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Saras plane project takes off: NAL, Indian Air Force to add wings to India's dreams

Made-in-India Saras has completed two successful test flights and the passenger plane is expected to enter production phase by 2022.

ZEE By Zee Media Bureau | Updated: Mar 26, 2018, 15:23 PM IST

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New Delhi: The 'Make in India' initiative just took the proverbial flight in the passenger airlines' space with Saras - a 19-seater turboprop aircraft. The indigenously-made aircraft is being tested once again by Bengaluru-based National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL) and the Indian Air Force (IAF).

First developed for testing purposes in 2004, the project was shut after a 2009 crash that killed two IAF pilots near Bengaluru. At the time, it was found that incorrect design information with the pilots had caused the crash. After eight years, the project was taken up once again by NAL and IAF who are confident of much better results this time.

What's special about Saras?

Saras is India's first home-built passenger airline. The 7,000 kilo plane is reportedly capable of short landing and take off, low fuel consumption, high cruise speed and has low cabin noise. It has already made two successful test flights since 2016 and if further tests are successful as well, Saras could enter production phase by 2022.

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Why is Saras crucial for Indian aviation?

Saras promises to further PM Narendra Modi's dream of bringing air travel within the reach of the common Indian. As such, not only could flying be cheaper but even far-flung areas of the country could be connected via air. In addition, the Saras planes are expected to be capable of carrying out aerial surveys and search, provide disaster relief and give medical assistance.

How much will Saras cost?

Officials involved with production and testing say that the Saras project in the production stage would require Rs 1,000 crore initially. Thereon, it would reportedly cost Rs 45 crore for each plane which is being seen as considerably less than the Dornier aircraft which cost approximately Rs 60

crore each. While production rights are expected to be given to Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), the first passenger plane may be given to a private agency.