UDAN at ten: 331 of its 679 routes were not flying in July 2026

In this report: The Ministry's own count, July 2026; CAG's audit of UDAN 1, 2 and 3, March 2023; What the backgrounder did not say; How the figures were made.

UDAN completed ten years on 21 October 2026. When the Ministry of Civil Aviation answered the Rajya Sabha in writing in July 2026, 331 of the 679 routes that it had started were not flying.

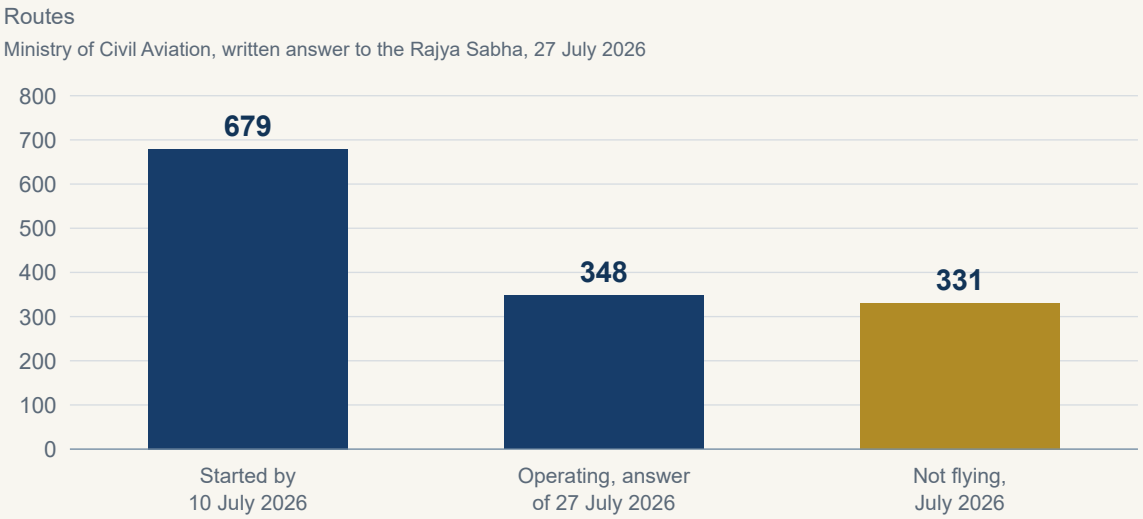
The Ministry counted 679 routes started by 10 July 2026 and only 348 operating when it answered on 27 July 2026, so 48.7 per cent of all the routes started were not flying.

Finding	What the Government's own records show
331 routes not flying, July 2026	The Ministry of Civil Aviation told the Rajya Sabha on 27 July 2026 that 679 routes had been started by 10 July 2026 and 348 were operating, so 331 routes, 48.7 per cent, were not flying in July 2026.
165 stopped early, by July 2026	The same answer of 27 July 2026 said that 165 routes were discontinued before their three years of subsidy were over, and the Ministry repeated the count on 10 August 2026.
The promise of 2016	At the launch on 21 October 2016, the Ministry promised "economically viable and profitable flights on regional routes", so that flying would become affordable to the common man in small towns.
CAG's audit: 54 of 774, March 2023	CAG found that only 54 of the 774 routes awarded under UDAN 1, 2 and 3, 7 per cent, kept flying after their three years of subsidy ended, as of March 2023.
The anniversary backgrounder	The Government's backgrounder of 20 October 2026 gave the number of routes started, and gave no count of the routes flying on that date.

Sources: Read on 21 October 2026. Rajya Sabha Question 907, 27 July 2026; Rajya Sabha Question 2406, 10 August 2026; PIB release 151850 on the launch of UDAN, 21 October 2016; CAG Report 22 of 2023 on UDAN, 10 August 2023; PIB backgrounder 2325359 on UDAN, 20 October 2026.

The Ministry's own count, July 2026

The Ministry of Civil Aviation gave two counts when it answered the Rajya Sabha in writing on 27 July 2026. It said that 679 routes had been started under UDAN as on 10 July 2026, and that 348 routes were operating at present. The difference is 331 routes, which is 48.7 per cent of all the routes started from the launch to July 2026. The Ministry printed 679 and 348 in that answer, and the difference is this office's arithmetic on its two figures.



