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

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.

331 routes

of the 679 that UDAN had started were not flying in July 2026, on the Ministry of Civil Aviation's own written answer to the Rajya Sabha of 27 July 2026

The same answer said that 165 routes were discontinued before their three years of subsidy were over, and the Ministry repeated both counts on 10 August 2026.

Every figure in this brief comes from the Government's own records or from its auditor, and this brief is dated 22 October 2026.

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

Contents

Five findings from the Government's own records 3

The Ministry's own count, July 2026 4

By July 2026, 165 routes had stopped before the subsidy ended 5

What the Ministry promised on 21 October 2016 6

CAG's audit of UDAN 1, 2 and 3, March 2023 7

What the tenth-anniversary backgrounder did not say 8

Annexure: how the figures were made 9

Annexure: sources 10

This brief asks how many of the routes that UDAN started were still flying as the scheme reached ten years. The Ministry of Civil Aviation's written answers to the Rajya Sabha of July and August 2026 give the latest count, and CAG's audit of 2023 gives one for UDAN 1, 2 and 3.

Five findings from the Government's own records

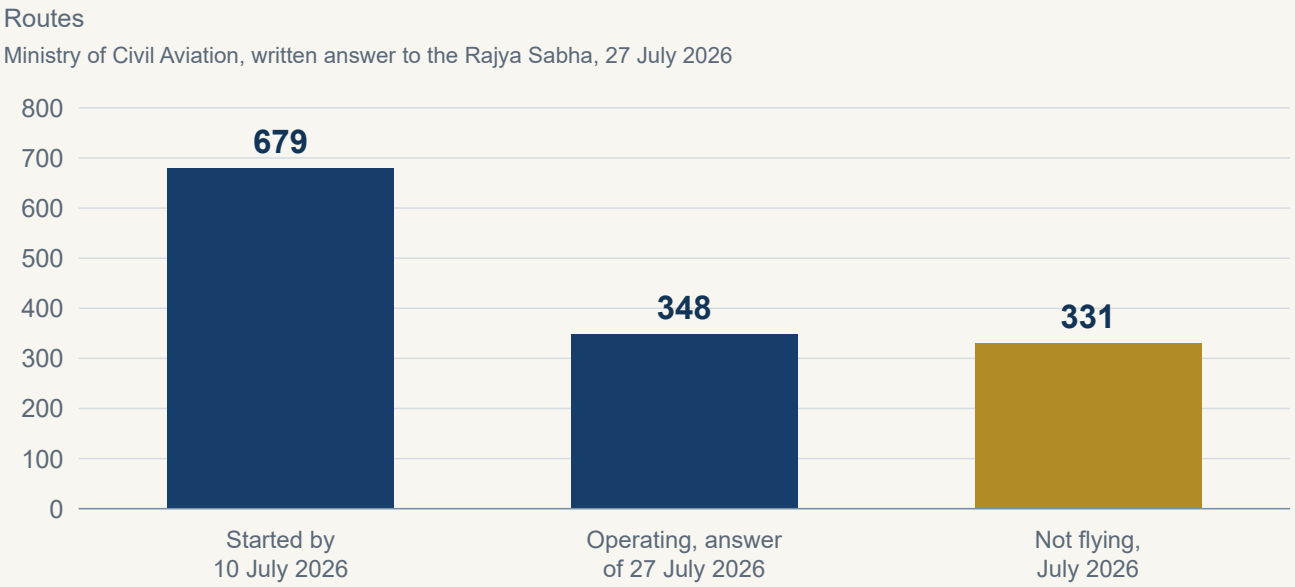
UDAN completed ten years on 21 October 2026. When the Ministry of Civil Aviation answered the Rajya Sabha in writing in July 2026, 331 of the 679 routes that it had started were not flying.

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.

Figure	What it counts	Date
679	Routes started under UDAN, from the launch	as on 10 July 2026
348	Routes operating "at present"	answer of 27 July 2026
331	Routes started and not flying: 679 less 348	July 2026
48.7 per cent	Share of all routes started that were not flying: 331 of 679	July 2026

Sources: Read on 21 October 2026. Rajya Sabha Question 907, 27 July 2026.

