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HUMBLE SCHEME LIFTS INDIA TO THE CUSP OF A CIVIL AVIATION REVOLUTION

1,000 incentivised short-haul flights to 100 no-frills airports at the heart of India's take off for the world's 3rd largest aviation market spot



LATEST ENTRANT: STAR AIR PROMOTED BY SANJAY GHODAWAT GROUP OPERATES UNDER THE RCS-UDAN SCHEME

By **VISHAL THAPAR**

A thousand new domestic routes and 100 new airports in the next five years: That's the near-term goal powering India's flight to the Number 3 spot in the world's aviation market at Round 4 of the UDAN Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS), which is set to become the global benchmark for making affordable flying accessible to teeming millions.

With 688 new routes already having been awarded – of which 232 have been operationalised so far – across 106 airports and 31 heliports since the launch of the scheme in 2017, UDAN (Udega Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) appears to be reached a take-off stage.

Round 4 for opening up a new tranche of routes

was launched on December 3, 2019. The focus is on increasing air connectivity to the North-Eastern states, the hill states, the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh and the Island Territories of Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep. Bids for these routes have been invited.

The highlight of Round 4 is the increase in the Viability Gap Funding (VGF) or subsidy cap for Category 2/3 aircraft of more than 20 seats operating on RCS routes in these priority areas.

Under the programme, airlines have to cap fares for 50 per cent of the seats to ₹2,500 per flight hour. The loss due to the price cap is compensated by the VGF, which is a grant to the airlines to bridge the gap between the cost of operations and revenue.

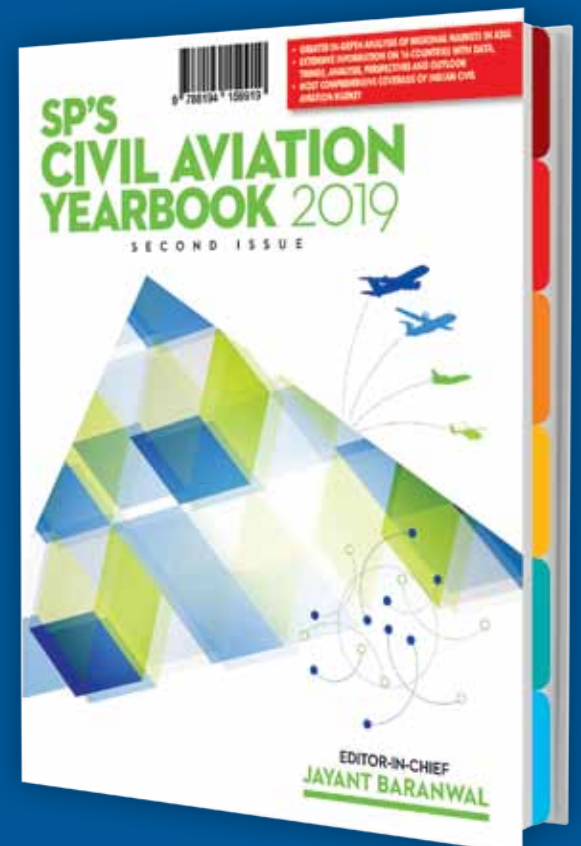
A key feature of UDAN is that it is not funded

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through the Government budget. Funds for this programme, including the VGF subsidy, are generated within the sector through a cess imposed on large aircraft operating on trunk routes with high profitability.

The VGF cap applicable for various stage lengths for operation through Category 1 / 1 A aircraft (under-20 seaters) has also been revised to further incentivize the operation of small aircraft under the Scheme.

VGF for Category 2/3 aircraft (more than 20 seats) would be restricted to routes with stage length of up to 600 km in order to promote short-haul routes.

Under a well defined Prioritisation framework, airports already developed by the Airports Authority of India (AAI) would be given higher priority for award of VGF under the Scheme, followed by non-AAI airports but located in priority area.

Another key feature introduced at the Round 4 Stage is the allowance of flexibility to the airline to change frequency of flight operations. The Selected Airline Operator (SAO) would be allowed to change the frequency of flight operation on a given route, provided it conforms to the numbers submitted in the Technical Proposal of its bid within a period of one year.

