

Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu launches Challenge Mode for Aerodrome Development

Next Phase of UDAN Takes Off with MoUs Signed with 21 States/UTs

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The Ministry of Civil Aviation today took a major step towards strengthening regional air connectivity across the country with the signing of 21 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with States and Union Territories under the next phase of the UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) Scheme. The MoUs mark a significant milestone in Centre-State/UT cooperation for the development of aviation infrastructure and expansion of air connectivity to underserved and unserved regions.



The ceremony, held at The Ashok, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi, was inaugurated by Shri Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu, Minister of Civil Aviation, in the presence of Shri Murlidhar Mohol, Minister of State for Civil Aviation; Shri Samir Kumar Sinha, Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation; Shri Vipin Kumar, Chairman, Airports Authority of India (AAI), and senior officials of the Ministry.

"With these MoUs, Team Bharat is joining hands to take India's regional aviation to greater heights. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Viksit Rajya is the foundation of Viksit Bharat, with every State as an equal partner in this journey," said Shri Ram Mohan Naidu Kinjarapu.

Talking about the impact of UDAN, the Minister added, "Since its launch, UDAN has operationalized 687 routes and 95 aerodromes, with more than 3.66 lakh flights carrying around 1.71 crore passengers. But the numbers that matter most to me are the numbers of impact, aviation-sector jobs have grown from around 3 million in 2014 to nearly 7.7 million today, with the potential to reach 25 million by 2040. Airports like Tezu in Arunachal Pradesh and Purnea in Bihar, once cut off from air connectivity by hundreds of kilometers, are today becoming drivers of regional prosperity".

The launch of the next phase of UDAN builds on the inauguration by the Prime Minister at Jodhpur on 4th July 2026 and the UDAN Workshop held on 16th July 2026, which brought together civil aviation stakeholders to deliberate on the roadmap for the next phase of the scheme.

"Modified UDAN rests on four pillars; affordability for passengers, sustainability of operations, transparent Challenge Mode framework for projects and the promotion of indigenous manufacturing. Together, we are building an ecosystem towards the larger ambition of Made in India Civil aircraft. That is the direction in which this next phase of UDAN is taking us", Shri Ram Mohan Naidu added.

With today's launch, the next phase of UDAN moves from policy and stakeholder consultations towards on-ground implementation, with a three-pronged focus on strengthening Centre-State/UT partnerships, creating aviation infrastructure and expanding regional air connectivity.

Speaking at the event, Minister of State for Civil Aviation Shri Murlidhar Mohol said, "Under the able leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, UDAN has come a long way since 2016 expanding regional and remote connectivity across the country. Now, with Modified UDAN, we are looking at 120 new destinations and 4 crore more passengers over the next ten years. With more than 20 States coming together, we are taking this journey forward and opening a new chapter in India's civil aviation sector."

A total of 21 MoUs were signed between the Ministry of Civil Aviation, participating States/UTs and the Airports Authority of India (AAI), the implementing agency under the UDAN Scheme. The MoUs establish a structured framework for coordinated action between the Centre, States/UTs and AAI for identification, development and operationalisation of aviation assets, aligned with the connectivity requirements and priorities of States and UTs.

The Civil Aviation Minister also launched the Challenge Mode Portal for Aerodrome Development and released the Scheme Document for the next phase of UDAN Route Bidding.

Under the Challenge Mode, State Governments and UT Administrations will now be able to nominate airstrips and helipads for development under the next phase of UDAN through the dedicated portal. This will enable States/UTs to proactively identify locations with potential for aviation connectivity and facilitate the creation and upgradation of aviation infrastructure based on local requirements.

The route bidding round will invite airlines to bid for identified UDAN routes, enabling transparent and competitive selection of routes and operators. The process will facilitate the expansion of air services to unserved and underserved regions, improving accessibility and mobility and supporting wider economic activity, tourism, trade and employment.

The event also featured a technical session on the next phase of UDAN, covering the Challenge Mode for aerodrome development and the upcoming bidding round for selection of UDAN routes. The session provided an opportunity for States/UTs, AAI, airlines and other civil aviation stakeholders to deliberate on the implementation framework and way forward.

The next phase of UDAN seeks to build on the gains achieved under the scheme and further deepen the aviation ecosystem across the country, ensuring that the benefits of air connectivity and aviation infrastructure reach more regions, communities and citizens.

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