

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION
RAJYA SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO. : 168

TO BE ANSWERED ON THE 9th March 2026

LOW AIRPORT DENSITY IN THE COUNTRY

168. SHRI S NIRANJAN REDDY

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether it is a fact that India has only 0.11 airports per million population, compared with 47.35 in the United States and 0.39 in China, as highlighted by the Economic Survey 2026-27;
- (b) if so, whether Government agrees that such low airport density poses constraints on regional connectivity, air passenger growth and logistics efficiency;
- (c) steps taken by Government to address this infrastructure gap, including details of new airport projects, greenfield and brownfield expansions and timelines thereof; and
- (d) manner in which public and private investment, including PPP models, is being leveraged to expand airport capacity across the country?

ANSWER

Minister of CIVIL AVIATION (Shri Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu)

(a) to (d): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (A) TO (D) IN RESPECT OF RAJYA SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 168 FOR REPLY ON 09.03.2026 REGARDING LOW AIRPORT DENSITY IN THE COUNTRY ASKED BY SHRI S NIRANJAN REDDY

(a) to (c): At present, there are 164 operational airports in the country. India is one of the fastest-growing aviation markets in the world and is currently the third-largest domestic aviation market. In order to address the growing demand and emerging challenges in the sector, the Government of India has undertaken several initiatives, the major ones being as under:

(i) The National Civil Aviation Policy was issued by the Ministry of Civil Aviation in 2016 with the objective of creating a conducive ecosystem for the overall growth of the aviation sector in a harmonised manner, covering all sub-sectors including airlines, airports, Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO), and Flying Training Organisations (FTOs).

(ii) The Government has launched the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS)-UDAN scheme in October, 2016 to facilitate / stimulate regional air connectivity by reviving unserved and underserved airports in Tier-2 & Tier-3 cities, for making air travel affordable to the masses. Since the commencement of the RCS-UDAN scheme, a total of 663 routes have been operationalised, connecting 95 unserved and underserved aerodromes. To further enhance regional connectivity, the Government has announced the modified UDAN Scheme to connect 120 new destinations across the country, catering to 4 crore passengers in the next 10 years.

(iii) Under Greenfield Airports (GFA) Policy, 2008, Government of India (GoI) has accorded "InPrinciple" approval for setting up of 24 Greenfield Airports across the country. Out of these, 13 Greenfield airports at Durgapur, Shirdi, Kannur, Pakyong, Kalaburagi, Orvakal (Kurnool), Sindhudurg, Kushinagar, Itanagar, Mopa, Shivamogga, Rajkot (Hirasar) and Navi Mumbai have been operationalised.

(iv) The total passenger handling capacity of all the operational airports in the country has increased from approx. 200 million passengers per annum (MPPA) in 2014 to more than 570 MPPA at present.

Further, the expansion and modernisation of airports is a continuous process undertaken by Airports Authority of India and other airport operators from time to time, depending upon passenger demand forecasts, operational requirements, and demand from airlines, availability of land, financial viability, statutory and regulatory clearances and other site-specific factors. Accordingly, timelines for completion vary depending on these factors.

(d): Public Private Partnership (PPP) models are being leveraged for expansion of airport capacity in the country for both brownfield as well as greenfield airports. In the case of

brownfield airports, AAI has leased out eight of its airports namely, Delhi, Mumbai, Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Mangaluru, Jaipur, Guwahati and Thiruvananthapuram for operation, management and development on a long-term lease basis. The Concessionaire of these airports are obligated to implement the Master Plan and Development Works as stipulated in the Operation, Management & Development Agreement (OMDA) and Concession Agreement, as applicable. Further, eleven airports of AAI, comprising five major airports clubbed with six smaller airports, have also been identified for their operation, management and development under Public Private Partnership (PPP). In addition, the development of greenfield airports such as Navi Mumbai International Airport and Noida International Airport is also being done through PPP mode.

To improve the airport infrastructure in the country, AAI and PPP Partners have incurred CAPEX of more than Rs. 96000 crore during FY 2019-20 to FY 2024-25.
