

# City hospital launches air ambulance

## Our Correspondent

**Kolkata:** With plans to take healthcare services to a new height, a city hospital is all set to launch an air ambulance service to cut down on the time needed to bring emergency cases for treatment. The hospital's aircraft would fly in patients from parts of south Bengal to cut down on travel time to the city.

The hospital at Mukundapur, on the city's southern fringes, has bought a four-seater Cessna Skyhawk aircraft, which would be used as an air ambulance. It would serve patients in need of urgent medical assistance within a radius of 200 km of Kolkata.

Launched by Medica Super-specialty Hospital, the Cessna Skyhawk would be available round-the-clock and would reach out to places having an air-field within four hours of return



### ■ Air ambulances are often equipped with life saving equipment

flying time. The service would be operational from Sunday and would be available by calling the hospital's board number.

"Saving time is saving life. Given the traffic condition in the city and the infrastruc-

ture of hospitals in other parts of the state, it takes quite a long time to bring patients to the hospitals in time. The time taken sometimes becomes a crucial factor in saving a patient's life. This aircraft is an answer to

all these problems" said Medica chairman Dr Alok Roy.

The charges for the aircraft would be Rs 10,000 per hour, including one relative and a doctor, who would accompany the patient to the hospital.

"Often patients are in need of transfer from one hospital to another for better services. Transferring patients across the state or even from outside the state is very expensive and time consuming. Our service is not only cost-effective but also a life-saving feature," he said.

The chairman also pointed out that the hospital is ready to assist other hospitals and the government in case of an emergency. "After all, saving a patient's life is our main mission," Roy pointed out.

Planned and designed by Spirit India at a cost of Rs 3 crore, the aircraft would be stationed at the city airport and would reach its destina-

tion within 30 minutes of receiving a call.

The aircraft, which has a maximum flight time of four hours, would have all basic medical amenities. The aircraft's maintenance would be taken care by Air Deccan.

Pilot Sartaj Singh Mand informed that the aircraft would fly at a speed of 185 to 200 km per hour, not going higher than 9000 feet since beyond that patients might feel some discomfort.

"I've been flying this model for the last three years. This is the right aircraft for the service. Besides being a pilot, me and my team will also gain basic knowledge of how to save a life," added Mand.

Air ambulances, both fixed wing aircraft and helicopters, were first used by different armed forces to transport and evacuate battlefield casualties. Later, the concept was put to civilian use.