

<http://bangaloremirror.indiatimes.com/bangalore/others/ensure-no-microlight-has-any-alteration-dgca-told/articleshow/59583226.cms?>

Ensure no microlight has any alteration, DGCA told

The committee investigating the crash on May 2 in Kodagu district involving prominent brand strategist and city-based businessman Ramesh Rao has directed the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to inspect all microlights (very small one- or two-seater aircrafts) operating in the country.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation, which had constituted a committee to investigate the causes of the crash which led to Rao's death, in its safety recommendations has asked the DGCA to carry out a one-time inspection of all the organisations that operate other microlights for any unauthorised modifications to the aircraft.

The committee has K Ramachandran, air safety officer, Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) as chairman and Captain Pavan Varma as operational member.

In its report, the committee noted that the Zenair STOL CH 701 microlight aircrafts are usually installed with fixed, full-span leading edge slats on both wings. However, Rao was flying a microlight without slats. The slats on the microlight Rao was flying were replaced with vortex generators fixed all along the wingspan at various positions. According to the committee, this modification was one of the main reasons behind the crash.

The committee also has asked the DGCA to formulate regulation covering all aspects of microlight flying. "Possibility of association with local administration may be explored to ensure that flying is undertaken only with a valid C of R (Certificate of Registration) and permit to fly. Also, accidents like these must be reported to AAIB and DGCA at the earliest," the committee recommended.

The two sorties which Rao undertook from Bengaluru to Begurkoli in Kodagu and the subsequent local sortie over Kodagu were not carried out under the authority and supervision of a flight instructor or an examiner approved by the DGCA as per the privileges under the student pilot license (microlight).

According to an aviator, there are only a handful of microlight aircrafts in the country and a couple of them operate in Bengaluru. "Unlike other countries, only a few own microlight aircrafts as it is very difficult to obtain security clearance for them which is given by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Even those who have applied for permit to fly a microlight aircraft are not issued permits so easily," he said.

The National Cadet Corps (NCC) Air Wing uses the Zenair microlight aircrafts for flying activities. However, these too are being replaced with Pipistrel Virus - a modern state-of-the-art microlight aircraft.