Operation of helicopters and sea planes under NSOP license is also allowed in Round 4.

"AAI would focus on developing no-frills airport in the future and routes connecting such airports would be prioritized for award of VGF. The market would be incentivized to develop short haul routes only, providing connectivity to nearby airports," the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) stated, while declaring its intention to "operationalise 1,000 routes and more than 100 airports in the next five years" in priority areas which are so far either un-served or underserved in air connectivity.

"In the last three years MoCA has successfully completed three rounds of bidding under the Scheme and awarded about 700 routes. Efforts are made to develop the airports and operationalise the pending routes. Many of these routes will be operationalised during the winter schedule 2019," the MoCA added.

Regions like the North-Eastern states are major beneficiaries of this programme, with 40 RCS routes having been awarded so far.

"In less than three years of implementation, UDAN has opened up 44 regional airports and transformed the way common people travel," notes Usha Padhee, Joint Secretary Civil Aviation, in a recent write-up. The objective is to promote balanced regional growth and make flying affordable for masses, she states.

RCS is special because it does not depend upon Budgetary support from the Government, and is, instead using funds raised creatively from within the sector and leveraging existing national assets which are lying either unused or under-utilised.

"As land is of very high value, the existing airstrips are like gold mines waiting to be explored. These airstrips, which may belong to state governments, PSUs, defence, private entities, all have been brought under the ambit of the scheme. Upgradation of these airstrips depends on the commitments from the airlines through the bidding process, so that the investment will not become infructuous," states Padhee on the approach to the programme.

UDAN also provides a freight connectivity template to accommodate the Krishi Udaan proposal announced recently in the Union Budget for the airlift of select agricultural produce.

"This convergence between regional air connectivity scheme and agriculture marketing has been envisaged to improve value realisation of niche products especially in North-East and tribal districts.

"A vertical of freighter connectivity under UDAN will become meaningful when there is an integrated supply chain management ensured by the concerned agencies in an eco-system where the role of each agency is defined," Joint Secretary Padhee observes.

India's air passenger traffic stands at 345 million today. With penetration levels currently as low as 7 to 8 per cent, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Puri envisages UDAN driving up growth rates in to as high as 25 per cent in the not too distant future. The humble scheme to make flying accessible to the common man has lifted India to the cusp of a civil aviation revolution. •

THE HIGHLIGHT OF ROUND 4 IS THE INCREASE IN THE VIABILITY GAP FUNDING (VGF) OR SUBSIDY CAP FOR CATEGORY 2/3 AIRCRAFT OF MORE THAN 20 SEATS OPERATING ON RCS ROUTES IN THESE PRIORITY AREAS.

GUJSAIL SURGING AHEAD WITH NEW IDEAS, CONQUERING NEW FRONTIERS

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Pratt & Whitney Customer Training Centre in India Registers 10,000 Student Days of Training

Facilitating the growth and development of an industry ready talent pool, this world-class training centre in Hyderabad underscores Pratt & Whitney's long-term vision and commitment to India.



LAUNCHED IN 2015, HYDERABAD IS ONE OF THE THREE PRATT & WHITNEY TRAINING CENTRES OPERATING GLOBALLY WHICH OFFER SPECIALISED DGCA AND EASA PART 147 APPROVED TRAININGS.

By **SP'S CORRESPONDENT**

Pratt & Whitney has announced a recorded 10,000 student days of training at its Customer Training Centre in Hyderabad, India. Launched in 2015, the centre in Hyderabad is one of the three Pratt & Whitney training centres operating globally which offer specialised DGCA and EASA Part 147 approved trainings. The centre offers advanced training for airline customers, MRO operators, as well as industry and university skill development programmes, to spur the growth of the aviation sector in India. Several leading aerospace organisations have extended their support to the skill development initiatives undertaken by Pratt & Whitney and will consider offering career opportunities to students trained by the company.

"In line with the Government of India's 'Skill India' and 'Make in India' programmes, we have strategically invested in a world-class customer training centre in Hyderabad," said Ashmita Sethi, Pratt & Whitney Managing Director, India. "Through our centre here, we have been nurturing and developing talent in the aerospace sector since 2015. Our training centre underscores Pratt & Whitney's long-term vision and commitment of developing a robust skill development base in the

country to support the growth of the aerospace ecosystem in India."

