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<http://bangaloremirror.indiatimes.com/bangalore/others/rains-play-spoilsport-to-saras-flight-plans/articleshow/60467623.cms>

Rains play spoilsport to Saras flight plans

The aircraft was to take to the skies after High-Speed Taxi Trials at HAL Airport

The heavy rain lashing the city over the last month-a-and-half has thrown life out of gear in Bengaluru. Waterlogging due to the rain has not only affected the civic infrastructure, but also flight-testing activity.

Flight-testing activity of India's first multi-purpose civilian aircraft Saras that has been going on at the HAL Airport over the last few months has not been the same since the heavy downpour began. Waterlogging at the airport has stalled the High Speed Taxi Trials of the modified prototype of the SARAS aircraft.

The National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL), which is developing the Saras programme, has already carried out engine ground runs and Low Speed Taxi Trials. This was to be followed by High-Speed Taxi Trials before Saras could take flight.

"There were a couple of technical issues with the aircraft that have delayed the trials and the weather too has not been conducive to carry out High Speed Taxi Trials. It has been raining non- stop every other day and due to waterlogging at the HAL Airport due to heavy downpour, it is not wise to carry out these trials," an official said.

As per the original plan, the High Speed Taxi Trials were initially expected to be completed by the end of June and the aircraft was to take to the skies in July.

However, the official added the High Speed Taxi Trials of the aircraft would be conducted only in the first week of October now. "Upon completion of the High Speed Taxi Trials in October and after analysing various parameters, we will conduct the maiden flight of the modified SARAS," he said.

The flight would be SARAS's first in eight years. In 2009, a Saras prototype during a test flight crashed in Seshagiri halli near Bidai on the outskirts of Bengaluru, killing three IAF personnel.

Following the crash, the Saras programme was briefly shelved and was revived recently after several modifications. The 14-19 seater aircraft can be used for military transportation, air ambulance service, maritime patrolling, border surveillance, commutation for regional connectivity and special missions.

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