

# Copter assembly unit for Hyderabad

Special Correspondent



Italian helicopter manufacturer Agusta Westland and Tata Motors which recently signed joint venture for setting up a final assembly unit of AW 119 have finalised Hyderabad as location for the proposed unit.

“We have finalised Hyderabad for the helicopter project owing to its closeness to several special economic zones and we are on the look out for suitable piece of land. We are hopeful of rolling out the first copter from this facility by 2011,” a senior official of

Agusta Westland said. Once operational, the new unit would enhance the country's presence in the growing rotocraft market.

The unit would take up final assembly and fly test of the copters before they are delivered to the customers. The joint venture is engaged in preparing designs to ensure a capacity to produce 30 units a year, catering not only to requirements in domestic market, but also markets abroad.

The Italian chopper major produces a range of military helicopters from the single engine AW 119, three-engine AW 101 in addition to two combat copters, AW 129 and Apache AH. The copters that are proposed to be assembled at the new facility are primarily intended for defence purposes, but they could be used for civil and public services including executive transport, emergency medical services, the official said.

Agusta Westland, he said, was planning to tap the high potential in rotocraft market in India where the requirement was expected to be around 800 copters in the next decade. The company was one among the three firms in the race for a recent tender from the Indian Army for 197 copters to replace the older fleet. "If we get the contract, the choppers would be assembled in the Hyderabad unit," he said.

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