"The milestone of 10,000 student days of training at the Customer Training Centre in Hyderabad further testifies Pratt & Whitney's commitment towards aviation skill development in the country thereby helping create a pool of industry-ready talent to fuel the growth of the aviation sector in India," said Amit Pathak, General Manager, Pratt & Whitney Customer Training, India.

"Our vision is to create one of the country's premier aerospace and aviation hubs in the state of Telangana. As the premier skill development agency of the state government, we look forward to working with corporates such as Pratt & Whitney in developing an ecosystem of skill development programmes that will propel Telangana to leadership in aerospace and aviation," said Srikanth Sinha, CEO Telangana Academy of Skills & Knowledge.

Accentuating its contribution to the Government's "Skill India" initiative, Pratt & Whitney India has partnered with leading state and private universities across more than five states in India and has successfully conducted specialised aviation training programs for the benefit of faculty and students. The centre has successfully delivered its programmes for students and faculty from states including Telan-

gana, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Haryana apart from providing training for over 30 airline operators representing 20 nationalities.

Additionally, the company has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with leading global universities to provide aerospace and aviation skill development programs in the country. These partnerships are aimed at facilitating the growth of an aviation ecosystem in the country through development of an industry ready talent pool in support of the massive growth in the aviation sector in India.

The training programmes conducted at the Customer Training Centre in Hyderabad range from short two-day seminars to more focused six-week intensive courses. While the short course is offered on campus, the six-week programme, which presents detailed theory and practical training, is offered at the training centre due to its intensive nature. Underlining the success of this initiative, many of these students graduating from these programmes are also successfully placed with leading global aerospace engineering services majors such as Belcan India. Apart from university programmes, the centre also organises specialised trainings targeted towards Medium and Small Scale Enterprises (MSMEs) looking to grow their business in the aerospace manufacturing sector. •

Pratt & Whitney's CSR Activities In India

By **ASHMITA SETHI**

Aligned with our commitment of supporting the communities in which we operate, we support following corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs in India:

- Pratt & Whitney supports United Way India in improving lives by mobilising the caring power of communities to build a stronger India. Present in seven cities, Bangalore, Baroda, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Mumbai, United Way India strives to leverage the talents and expertise of the community to craft solutions to India's unique social problems and set the standard for results and accountability.
- Pratt & Whitney, the University of Connecticut (UConn) and Engineers

Without Borders – India have collaborated to install 100 e-Learning centres where elementary-age children can have access to high-quality electronic education courses with a STEM emphasis. The e-Learning Centres serve approximately 600 students each year. Each centre features a modern facility equipped with the tools and technologies needed to support both teachers and students.

- Girls Who Code leverages United Technologies Corporation's support and Pratt & Whitney's in-country resources to expand coding clubs in Bangalore, Delhi and Hyderabad. The program partners with schools and orphanages to set up free clubs and provide girls with the skills and tools necessary for success in engineering and technology fields, thereby encouraging the pursuit of careers in STEM. •

HondaJet Elite to Soon Have an Indian Customer

The Indian infrastructure might right now not be very welcoming for the private flights but HondaJet is hopeful that soon it will have a significant change.



HONDAJET ELITE ON STATIC DISPLAY AT BEGUMPET AIRPORT, HYDERABAD; (RIGHT) SIMON ROADS, VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES, HONDAJET.

Having outperformed most of its competitors in the very light jet sector, Honda's aircraft company, HondaJet made its presence at the Wings India 2020, Hyderabad. The HondaJet Elite flew down to Hyderabad after being at Singapore last month and was at display during show. "An upgraded version of the HondaJet classic, Elite is a single-pilot six-seater (excluding the pilot) aircraft with a greater range, better runway performance, and improved sound proofing. Hence it is further, faster, quieter and higher," said Simon Roads, Vice President of Sales, HondaJet while he spoke to *SP's ShowNews*.

