

City hospital starts air ambulance service

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kolkata: A city hospital has leased a four-seater Cessna aircraft to airlift rich patients from towns with poor medical facilities in Bengal and neighbouring Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. At Rs 10,000 per flying hour, the facility from Medica Superspeciality Hospital is targeted at the affluent 500-1,000 families in each of the major district towns in these states by promising them state-of-the-art medicare within two hours of a phone call.

Around four years ago, several hospitals, including Calcutta Medical Research Institute, BM Birla Heart Research Centre and Wockhardt (now Fortis), had seriously considered introducing air ambulance service with leased helicopters. But the idea never really took off due to logistics of operating from the Race Course that does not have any air traffic control centre.

The four-seater Cessna SkyHawk will, however, be operating between Kolkata airport and other operational

TOWNS THAT CAN AVAIL OF THE FACILITY



West Bengal: Cooch Behar, Bagdogra, Balurghat, Burnpur, Kalaikunda, Malda, Purulia

Assam: Dibrugarh, North Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Diphu, Silchar, Tezpur, Dispur, Nalbari, Dhuburi, Guwahati

Bihar: Kishanganj, Katihar, Purnia,

Bhagalpur, Saharsa, Munger, Darbhanga, Madhubani, Muzaffarpur, Patna, Gaya, Chapra, Motihari, Betiah, Balmikinar

Jharkhand: Daltanganj, Hazaribagh, Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Bokaro, Chaibasa, Giridih, Dhanbad, Dumka, Deoghar,

Orissa: Nuaparha, Padampur, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Rourkela, Jeypore, Therubali, Baripada, Birsal, Barbil, Hirakud, Rangeilunda, Bhubaneswar

Arunachal Pradesh: Itanagar, Ziro, Daporijo, Along, Pasighat, Tezu

Uttar Pradesh: Kushinagar, Gorakhpur, Ghazipur, Varanasi, Mirzapur, Faizabad, Allahabad, Rae Bareilly, Lucknow

airports or airfields of World War II vintage in the region. "The facility will be available 24x7 and be of use to anyone who has the means but cannot find emergency care," said Med-

ica chairman Alope Ray.

Pointing out that patients from towns like Lucknow, Kanpur, Patna, Gaya, Darbhanga, Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Behala, Cooch Behar, Jhargram, Midnapore, Bagdogra, Agartala, Guwahati, Tezpur, Jorhat and Silchar were often unable to reach or avail the services of a well-equipped medical facility in times of emergency, Ray said the air evacuation and consultancy service would provide the much-needed option.

"The four-seater SkyHawk can be deployed to pick up the patient and one relative for transportation to the hospital in Kolkata. If required, a doctor may be flown in to accompany the patient. An ambulance will be present at the airport for the hospital transfer. If the patient cannot be airlifted, then Medica will fly a doctor to see the patient at his/her location," the chairman said.

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