

Govt launches UDAN 5.1, specifically designed for helicopter routes

By TIOL News Service

NEW DELHI, MAY 25, 2023: FOLLOWING

four successful rounds of the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) - Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) and with the version 5.0 of the fifth round underway, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has launched UDAN 5.1 to further enhance the connectivity to remote areas of the country and achieve last mile connectivity through helicopters.

For the first time under RCS-UDAN, this round is designed specifically for helicopter routes.

The main features include:

An increase in the scope of operations for operators wherein the scheme will now allow routes where one of the origin or destination locations is in a priority area. Earlier both points had to be in priority areas.

Airfare caps have been reduced by as much as 25% to make flying in helicopters more affordable for passengers.Â

Viability Gap Funding (VGF) caps for the operators have been increased substantially for both single and twin-engine helicopters to enhance financial viability for operating the awarded routes.

"The latest round of UDAN scheme is a testament to two emerging phenomenon in Indian civil aviation - one, a deeper democratisation of air travel with a focus on last-mile connectivity. Second, a growing appetite for helicopters in aiding tourism. Greater helicopter penetration through such efforts will help boost tourism, hospitality, and thus, our local economies. UDAN 5.1 heralds a new dawn not just for civil aviation, but also for India's remote & unserved regions."

said Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, Union Minister of Civil Aviation and Steel.

The current version of the scheme has been designed after consultations with all stakeholders including helicopter operators. While the intended target is to provide last-mile connectivity, it is also projected to give the helicopter segment of the Indian civil aviation industry a much needed boost.

It may be mentioned that till date 46 helicopter routes have been operationalized under previous rounds of the scheme benefitting a number of hilly and North East states and this round is targeting coverage of a much larger number of routes.

Under the UDAN scheme passengers have received the benefit of air connectivity, airlines have received concessions for operating regional routes, and unserved regions have received the direct and indirect benefits of air connectivity for their economic development. The present version of the scheme will be another step towards the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of allowing the common man to travel by air at affordable fares to remote destinations of the country.