

BY PRASHANTH BHAT

HYDERABAD

Oct. 7: The cyclone-prone Coastal Andhra region may soon get heliports to enable the state government to rush relief material to victims during natural calamities.

Officials of the department of infrastructure and investment would try to sign deals with aviation firms during the International Aviation Expo in the city next week.

The state government had recently hit upon the idea of setting up heliports on a public-private-partnership (PPP) model to deliver relief material during cyclones and floods.

"It will help speedy transport of relief material during calamities," said Mr Manmohan Singh, the principal secretary of the department of infrastructure.

"It is extremely difficult to distribute relief material to the people in the Coastal Andhra region during floods. So we will talk to various aviation infrastructure firms to set up heliports

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in the region."

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Besides, there has also been a demand from multinational companies and their CEOs to set up heliports in special economic zones coming up in the region. They can also be used for tourism promotion in the region.

The government is looking at firms which are interested in setting up maintenance, repair and overhaul facilities at the airports coming up at Kadapa and other tier-II cities in the state.

Begumpet gets busy with Expo

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

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Oct. 7: The Begumpet airport will again be lively because of the India Aviation Expo 2008 that is scheduled next week.

Since the commercial operations ended at the Begumpet airport on March 22 this year, the airport has literally become sleepy. Airport employees are happy to see some activity and are planning to use the occasion to display the facilities available.

"We believe that this airport can still be used for commercial operations," said Mr V.S. Gupta, leader of the Airport Employees' Union.