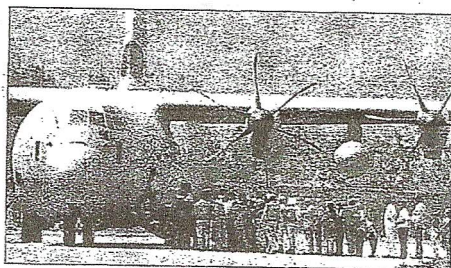


C-130J makes Hercule-an task easy

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: In an innovative step, the IAF on Saturday established an aviation fuel supply bridge at Dharasu in Uttarakhand to give greater impetus to the rescue operations, which were being severely restricted because of unavailability of aviation fuel.

The first C-130J Super Hercules from the Hindon airbase landed at Dharasu,



Pilgrims rescued from Gangotri boarding an IAF C-130 J aircraft at Dharasu on Saturday

an advanced landing ground with an airstrip only 1300 feet long, early on Saturday for the first time despite inclement weather.

"On landing, the aircraft defueled 8,000 litres of fuel into an empty bowser (a tanker containing fuel for aircraft) which had been airlifted on Friday from Sarsawa by a Mi-26 heavy-lift helicopter. With the availability of additional fuel now at Dharasu, rescue operations have picked up pace and helicop-

ters are now able to make more sorties," said IAF spokesperson Squadron Leader Priya Joshi. Apart from carrying fuel to Dharasu, the first C-130J on its return trip carried about 40 and the second aircraft about 100 injured and stranded pilgrims to the Air Force Station at Hindon. An emergency medical centre has been set up at Hindon tend to people arriving on board the aircraft.

"The first two C-130J aircraft carried fuel to Dharasu. A third is carrying an IAF medical team to attend to sick people at Dharasu before they are moved out to safer places," Joshi said.

Having paved the way for fixed-wing aircraft landing at Dharasu, the IAF also pressed an An-32 aircraft into action. These aircraft are carrying disaster communication equipment, some more aviation fuel, Sudan pumps for refueling the helicopters and 4,200 kgs of bridging equipment for the Border Roads Organization.

The Mi-26 will also airlift BRO heavy equipment to facilitate road repair and construction.

"While the fuel bridging has given impetus to rescue operations, increased flying activity in the narrow valleys is posing a new challenge to traffic management and safe flying. IAF has inducted additional personnel to ensure smooth planning, coordination and execution of flying operations, be it Air Force, Army or civilian operators," she said.

