

# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Durgapur-Delhi flight will help industry & tourism: CM

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**New Delhi:** At 31 minutes, it was the shortest flight that Captain K K Kejriwal had undertaken. For the passengers in the Airbus A319, it was pretty much the same. The plane took off from Kolkata airport on Monday afternoon and touched down at Andal even before the 122 passengers on the flight had settled down.

While this leg of the flight was exciting, it was the next two-and-a-half-hour leg from Andal to Delhi that made history, connecting the industrial hub to the Capital and realizing the long-cherished dream of thousands of executives and residents.

### ► AI banks on Asansol, P 6

"This flight will help the growth of industry, commerce and also tourism in the region," said chief minister Mamata Banerjee, who travelled on the maiden flight. Regular service will, however, commence only on December 21 with flights every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The current ATR-42 service between Kolkata and Andal will be withdrawn.

Partho Ghosh of Bengal Aerotropolis Projects Ltd (BAPL), the private firm that developed the greenfield airport, said: "The AI service will help people of the region to reach Delhi for work, study, treatment, pilgrimage or just leisure with much greater ease."

## AI banks on Asansol, Durgapur

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**A**I is banking on the estimated 1.1 crore population residing in the Asansol-Durgapur belt and extending up to Dhanbad who will benefit from the connection.

Also on board the inaugural flight were industrialists Harsh Neotia, Sanjay Budhia and Utsav Parekh (one of the BAPL promoters) along with healthcare investor Dr Satyajit Bose, Durgapur Steel Plant CEO PK Singh and a clutch of bureaucrats like state chief secretary Sanjoy Mitra, transport principal secretary Alapan Bando-padhyay and Burdwan district magistrate Soumitra Mohan.

"This is going to be a game-changer. It will significantly cut travel time. Earlier Rajdhani Express was our fastest mode to reach Delhi from here, unless one drove to Kolkata to catch a flight. In addition, the Durgapur-Asansol belt is dotted with central PSUs. Neighbouring Dhanbad could also benefit from these," said a DSP executive.