

New Maputo air route

Daily News Correspondent

MOSCOW: Maputo is to become the half-way house on a new Russian air route linking Moscow with the Antarctic.

The Russians have an important Antarctic base at Molodyozhnaya but the problem of keeping it regularly and adequately supplied has been a constant headache for the Kremlin.

The sea passage from the Soviet, Far East and Black Sea ports takes at least a month, and the lack of suitable staging and refuelling points has made air flights impracticable.

The availability of facilities at Maputo puts all these problems in the past, according to Tass, the official Soviet news agency.

A trial flight by a giant Ilyushin transport plane proved that Maputo can accommodate the new traffic, said Tass.

The agency did not indicate how often the Russian supply planes would be landing at Maputo.

At ice-bound Molodyozhnaya, a special runway surface has been laid to ensure safe landings by wheeled aircraft. They will make the trip from Moscow to the Antarctic base in 27 hours — not counting the stop at Maputo.