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**TECHNICAL COMMISSION**

**Agenda Item 46: Other issues to be considered by the Technical Commission**

**LICENSING OF AERODROMES IN INDIA**

(Presented by India)

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This paper brings out status of India's progress to comply with ICAO's Amendment No. 4 to Annex 14 — *Aerodromes*, Volume I — *Aerodrome Design and Operations*, requiring certification of aerodrome. As the amendment also requires establishment of an appropriate regulatory frame-work and well defined safety oversight mechanism, as a pre-requisite for the commencement of action for certification of aerodromes, measures taken in India to comply with the said ICAO standards and recommendations are also highlighted in this paper.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Objective A: Safety – Enhance Global Civil Aviation Safety.
<i>Financial implications:</i>	None
<i>References:</i>	Annex 14 — <i>Aerodromes</i> , Volume I — <i>Aerodrome Design and Operations</i> , and relevant ICAO Docs, Aircraft Rules, 1937 and Civil Aviation Requirements

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Regulations for licensing of aerodromes in India existed since 1956 as provided in Rule 79 of the Aircraft Rules, 1937. The Rule however excluded Government aerodromes, which were managed and operated by the regulator – Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). The Rule required licensing of a place other than a Government aerodrome that is used as a regular place of landing and departure by a scheduled air transport service or for a series of landing and departures by any aircraft carrying passengers for hire or reward.

1.2 Prior to 1971, the regulator was the operator of Government managed aerodromes and an aerodrome directorate existing within the regulator engaged primarily in management of aerodromes. In 1971, the management of four Government managed international aerodromes i.e. Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata was given to the International Airports Authority of India (IAAI). In 1985, the management of all Government managed domestic aerodromes was transferred from the regulator to the National Airports Authority (NAA) along with the aerodrome directorate. In 1995, the two entities IAAI and NAA were merged to form Airports Authority of India (AAI) with the responsibility of functioning and managing Government aerodromes. Airports Authority of India (AAI), as on date manages most of the aerodrome in the country.

1.3 Subsequent to formation of NAA, and transfer of all aerodromes, CNS/ATM, AIS from DGCA, there was a void and no infrastructure was available in DGCA to oversee these functions. The aerodrome standards directorate was established in DGCA and commenced functioning in the year 1999 onwards. However, the activities remained minimal due to the manpower constraints and lack of regulatory framework for aerodrome licensing.

1.4 ICAO in March 2001 adopted Amendment No. 4 to Annex 14 Volume I that required all aerodromes used for international operations to be certified by 27 November 2003. This necessitated amendments to be carried out in the existing regulations on aerodrome licensing in India. Accordingly, the Rules pertaining to licensing of aerodromes in India were amended to comply with the provisions of Annex 14 which now read in 2004 as *'Rule 78 – No aerodrome shall be used as a regular place of landing and departure by a scheduled air transport service or for a series of landings and departures by any aircraft carrying passengers or cargo for hire or reward unless it has been licensed for the purpose.'*

1.5 The Indian Aircraft Rules provide a basic framework for the licensing of the aerodromes which were amended in 2004 to include licensing of Government managed aerodromes. Detailed requirements and guidance in the form of Civil Aviation Requirements and advisory circulars have been developed based on the SARPs contained in ICAO Annex 14 Volume I and guidance material provided in the ICAO document on aerodrome certification procedure. The procedure cover areas relating to issuance of an Aerodrome License, preparation of aerodrome manual, Aerodrome design and operations including exemption procedure for non-compliances of standards. Aerodromes are licensed based on procedures and checklists given in the Procedures manual designed and developed on the basis of ICAO guidelines. Above documentation was notified before embarking on the aerodrome licensing.

## 2. STEPS TAKEN FOR THE LICENSING OF AERODROMES

2.1 It was in 2002 that an Aerodromes Standards Directorate started functioning formally with the specific function of licensing of aerodromes as required under the Aircraft Rules. The said directorate with its nucleus at DGCA headquarters at Delhi has four regional offices at Delhi, Mumbai,

Chennai and Kolkata. The personnel employed in the directorate are suitably qualified aerodrome licensing personnel selected on basis of their earlier experiences in the field of aerodrome management.

