

# UDAN : Contrasting State of Affairs at Bokaro, Jharkhand and Darbhanga, Bihar

The Union Civil Aviation Minister Suresh Prabhu has said on social media Twitter that Bokaro airport in Jharkhand will start functioning fully by this year end and will have direct flights to Kolkata and Patna under the government's Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) scheme. This development would contribute significantly towards enhanced connectivity and economic growth in this region.

The UDAN-RCS scheme seeks to connect unserved and under-served airports in the  country with fares capped at Rs 2,500 for one-hour flights.

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Jharkhand Chief minister Raghubar Das and Union minister of state for civil aviation Jayant Sinha recently laid the foundation stone for the expansion of Bokaro airport. Soon, commercial flights for

Calcutta and Patna are planned to be launched. An MoU has been signed between Steel Authority of India Ltd and Airports Authority of India (AAI) in New Delhi earlier this year.

The AAI would operate and manage the flight operations. Upgrading of the Bokaro airport, however, will require an estimated investment of further Rs 52.57 crore. Its 1,673-metre long and 30-metre wide runway will allow an 80-seat aircraft. Other development works like the setting up of an

expandable low-cost terminal building having six counters and parking facility for 20 cars are in the process of being awarded. A control tower, watch towers and precision approach path indicator are also on the list.

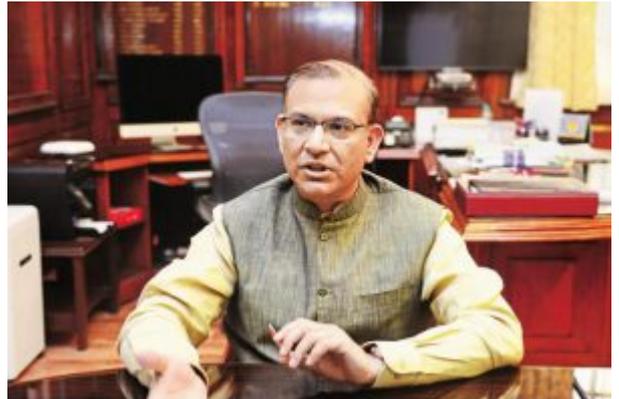
The present situation at a number of other airports in Jharkhand are:

**Jamshedpur** – awaiting the technical sanction by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation to start commercial services.

**Dumka** – To be developed to operate flights to Patna and Calcutta

**Hazaribagh, Giridih, Dhanbad and Daltonganj** – possibilities being explored

**Parasnath** – an helipad to be developed



Even as Jharkhand got a kick start of the UDAN scheme, neighbouring Bihar is still waiting for its UDAN to commence.

The Darbhanga airstrip project recently hit a roadblock. It did not get any bidder for re-carpeting of its 8,000 feet long runway.

As per AAI tweet on August 18, tenders for the construction of approach road, installation of PAPI and conveyor belts have been awarded. Construction work will be initiated to ensure smoother connectivity to and from the terminal building and dispersal area.

Consequently, AAI officials had to admit that operation of flights from Darbhanga, which was to commence from January 2019, will be delayed. Earlier in January 2018, SpiceJet was awarded permission to operate flights from Darbhanga to Delhi, Bengaluru and Mumbai.

