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India aims to be a leading aviation hub by decade-end, has become 'aviation inclusive' in past 10 years: PM Modi

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Written by [Sukalp Sharma](#)

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Modi credited the government's policy measures and initiatives like regional connectivity scheme— Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik (UDAN)—for making air travel affordable and accessible for the common Indian, and called upon the visiting delegates to study the scheme. (File)

India is moving forward to become a leading aviation hub by the end of the decade and will be among the most well-connected regions in the coming years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Thursday while underscoring the shift in India's aviation landscape over the past few years that has made flying more affordable and accessible for the common citizen.

“India is today a strong pillar of the global civil aviation ecosystem. The growth of the civil aviation sector in India is unprecedented. In just one decade...from ‘aviation exclusive’, our country has become ‘aviation inclusive’,” Modi said, adding that a growing number of lower middle class and middle class Indians even from smaller cities and towns are now travelling by air, something that earlier used to be limited to well-heeled Indians mostly from big cities.

“The number of airports has doubled in India in the past 10 years...The India of the future will be among the most well-connected regions globally. Our airlines are also aware of this. That is why they have placed orders for over 1,200 aircraft,” the

Prime Minister said in his address to the International Civil Aviation Organization Agency's (ICAO) Second Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Civil Aviation

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Last year, Indian carriers IndiGo, Air India, and Akasa Air placed large aircraft orders with Airbus and Boeing, with deliveries likely to run into the middle of the next decade. India is now the world's third-largest aviation market and is also among the fastest-growing major aviation markets globally. The country has ambitions to develop its large airports into international hubs, while also building a domestic aircraft maintenance and manufacturing ecosystem.

"India is moving ahead with an aim to become a leading aviation hub by the end of the decade where the MRO (maintenance, repair, and overhaul) industry alone would be worth \$4 billion. For this, we have made MRO policies... With enhanced air connectivity in tier two and three cities, many cities will become new centres of growth in India," the Prime Minister said as he touched upon the economic potential of the civil aviation sector, particularly with regard to further developing the country's aviation ecosystem and creating high-skill job opportunities.

Modi credited the government's policy measures and initiatives like regional connectivity scheme— Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik (UDAN)—for making air travel affordable and accessible for the common Indian, and called upon the visiting delegates to study the scheme.

"This regional connectivity scheme has made aviation inclusive in India. It has taken air travel to small cities and India's lower middle class. So far, 14 million people have travelled under the UDAN scheme. Lakhs of people have seen the inside of an aircraft for the first time due to this scheme. The demand created from the UDAN scheme has led to the creation of new airports in many smaller cities and starting of numerous routes," Modi said.

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According to the Prime Minister, the rapidly growing middle class and the consequent growth in air travel demand in Asia Pacific is a major driving force for the development of the aviation sector in the entire region. Such a network will drive economic growth, encourage innovation, and strengthen peace and prosperity, Modi said.

“For improving air connectivity in the Asia Pacific region, sharing of knowledge, expertise, and resources would enhance our strength. We would also need more investment in infrastructure. Our aim is to make air travel accessible to the common citizen. We have to make air travel safe, affordable, and accessible for everyone,” Modi said.

The Prime Minister also pitched the development of an international Buddhist circuit, as various countries in Asia Pacific have sites with significance for the Buddhist community, which resides in large numbers across the region. Modi said that such an effort would benefit the region’s aviation sector, the countries involved, as well as travellers, and create a win-win model.

At the conference, which concluded Thursday, Modi also announced the formal adoption of the Delhi Declaration—a comprehensive framework aimed at

enhancing regional cooperation, addressing emerging challenges, and fostering sustainable growth within the civil aviation sector in the Asia Pacific region



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“The Delhi Declaration will take forward our resolve on regional connectivity, innovation, and sustainable growth in aviation. I am confident that there will be fast action on each point and we will be able to implement the Declaration on the ground,” Modi said.



Sukalp Sharma

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Sukalp Sharma is a Senior Assistant Editor with The Indian Express and writes on a host of subjects and sectors, notably energy and aviation. He has over 13 years

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