2.2 The aerodrome licensing personnel in DGCA have been provided training on Aerodrome Certification under ICAO's regional Technical Cooperation Project (COSCAP-SA) and the European Union – India Civil Aviation Cooperation Project. The approach in India has been not only to train the regulator but also bring awareness to related professional from the aviation industry who have also been trained through these international training programmes. Thirteen (13) training courses have been conducted under the above programmes wherein experts from UK and Australia have trained personnel from the regulator and the industry. In addition technical assistance was also taken through the COSCAP-SA programme by deputation of its experts to assist the DGCA personnel.

2.3 In India, as on date there are about 87 aerodromes used for scheduled flight operations and handling passengers/cargo traffic operated on hire or reward basis. Keeping in view that the implementation of the amended Rule to all these aerodromes would become a gigantic task, a conservative approach was considered and therefore while framing the amendment to the Rules, a provision was included which required that aerodromes already permitted for operating scheduled air transport services, before the commencement of these amended Rules, may continue operation of such services till the aerodrome operator obtains the licence from the Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) by a date to be notified by the Government.

2.4 In view of the large number of aerodromes to be licensed, a phased approach was taken by India wherein priority was given to licensing the international aerodromes in the first phase. This was also aimed at fulfilling India's obligation to the Chicago Convention. In the subsequent phase, licensing of aerodromes other than international aerodromes has been taken. As on date, 11 international and 12 domestic aerodromes have been licensed.

2.5 The aerodrome licensing process comprises of assessing the formal application, including evaluation of the aerodrome manual; technical inspection assessing the aerodrome facilities and equipment; exemption procedure in respect of non-compliances, issuing an aerodrome license; and promulgating the licensed status of an aerodrome and the required details in the AIP (India). As a pre-requisite to the issuance of an aerodrome license, the aerodrome operators are also required to put in place a Safety Management System as required by ICAO in Annex 14 Volume I.

2.6 Once the license is issued, safety oversight function was also developed by drawing surveillance inspection plan for licensed aerodromes. Subsequently the surveillance inspection programme was centralized in DGCA to cover all regulatory functions by creation of "Surveillance & Enforcement Division". The surveillance inspections carried out by various directorates as per the plan, are monitored by this division.

2.7 Like the prevailing trend worldwide, all the aerodromes in India had been developed over a period of time and there was no strict regulatory control over the aerodromes as they were maintained by governments directly and such bodies were performing dual functions of the regulator and service provider. Most of the airports in the country have been in existence since the pre-independence era and have been developed subsequently to meet the requirement of the traffic as well as aircraft operations. These airports have been upgraded in terms of the runway and associated facilities on the need basis. This was biggest challenge for licensing of the aerodromes as the compliance of SARPs was not to the desirable standards for such airports.

2.8 The aerodrome facilities are notified by the airport operator in the AIP and are available in the aerodrome manual, which forms the basis of issue of aerodrome license. The present licensing system which has been introduced cannot resolve the shortcoming existing inherently at an aerodrome and is making an effort to streamline the system and ensure that development of an aerodrome in future in rational manner. The licensing procedure also requires that the non-compliances of the standards are dealt in a defined manner, by seeking exemption (temporary/ permanent). The first aim is to remove the non-compliances in a time bound manner by the aerodrome operators for which temporary exemption is granted. In case, resolution of non-compliance is not possible due to reasons beyond control, the permanent exemptions are granted, by ensuring that the risk is reduced through alternate safety measures. These shortcomings are notified in the AIP to assist the airlines/aircraft operators to evolve/introduce additional mitigation measures through operational procedures/limitation.

2.9 A National project was commissioned by DGCA in collaboration with TCB of ICAO to address findings of audit findings related to aerodrome regulatory system. The project has been completed and as outcome of the project, DGCA Safety Management System requirement for Aerodrome Licenses, Advisory Circular on Operational Safety Competence of Aerodrome Operators, Aerodrome Inspector's Handbook and Process for communicating on the planning, construction and commissioning of changes to Airport Infrastructure have been prepared. These documents will be issued as per the plan prepared for their issue.

### 3. CONCLUSION

3.1 India has successfully commenced licensing of aerodromes in compliance with ICAO Standards through extensive cooperation between the regulator and the aerodrome operators. All licensed aerodromes are being operated by adequately trained personnel and in accordance with the regulations based on the standards of ICAO in Annex 14 Volume I. As a consequence, all the airline operators can be assured of the highest level of safety at the international aerodromes.

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