

In a first, IAF to fly plane with bio-fuel blend

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The Indian Air Force (IAF) will make history next week when a Russian-origin AN 32 transport plane will be formally flight tested using a mix of aviation turbine fuel (ATF) and bio-fuel.

The plane will fly from the IAF base at Chandigarh with a blend of around 10 per cent bio-fuel. Trials have been on since mid-November and the first scheduled flight is slated on December 17. Some modifications have been made to the plane.

AN 32 flies regularly from Chandigarh to Kargil, Leh and Srinagar to drop supplies, equipment and men. The need for air effort is more during winter months as passes on the Manali-Leh road and the Srinagar-Kargil-Leh route get closed down due to snow.

This would be the first-ever IAF aircraft to use a fuel mix.

The plan is to fly an AN-32 over the Rajpath at the forthcoming Republic Day Parade. The matter was first reported in The Tribune, citing an "issue brief" of the IAF-backed think-tank—the Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS).

The move could reduce the import bill of oil and, in turn, augment farm income in the

AN 32 flight on Dec 17

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- The IAF spends about Rs 40,000 crore on ATF annually and by using bio-fuel, it plans to save around 10 per cent on fuel bill

country, says Wing Commander Asheesh Srivastava, a research fellow at CAPS, in the "issue brief" that was put in public domain on the CAPS website.

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Every year, the IAF pays about Rs 40,000 crore for ATF. By using bio-fuel, it plans to save around 10 per cent on the fuel bill.

Bio-fuel for the purpose will be produced using only non-edible oils. States that are keen on producing non-edible oil seeds include Punjab, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand and Telangana.