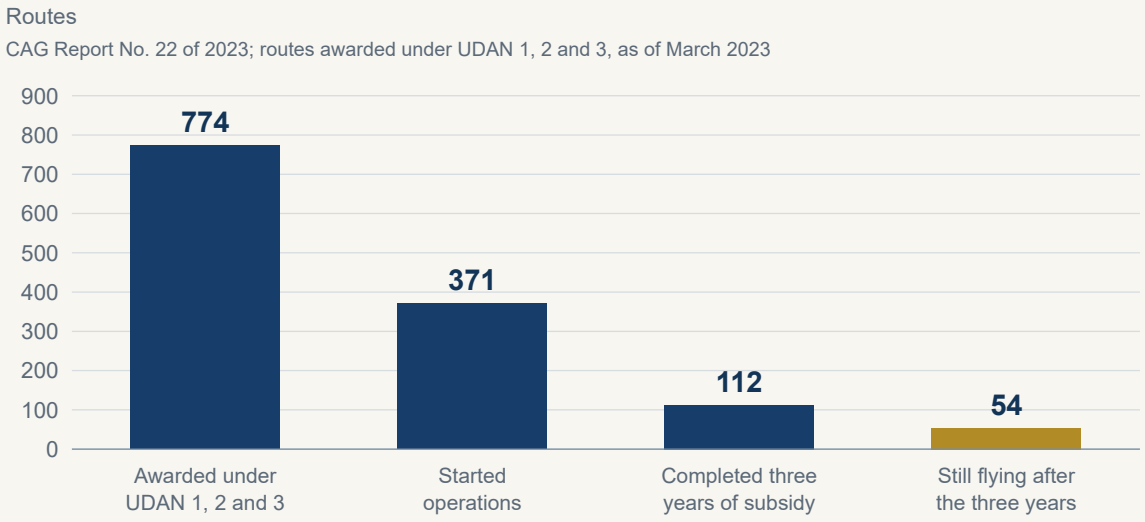
Each bar is a count of routes that the Ministry gave in its answer of 27 July 2026. The gold bar shows the 331 routes that had been started and were not flying in July 2026.

In the same answer of 27 July 2026, the Ministry said that 165 routes were discontinued before the three-year subsidy period was over. In another written answer on 10 August 2026, the Ministry repeated both counts: 348 routes operating, and 165 routes that had stopped before their three years of subsidy ended.

Sources: Read on 21 October 2026. Rajya Sabha Question 907, 27 July 2026; Rajya Sabha Question 2406, 10 August 2026.

CAG's audit of UDAN 1, 2 and 3, March 2023

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India, the national auditor, audited the routes awarded under UDAN 1, 2 and 3 in its Report No. 22 of 2023. CAG recorded the scheme's aim in these words: "The Scheme focuses on encouraging sustainability of operations under RCS in the long term so that the connectivity established is not dependent on VGF in perpetuity." CAG counted 774 routes awarded under them. By March 2023, 371 of them had started operations, and 112 had completed the full three years of subsidy. Only 54 routes, 7 per cent of the routes awarded, kept flying after their three years ended, as of March 2023.



Each bar is CAG's count for the routes awarded under UDAN 1, 2 and 3, as of March 2023. This brief reads the audit on its own basis, because it counts a different set of routes on a different date from the Ministry's answer.

Sources: Read on 21 October 2026. CAG Report 22 of 2023 on UDAN, 10 August 2023.

What the backgrounder did not say, and how the figures were made

On 20 October 2026, a day before the tenth anniversary, the Press Information Bureau published the Government's backgrounder on UDAN's ten years. It gave the number of routes the scheme had started, but no count of the routes flying on that date and no count of the routes that had stopped.

The most recent count of all the routes operating in the country, on this office's record, is still the Ministry's answer of 27 July 2026, which counted 348 routes operating, and which it repeated on 10 August 2026.

Figure	How it was made	Source and date
679	Copied from the Ministry's answer	Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 907, 27 July 2026; as on 10 July 2026
348	Copied from the Ministry's answer	Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 907, 27 July 2026; at present
331	679 less 348	Worked out from the answer of 27 July 2026
48.7 per cent	331 as a share of 679	Worked out from the answer of 27 July 2026
165	Copied from the Ministry's answer	Unstarred Questions No. 907, 27 July 2026, and No. 2406, 10 August 2026

CAG's counts cover the routes awarded under UDAN 1, 2 and 3, as of March 2023. The Ministry's counts cover every route started under the scheme, as of July 2026. The two count different sets of routes on different dates, so this brief never sets one against the other.

UDAN was launched to give small towns flights that would pay their own way, and on the Ministry's own count of July 2026, 331 of the 679 routes it had started were not flying.

Sources: Read on 21 October 2026. PIB backgrounder 2325359 on UDAN, 20 October 2026; Rajya Sabha Question 907, 27 July 2026; Rajya Sabha Question 2406, 10 August 2026; CAG Report 22 of 2023 on UDAN, 10 August 2023.