of sanctioned posts being vacant. It noted that DGCA lacks the autonomy to recruit qualified personnel. The Committee recommended: (i) granting statutory and administrative autonomy to DGCA, (ii) establishing specialised recruitment mechanism for the agency, and (iii) offering competitive compensation to attract talent.

- **Challenges in air traffic management**: The Committee noted that a shortage in Air Traffic Controllers (ATCOs) has led to increase in workload, creating risks for fatigue-related failures. It observed that training capacity for ATCOs cannot keep pace with growing needs, leaving a gap in trained manpower. It recommended: (i) implementing a fatigue risk management system, (ii) conducting comprehensive staffing audits, and (iii) expanding training capacity.

  The Committee further noted that existing air traffic control automation systems show performance degradation and lack modern capabilities such as conflict detection and predictive analytics. It recommended timely modernisation of these facilities with necessary integration of Artificial Intelligence.

- **Strengthening safety surveillance**: The Committee observed that though the DGCA has been effective in detecting safety issues, it has not been that effective in rectifying them. This has led to accumulation of unresolved issues, including those related to aircraft fitness. The Committee recommended establishing time-bound closure mechanisms and stronger enforcement measures including financial penalties for non-compliance.

- **Safety standards in helicopter operations**: The Committee observed that recent helicopter accidents have highlighted regulatory gaps where state level agencies manage high risk operations with limited central oversight. It also noted the absence of mandatory terrain-specific training for pilots operating in mountainous regions. The Committee recommended creating uniform national frameworks for operations and mandating terrain-specific training and certification for pilots.

- **Addressing recurring operational risks**: The Committee noted that in 2024, incidents such as runway incursions by aircrafts exceeded set safety targets significantly. It observed that despite consistent review by the DGCA's Occurrence Review Board, persistence of these incidents indicates failure to implement systemic solutions. It recommended mandating detailed root cause analysis and focused remedial programmes.

- **Error reporting**: The Committee observed that the current approach of imposing penalties up to Rs 25 lakh on individual ATCOs discourages voluntary error reporting, which is essential for safety improvement. It also noted limited clarity on protections for such safety reporting. The Committee recommended reviewing existing penal provisions and instituting a framework for whistleblower protection.

- **Developing domestic maintenance capabilities**: The Committee noted that approximately 85% of aircraft maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) work is outsourced abroad, resulting in outflow of foreign exchange and strategic dependency. Despite initiatives such as reduction of GST rates and customs duties, domestic MRO facilities still struggle to compete. The Committee recommended comprehensive policy review, and further rationalising taxes and incentives to build domestic maintenance capabilities.

- **Aligning airport development with fleet expansion**: The Committee noted that aircraft induction in the country is outpacing airport development, creating capacity mismatches at major hubs. It recommended developing a National Capacity Alignment Plan to synchronise infrastructure development with fleet expansion. Further to meet growing demand for pilots, DGCA has approved new flying training organisations and inducted training aircrafts. The Committee recommended continued investment in training capacity and enhanced certification processes to ensure adequate pilot supply.

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