By July 2026, 165 routes had stopped before the subsidy ended

UDAN pays an airline a subsidy on each route it wins, which the scheme calls viability gap funding. The Ministry described it in 2016 as "financial support (viability gap funding or VGF) to meet the gap, if any, between the cost of airline operations and expected revenues on such routes". The subsidy on a route lasts three years, which the Ministry's answer of 27 July 2026 calls the three-year VGF support tenure.

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.

Date of the answer	Rajya Sabha question	The Ministry's words
27 July 2026	Unstarred Question No. 907, part (b)	165 routes were discontinued before completion of the three-year VGF support tenure under the UDAN Scheme.
10 August 2026	Unstarred Question No. 2406, part (b)	At present, 348 RCS routes are operational across the country. A total of 165 RCS routes have ceased operations before completion of their three-year Viability Gap Funding (VGF) support period.

Both answers are the Ministry's own words to the Rajya Sabha, and each row gives the date of the answer.

Sources: Read on 21 October 2026. Rajya Sabha Question 907, 27 July 2026; Rajya Sabha Question 2406, 10 August 2026; PIB release 154059 on the fund, 22 November 2016.

What the Ministry promised on 21 October 2016

When it launched UDAN on 21 October 2016, the Ministry of Civil Aviation said of the scheme: "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." The name UDAN stands for Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik, which means let the common citizen of the country fly.

The same release said how the subsidy would end: "Such support would be withdrawn after a three year period, as by that time, the route is expected to become self-sustainable."

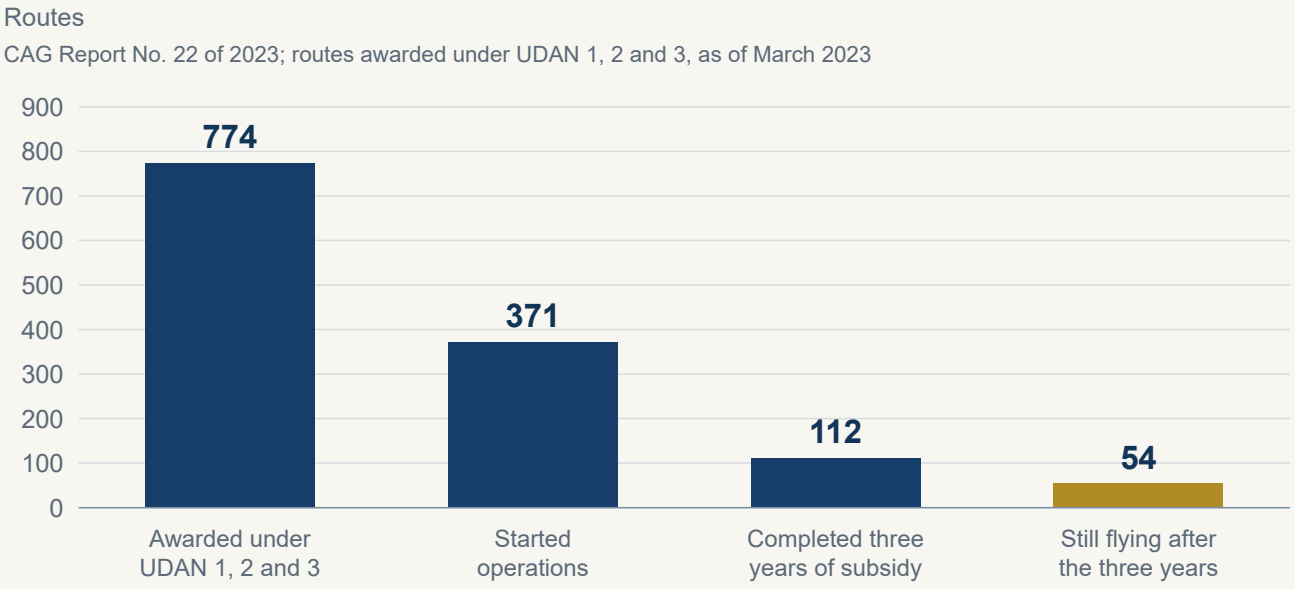
What the Ministry promised, 21 October 2016	What the Ministry told the Rajya Sabha, 27 July 2026
"economically viable and profitable flights on regional routes"	165 routes were discontinued before completion of the three-year VGF support tenure under the UDAN Scheme.
"flying becomes affordable to the common man even in small towns"	"At present, 348 routes are currently operational." (the same answer counted 679 routes started as on 10 July 2026)

The left column quotes the release of 21 October 2016, while the right column quotes the answer that the Ministry gave on 27 July 2026.

