

# Udan Khatola



## ‘Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik’

### The Regional (Air) Connectivity Scheme – by another Name!

On 21 October 2016 two decades after the demise of Vayudoot, India’s first and thus far only regional/commuter/third level airline, the Ministry of Civil Aviation took yet another step towards “making flying a reality for the small town common man”, with Civil Aviation Minister P Ashok Gajapathi Raju launching the Ministry’s much awaited Regional Connectivity Scheme UDAN in New Delhi. This time, however, it was to be an innovative scheme “to develop the regional aviation market, a market-based mechanism in which airlines bid for seat subsidies. This first-of-its-kind scheme globally will create affordable yet economically viable and profitable flights

on regional routes so that flying becomes affordable to the common man even in small towns.” Enter the UDAN.

Mr Raju expressed the hope that first flight under the scheme would be able to take off by January 2017 and said that the scheme had been prepared after a lot of stakeholder consultations and called for support “from all players to make it a success”. Also speaking on the occasion Minister of State for Civil Aviation Jayant Sinha said that objective of the scheme was *Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik (UDAN)* stating that this scheme would ensure “affordability, connectivity, growth and development, provide a win-win situation for all stakeholders, citizens would get the benefit of affordability, connectivity

and more jobs”. While the Centre would be able to expand the regional air connectivity and market, State governments would reap the benefit of development of remote areas, enhanced trade and commerce and expansion of tourism. For incumbent airlines there was “the promise of new routes and more passengers while for start-up airlines there is the opportunity of new, scalable business. Airport operators will also see their business expanding as would original equipment manufacturers. “UDAN envisages providing air connectivity to un-served or under-served airports of the country through revival of existing air strips and airports. The scheme would be active for a period of 10 years.”