



International Civil Aviation Organization

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Ninth Meeting of the ICAO Asia/Pacific Search and Rescue Working Group (APSAR/WG/9)

Bangkok, Thailand, 07 – 10 May 2024

Agenda Item 4: Asia/Pacific and inter-regional SAR planning, coordination and cooperation

**SEARCH AND RESCUE EXERCISE –
SAREX 2024 (RESCUE SUB-CENTRE, GUWAHATI - INDIA)**

(Presented by India)

SUMMARY

Full scale aeronautical SAR exercise, SAREX–2024, the first of its kind in the Northeast Region of India, was organized by RSC, Guwahati for the year 2023-24 with the active participation of all the relevant resource agencies. SAREX tests operational plans, provides learning experience and improve liaison and coordination skills. Challenges, particularly in regions like the North-East part of India, highlight the importance of coordinated actions. Successful execution of SAR plan of operation depends on the meticulous execution of collective endeavours, ensuring the preservation of life and assets amidst challenging terrain and volatile weather conditions.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Search and Rescue (SAR) acts as a critical safety net for air travel, even with the aviation industry's advancements. Though accidents are rare, having a robust SAR system in place is essential. International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Annex 12 dictates that countries establish effective SAR plans. These plans involve infrastructure, well-trained personnel, and clear communication protocols. This ensures a swift and coordinated response when aircraft or mariners encounter distress situations.

1.2 Efficient SAR operations increase the chances of locating survivors quickly, especially during the vital "golden hours" after an incident. This significantly improves the probability of rescue and successful medical care.

1.3 Exercises, conducted on a realistic basis, help to demonstrate and assess true effectiveness of training, operational efficiency and competence of the SAR service and thus help to improve coordination skills and effectiveness of SAR procedures. By simulating real emergencies, SAR personnel can ensure they operate smoothly and effectively when lives are truly on the line.

1.4 A table top exercise is conducted in each FIR in India on quarterly basis. The annual Full Scale SAREX is conducted in one of the four Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC) or a Rescue Sub Centre.

1.5 SAREX for the year 2023-2024 was conducted by Rescue Sub-Center (RSC) Guwahati.

1.6 SAREX for the year 2024-2025 is planned for RCC Kolkata in March-2025.

1.7 This paper presents information about SAREX 2024.

2. DISCUSSION

SAREX 2024: RSC Guwahati

- 2.1 SAREX 2024 was conducted by RSC Guwahati on 15th and 16th February, 2024.
- 2.2 RSC Guwahati conducted SAREX-2024 in accordance with guidelines as published in National Aeronautical Search and Rescue (NASAR) Manual.
- 2.3 Various agencies such as Indian Mission Control Centre (INMCC), Indian Army, Indian Coast Guard, Indian Navy, Indian Air Force, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Indian Meteorological Department, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), North Eastern Space Applications Centre (NESAC), Guwahati International Airport Ltd, Assam State Govt. Administration and Police, Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) etc. participated in the Full-Scale SAR Exercise.
- 2.4 Day one programme was an interactive seminar in which different stakeholders delivered presentations on preparedness as well as challenges based on experience of their respective organizations. Day two was dedicated to a Full-Scale Search and Rescue Exercise.
- 2.5 To make the exercise as realistic as possible and check the preparedness and efficiency of RSC as well as SAR units, a scenario was simulated when a flight SAREX 024 departed from Ranchi (VERC) for Guwahati (VEGT). En-route ATC (Bagdogra, VEBD) telephonically reported VEGT ACC that the aircraft reported some technical problem (Engine Vibrations) however preferred to continue for VEGT. SAREX 024 came in contact with VEGT ATC, reported technical problem and requested priority landing at Guwahati. At 30 NM from GGT (DVOR) the aircraft disappeared from radar. After initial communication search, a SAR helicopter was deployed. A villager informed the local police about the crash near a lake as it happens in real life scenario. The SAR personnel activated the RSC and coordinated the SAREX.
- 2.6 The SAR Personnel were divided into two teams. One Team went to the suspected crash site which was near Chandubi Lake, Kamrup (Rural) District, Assam (approx. 18 NM from Touchdown in Approach path of RWY 02). The other team was stationed at RSC Guwahati.
- 2.7 A giant flex model of a crashed aircraft was laid in an open field near Chandubi Lake, Kamrup (Rural) District, Assam. Fire and smoke were created to make it look like an air crash. Emergency Locator Transmitter (ELT) was also activated.
- 2.8 Observation Team noted the various activities and coordination among SAR agencies.
- 2.9 SAR activities concluded and terminated at time 0625 UTC.
- 2.10 Later on, the analysis and discussion took place to evaluate the preparedness of the RSC and other agencies involved in the exercise.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

- 3.1 The meeting is invited to:
- a) note the information contained in this paper; and
 - b) discuss any relevant matters as appropriate.

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