Indian Economy · GS - III

What is the need for expanding the regional air connectivity in India? In this context, discuss the government's UDAN Scheme and its achievements.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2024	GS - III	Indian Economy

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

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Answer Hint

Regional connectivity, balanced development, UDAN, RCS, Tier-2/Tier-3 cities, tourism, employment, affordable aviation, underserved airports

Model Answer

Introduction

Air connectivity is an important component of modern infrastructure because it improves mobility, integrates markets and supports balanced regional development. However, high airfares and concentration of aviation infrastructure in major cities have historically restricted access to air travel.

Body

1. Need for Regional Air Connectivity

- Connects remote, hilly, island and aspirational regions with economic centres.
- Promotes tourism, trade, investment and employment.
- Reduces regional disparities by integrating smaller cities into national markets.
- Provides faster access to healthcare, education and administrative services.

- Strengthens strategic connectivity in border and geographically difficult regions.
- Encourages development of aviation-related infrastructure and services.

2. UDAN Scheme

The **Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN)** scheme was launched in 2016 under the Regional Connectivity Scheme to make air travel affordable and improve connectivity to underserved and unserved airports.

Its principal mechanisms include:

- Viability Gap Funding to support selected routes.
- Affordable fares for a specified portion of seats.
- Revival and development of regional airports and airstrips.
- Participation of airlines through competitive bidding.

3. Achievements

The scheme has expanded regional aviation substantially. Ministry of Civil Aviation data for 2024-25 reported **88 operationalised aerodromes, 619 operationalised routes, about 2.94 lakh RCS flights and more than 148 lakh passengers** under RCS-UDAN.

Conclusion

UDAN has demonstrated that targeted public support can create viable aviation markets in underserved regions. Its long-term sustainability will require better airport infrastructure, financially viable routes, reliable airline operations and continued integration of remote regions.

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