

Sri Lanka seeks Indian investment to boost domestic aviation connectivity

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Dhaka: Sri Lanka is reportedly seeking support from international investors, including Indian airlines, to introduce a new domestic air connectivity scheme modeled on India's UDAN program, with an aim to strengthen regional air links and support the country's growing tourism sector.

During his recent visit to Mumbai, Sri Lankan Deputy Tourism Minister Ruwan Ranasinghe said the proposed initiative seeks to improve access to regional destinations and unlock tourism potential beyond major gateways. Indian airlines and investors are being viewed as key partners due to their experience in operating regional routes efficiently.

Currently, Sri Lanka's domestic aviation market remains underdeveloped. National carrier SriLankan Airlines primarily focuses on international operations and operates only four aircraft on routes

within the island nation.

The proposed UDAN-like framework is expected to encourage private sector participation, reduce operational barriers, and make regional air services more commercially viable. Improved domestic connectivity would enable faster travel between cities, beaches, cultural landmarks, and emerging tourist destinations.

For India, the opportunity aligns with growing outbound travel to Sri Lanka and strong bilateral ties in aviation and tourism. Indian carriers could leverage their regional expertise while expanding their footprint in South Asia.

If implemented successfully, the scheme could boost tourism, promote regional development, and support Sri Lanka's broader economic recovery efforts, positioning domestic aviation as a catalyst for long-term, sustainable growth.

Earlier, in 2016, India adopted the UDAN, an acronym for Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik ("Let the Common Citizens of the Country Fly" in English) regional connectivity scheme to make air travel affordable and expand services to underserved and unserved airports.

Over the last decade, the UDAN program offered financial incentives and fare caps to airlines, which has significantly increased regional routes and enhanced connectivity across smaller cities and remote areas.

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