

India's Aviation Vision 2047

Mains: GS III – Infrastructure: Airports

Why in News?

Recently there has been a steady increase in the air traffic in India.

What is the status of India's aviation sector?

- **3rd largest** – India has emerged as the world's third-largest domestic aviation market.
- In the last decade, India's skies have grown busier than ever
- **Airports** – The number of airports increased from 74 in 2014 to 163 in 2025.
- Meanwhile, as India celebrates hundred years of independence in 2047, the government's vision is to increase airports to 350-400 by then.
- **Contribution to growth** – The aviation sector is also one of the fastest-growing sectors in India's economy, contributing through air transport services and indirectly through tourism, trade, logistics, and manufacturing.
- According to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), investments in aviation have a strong ripple effect on the economy.
- For every rupee spent, the sector generates more than 3 times that value in economic activity and supports over six times as many jobs in connected industries.
- **Employment** – The sector supports over 7.7 million jobs indirectly, including 369,000 jobs directly.
- The demand for skilled personnel—pilots, engineers, ground staff, and logistics professionals—is expected to rise sharply.
- **Increased global connectivity** – With over 116 bilateral Air Service Agreements, India is deepening global connectivity as Indian carriers expand internationally, reinforcing the country's position as an aviation hub in Asia.
- **Other benefits** – Civil aviation is also driving FDI inflows, technology transfer, and Make in India initiatives in aircraft manufacturing, ground handling, and Maintenance, Repair, and Operations (MRO) services.
- **Future prospects** – Over the past decade, domestic air passenger traffic has grown 10-12% annually.
- By 2040, the passenger traffic is expected to grow six-fold to around 1.1 billion.
- India's commercial airline fleet is predicted to grow from 400 in 2014 to around 2359 in March 2040.
- The total employment due to aviation sector in 2040 is expected to be around 25 million - emerging as a core engine of India's journey towards becoming a developed economy.
- **Vision For 2047** – As India moves toward its centenary of independence, the aviation

sector is charting an ambitious growth path from 163 airports in 2025 to over 350 by 2047, and passenger traffic expected to cross one billion.

- These numbers represents a shift toward cleaner fuels, digital airways, and inclusive mobility.
- With 25 million jobs projected by 2047 and expanding opportunities in MRO, drone manufacturing, and pilot training, aviation will become a vital pillar of India's \$10 trillion economy.

What is UDAN scheme and its achievements?

- **UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik)** - It is a regional connectivity scheme launched on 21 October 2016 scheme under Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA).
- **Outcomes** - It has democratised air travel and reshaped India's regional connectivity landscape.
- According to NITI Aayog, domestic travellers accounted for over 83% of total tourism spending in 2019, a figure expected to rise to nearly 89% by 2028.
- UDAN have bridged the infrastructure gap and made air travel accessible for millions, connecting remote regions and making air travel affordable and accessible.
- This reflects the government's efforts to make air travel affordable and inclusive, supported by initiatives like UDAN.
- **Empowering remote areas** - Once remote destinations— Kullu, Darbhanga, Hubballi and Shillong ,are now directly connected by air, boosting local economies and regional tourism.
- UDAN has operationalised 649 routes and connected 93 aerodromes (including 2 water aerodromes and 15 heliports) across the country, among which 12 airports/heliports in the North-East region.
- **Island development** - It has also integrated the Andaman, Nicobar, and Lakshadweep Islands into the national aviation network.
- **Milestone Achieved** - Over 1.56+ crore passengers have travelled on RCS-UDAN flights.
- A total of 3.23 lakh RCS flights have been operated across regional routes nationwide.
- **Expanded UDAN** - The scheme aims to increase regional connectivity to 120 new destinations across the country, catering to 4 crore passengers in the next 10 years.
- The scheme will also support helipads and smaller airports in hilly, aspirational and North East region districts.
- **Affordable Food at Airports with UDAN Yatri Café** - The UDAN Yatri Café initiative, launched at Kolkata and Chennai airports, provides affordable, quality meals (tea at Rs.10, samosa at Rs.20) making air travel more inclusive and accessible to all.

What are the key schemes in aviation sector?

- **Krishi UDAN** - It enables faster transport of agricultural produce and perishables, especially to benefit the tribal and northeastern states.
- In convergence with the Operation Greens Scheme, it offers 50% freight subsidy, multimodal transport options, and coverage of horticulture and allied produce.
- **Lifeline UDAN** - This special initiative was launched in March 2020, during the COVID-19 lockdown, to ensure uninterrupted medical and essential supply deliveries.

- Over 588 flights carried 1,000 tons of cargo across 5.45 lakh km, focusing particularly on the North Eastern region, the Islands, and hilly terrains.
- Lifeline UDAN also supported setting up COVID labs, transporting medical teams, and responding to emergencies like the Vishakhapatnam gas leak.
- **Greenfield Airports Policy** - The Greenfield Airports Policy provides a framework for building new airports on unused land through public-private partnerships to expand India's aviation infrastructure and decongest metro hubs.
- **Enhancing Travel Experience** - To enhance the travel experience, reduce redundancy, and save time, the government has launched various initiative including Digi Yatra.
- Implemented from 2022 onwards, Digi Yatra enabled paperless, contactless processing of passengers using facial recognition technology.
- Digi Yatra App is available on Android as well as iOS platforms and has been downloaded by over 12.1 million users so far.
- **Flight Training and Pilot Development** - To meet the projected demand of 30,000-34,000 pilots in the next 10-15 years, government is expanding Flight Training Organizations (FTOs) and commercial pilot licensing.
- Promoting gender inclusion, with 13-18% women pilots, DGCA targets 25% female representation in all aviation roles by 2025.
- **Drone Rules 2021, Production-Linked Incentive (PLI)** - The Drone Rules, 2021, liberalized India's drone sector by simplifying regulations and enabling wider commercial use.
- **Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme** - With Rs 34.79 crore disbursed in FY 24-25, PLI has encouraged domestic manufacturing and reduced reliance on imports, boosting India's self-reliant drone ecosystem.
- **Bharatiya Vayuyan Adhiniyam, 2024** - Legislative reform aimed at modernizing India's aviation sector by re-enacting the Aircraft Act, 1934, in alignment with contemporary needs and global standards.
- The new legislation fosters indigenous manufacturing under Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat initiatives, aligning with international conventions like the Chicago Convention and ICAO, and streamlining regulatory processes, such as simplification of the issuance of licenses.
- The Act removes redundancies and provides provisions for appeals.

What lies ahead?

- India's civil aviation sector has emerged as one of the fastest-growing sectors, making the country the third-largest domestic aviation market in the world.
- As country continues to record unprecedented rise in passenger traffic, expand regional connectivity, and modernise aviation frameworks, the efforts by the ministry enhance travel experiences for millions and bolster economic prosperity, strengthen national integration, and empower India to confidently soar towards its vision of becoming a developed nation—Viksit Bharat @2047.

Reference

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