
Trailblazer: Plane flies Doon-Delhi on biofuel

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Dehradun: A SpiceJet turboprop aircraft named *Haldi* became India's first plane carrying passengers to operate on biofuel when it flew from Dehradun to Delhi on Monday, raising hopes for low-emission flights less dependent on increasingly expensive jet fuel.

The biofuel, derived from the jatropha plant grown by 500 farmer families in Chhattisgarh, was first tes-

ted on a 20-minute flight on *Haldi* with only crew in Dehradun a day earlier.

After the green fuel performed better than expected, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation cleared the first-ever flight with passengers on Monday.

"The flight result showed biofuel had 1.8% higher energy density than regular aviation turbine fuel," said SpiceJet chief strategy officer G P Gupta.

► **Touched 14,000ft, P 12**

Aircraft flying to Delhi on biofuel touches 14,000ft

The right engine of the first biofuel aircraft was filled with 75% regular ATF and 25% biofuel. The left engine had regular ATF. While the fuel tanks below the two engines are interconnected, for this flight they were not so that there could be no cross-feed. The idea was to be able to measure engine performance separately based on fuel feed," said Anjan Ray, director of the Dehradun-based Indian Institute of Petroleum (IIP) which prepared the fully indigenous biofuel. The aviation biofuel is of the "drop in" variety — one that can be used in existing engines without the need for any engine modification.

The Bombardier aircraft (VT-SUD) got 1,300 kg of fuel for the Dehradun-Delhi flight, of which 325 kg was biofuel. Getting ready to roll, first the plane's left engine (getting regular ATF) roared to life. A little later, the pilots switched on the right engine (containing the biofuel mixture). It then quickly taxied to the runway and took off. In a few minutes, the pilot announced the aircraft had reached an altitude of 14,000 feet and was cruising at 680 kmph. The minute it touched down at IGIA, everyone on board broke into applause.

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