UDAN regional air connectivity scheme completes 10 years (launched 21 Oct 2016)

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News

The regional connectivity scheme 'Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik' (UDAN – let the common citizen of the country fly), launched on 21 Oct 2016, completed 10 years on 21 Oct 2026. The first UDAN flight flew Shimla–Delhi on 27 Apr 2017. As of July 2026, 679 routes and 95 airports/heliports/water aerodromes had been connected, with over 3.58 lakh flights carrying more than 1.68 crore passengers. The Union Cabinet approved 'Modified UDAN' (₹28,840 crore), extending it to 2035–36, on 25 Mar 2026.

Key facts

Launch	21 Oct 2016; under the National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP) 2016
Ministry / implementer	Ministry of Civil Aviation / Airports Authority of India (AAI)
First flight	27 Apr 2017 – Shimla–Delhi
Support	Viability Gap Funding (VGF) from the Regional Connectivity Fund; Centre–State 80:20 (NE/hill 90:10)
Achievement (July 2026)	679 routes; 95 airports/heliports/water aerodromes; 1.68 crore+ passengers
Modified UDAN	Cabinet 25.3.2026; ₹28,840 crore; 2026–27 to 2035–36; 100 airports, 200 helipads

Background

- UDAN rounds: 1.0 (2017) – 128 routes to 70 airports; 2.0 (2018) – helipads for the first time; 3.0 (2019) – tourism routes, seaplanes; 4.0 (2020) – hill, North-East and island areas; 5.5 – special bids for seaplanes and helicopters.
- Economy: airlines must offer half the seats at capped fares; VGF compensates them. States provide land, power, security etc. UDAN won the PM's Award for Excellence in Public Administration (Innovation), 2020.
- Related: Krishi UDAN – air transport of farm produce (58 airports); 'UDAN Yatri Cafe' – low-cost eateries at airports (Kolkata, Chennai). Modified UDAN – HAL Dhruv helicopters for Pawan Hans and HAL Dornier aircraft for Alliance Air.
- Airports Authority of India (AAI) – statutory body under the AAI Act, 1994; HQ New Delhi. Aviation safety regulator – DGCA.

Tamil Nadu link: Under UDAN, Salem airport resumed operations on 25 Mar 2018 with TruJet's Chennai–Salem service. Funds were also sanctioned under UDAN to develop Neyveli, Vellore, Thanjavur and Ramanathapuram airports. A 'UDAN Yatri Cafe' has opened at Chennai airport.

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