Sources: Read on 21 October 2026. PIB release 151850 on the launch of UDAN, 21 October 2016; Rajya Sabha Question 907, 27 July 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.

CAG's count, as of March 2023	Routes
Routes awarded under UDAN 1, 2 and 3	774
Routes that "could not commence operations", in CAG's words	403
Routes that started operations	371
Routes that "completed the full concession period of three years"	112
Routes that could "sustain the operations beyond the concession period of three years"	54

Those 54 routes connected only 17 of the scheme's airports, CAG found in the same paragraph of its audit, which counts routes as of March 2023.

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

What the tenth-anniversary backgrounder did not say

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.

CAG made the same point about the Ministry's own monitoring in 2023. It found that the PRAYAS portal showed the routes commenced, while "the number of routes and airports where operations were discontinued subsequent to commencement of operations were not found to be indicated at the portal", and it concluded that the portal's data "fails to portray the complete picture of the performance of RCS-UDAN scheme".

The question	PIB backgrounder, 20 October 2026	Ministry's answer to the Rajya Sabha, July 2026
How many routes has UDAN started?	It gives a count.	679 routes, as on 10 July 2026
How many of those routes are operating?	It gives no count.	348 routes, answer of 27 July 2026
How many routes stopped before the subsidy ended?	It gives no count.	165 routes, answer of 27 July 2026

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.

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; CAG Report 22 of 2023 on UDAN, 10 August 2023; Rajya Sabha Question 907, 27 July 2026; Rajya Sabha Question 2406, 10 August 2026.

Annexure: how the figures were made

Every figure in this brief comes from a document that the Government or its auditor published, and each is printed with its date and its source on the same page. The Ministry of Civil Aviation's written answers to the Rajya Sabha of 27 July 2026 and 10 August 2026 give the counts of routes started, operating and stopped early.

Two figures are this brief's own arithmetic on the Ministry's numbers of July 2026. The figure 331 is 679 less 348, and 48.7 per cent is 331 as a share of 679. The Ministry counted 679 routes as on 10 July 2026, and 348 routes at present in its answer of 27 July 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.

Each quotation in this brief was found again, word for word, in the saved copy of its source when the brief was built. The office keeps a copy of every source it read, and each one is linked here to its public address.

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
774, 371, 112, 54	Copied from CAG's audit	CAG Report No. 22 of 2023, PDF page 12; counts as of March 2023

Each row names one figure in this brief, how it was made, and the document and date it comes from.

Sources: Read on 21 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.

Annexure: sources

Every figure and quotation in this brief comes from one of the documents below. Each source is linked to its public address in the source line at the foot of each page.

Source	Where
Ministry of Civil Aviation, press release on the launch of UDAN, PIB Release ID 151850, 21 October 2016	body
Ministry of Civil Aviation, press release on the Regional Connectivity Fund, PIB Release ID 154059, 22 November 2016	first paragraph
CAG, Report No. 22 of 2023, Compliance Audit on the Regional Connectivity Scheme UDAN, 10 August 2023, Executive Summary	pdf:11-12
Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 907, written answer of the Ministry of Civil Aviation, 27 July 2026	pdf:1
Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 2406, written answer of the Ministry of Civil Aviation, 10 August 2026	pdf:1-2
PIB Backgrounder, Wings of Change: 10 Years of Redefining Regional Air Connectivity through UDAN, Release ID 2325359, 20 October 2026	the whole page

The documents come from the Ministry of Civil Aviation, the Press Information Bureau, the Rajya Sabha and the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. The reading of them is this brief's own, and so is any error in it.

Sources: Read on 21 October 2026. PIB release 151850 on the launch of UDAN, 21 October 2016; PIB release 154059 on the fund, 22 November 2016; CAG Report 22 of 2023 on UDAN, 10 August 2023; Rajya Sabha Question 907, 27 July 2026; Rajya Sabha Question 2406, 10 August 2026; PIB backgrounder 2325359 on UDAN, 20 October 2026.