Parked at the Begumpet Airport for the show, the beautiful blue and white HondaJet Elite boasted of its efficient design. Roads explained how the design ensures that the aircraft is more comfortable and more cost efficient. "For us at Honda, keeping a tab of our carbon footprint is very important, and this aircraft is an example of that. It has an efficient engine, a GE Honda engine as well as less turbulence

and noise. Even its exhaust is placed well with an air-frame design," he added. Roads also shared the experience of the company with Sustainable Alternative Jet Fuel and remarked how it is as good as the usual fuel but has better environmental advantages.

Talking about the market in India, Roads informed that soon this year there will be announcements of India's first Elite delivery. Not disclosing the names, he told that HondaJet have customers for ownership and also chartering. He also talked about the infrastructural challenges in India but remains hopeful of a change soon. "It might seem that there is a lot of flamboyance around this industry and such planes but it is about selling a lifestyle to the customers and explaining them the long run cost efficiency," he said. •

—Ayushee Chaudhary

Boeing Showcases Range of Commercial Capabilities

Interactive exhibit features how Boeing and partners are making strategic investments to advance aerospace technology and innovation in India

Boeing is highlighting its innovative commercial products and services at the show. The company's exhibit feature its commitment to innovation, safety and industry partnerships in developing India's aerospace ecosystem in support of 'Make in India' and 'Skill India'.

"India is one of the world's fastest growing aviation markets and Boeing is honored to partner with customers and industry leaders to enhance the country's aerospace sector for the last 75 years," said Salil Gupte, President, Boeing India. "We look forward to the opportunity to highlight our ongoing investments in India that span the development of aerospace technology, innovation, production capacity, supply chain, aerospace skilling centres, manufacturing and the modernisation of airport infrastructure and airspace."

In addition to showcasing commercial aviation platforms such as the 787 Dreamliner and 777X, the Boeing exhibit at B8 focuses on the company's world-class services capabilities to enhance airline operations. "As India's middle class expands and more consumers are able to fly, we're seeing tremendous potential for the country's growth as a commercial aviation hub," said Darren Hulst, Vice President, Commercial Marketing. "Boeing's fuel efficient and capable airplanes will enable this growth." •



Profit Hunter Captivates Attention @ Wings India 2020

Embraer hopes to bridge the passenger capacity gap in the Indian market with its comfortable and cost-efficient aircraft.



(TOP) EMBRAER PROFIT HUNTER E-195 E2 AIRCRAFT ON STATIC DISPLAY.
(ABOVE, LEFT) CESAR PEREIRA, VICE PRESIDENT ASIA PACIFIC, EMBRAER COMMERCIAL AVIATION,
(ABOVE RIGHT) MORE COMFORTABLE SEATS OF THE AIRCRAFT.

Brazil manufacturer, Embraer's 'King of Skies' also managed to become the king in all eyes as the aircraft enthralled the maximum visitors who gathered to get a glimpse of the aircraft displayed at the Wings India 2020 in Hyderabad. Named as the 'Profit Hunter', this E-195 E2 has been designed to magnify profit, explained Cesar Pereira, Vice President Asia Pacific, Embraer Commercial Aviation during an interaction with *SP's ShowNews*.

Speaking about the design of the aircraft, Pereira said, "E2 was our guidance for the design but our aim was not to just alter the engine and get done with it. We redesigned the entire aircraft with a better engine, more and comfortable seats, etc. to have the most efficient design for a single-aisle aircraft."

The aircraft gets its name from the concept it showcases, added Pereira. "The idea was to maximize the revenue but at the same time

reduce the cost, and hence enhance the profit," he said. With the marvel engineering capabilities that Embraer has, this aircraft has been built with the lowest operating cost in the country in the new generation jets.

Further talking about India, Pereira added that it actually is the right market for this aircraft. "In 2019 in India, 52 per cent of flights carried between 90 and 150 passengers. However, here either there are 70 seaters or too large aircrafts. An aircraft like Profit Hunter, which is 146 seater is the appropriate one for this market. This is a great opportunity which is untapped till now."

This is probably the reason that Embraer is very excited on displaying this state-of-the-art, highly comfortable aircraft at Wings India to seek an opportunity for more visibility for a wider audience of suppliers, passengers, media, airlines, etc. •

—Ayushee Chaudhary

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