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## 88 airports to be functional under UDAN, says minister

Union Civil Aviation Minister P Ashok Gajapathi Raju said on Tuesday that a total of 88 airports in the country would be made functional in the next one-and-a-half-years, through two rounds of bidding under the UDAN regional connectivity scheme.

Speaking after inaugurating the upgraded Hubballi Airport here on Tuesday, he said only 71 airports had flight operations till the UDAN scheme was launched.

"During the second bidding under the UDAN scheme, we are looking at getting air connectivity from Hubballi to Mumbai, Chennai, Pune, Kannur, Hyderabad, Kochi, Goa, Tirupati, Delhi and other places," he said. Civil aviation would get a boost if the state governments keep their taxes on fuel and other materials within reasonable limits. Unfortunately, the trend is that the state governments hand over only loss-making airports to the Centre, he said.

"Amphibious aircraft (seaplane) service is also being launched in the country. This has great potential as the country has 7,500 km of coastline and a number of reservoirs," the minister said. India, at present, stands in the third position in terms of growth in the civil aviation sector, mainly due to the increasing number of domestic passengers.

Union Chemicals and Fertilisers Minister Ananth Kumar stressed the need to develop the region as an international cargo hub, through the upgraded airport. He suggested that the airport be named after Jagajyoti Basaveshwara. Gajapathi Raju also inaugurated the new terminal and flagged off Air India's A319 aircraft service (tri-weekly) on the Bengaluru-Hubballi-Mumbai route. Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation Jayant Sinha, district incharge Minister Vinay Kulkarni, MP Pralhad Joshi, Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Jagadish Shettar and others were present.