

JOURNEY OF UDAN: Women Reservation Act 2023: Provision and Prospect

In a country where the sky often symbolizes hope and aspiration, the dream of flying has remained an elusive luxury for many. This dream began to take shape with the launch of the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) - UDAN, or "Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik," on October 21, 2016. Spearheaded by the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA), UDAN aims to enhance regional air connectivity from unserved and underserved airports across India, making air travel affordable for the masses. As it celebrates its seventh anniversary, UDAN stands as a testament to the commitment of the Indian government to improve infrastructure and connectivity, especially in remote regions.

The story of UDAN is deeply rooted in the vision of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, who in a pivotal meeting before the National Civil Aviation Policy was announced, emphasised the need to democratize air travel. He famously remarked that he wanted to see people wearing slippers boarding planes, a sentiment that ignited the vision for a more inclusive aviation sector. This commitment to the common man's dreams led to the birth of UDAN.

The first UDAN flight took off on April 27, 2017, connecting the serene hills of Shimla to the bustling metropolis of Delhi. This inaugural flight marked the beginning of a transformative journey in Indian aviation, one that would open up the skies to countless citizens.

UDAN operates on a market-driven model, where airlines assess demand on specific routes and submit proposals during bidding rounds. The scheme incentivizes airlines to connect underserved regions by offering them support through Viability Gap Funding (VGF) and various concessions provided by airport operators, the Central Government, and State Governments.

The government has implemented several supportive measures to attract airlines to operate flights in less lucrative markets: Airports Authority of India (AAI) does not levy Terminal Navigation Landing Charges (TNLC) on these flights. Moreover, a discounted Route Navigation and Facilitation Charge (RNFC) is applied.

(ATF) purchased at RCS airports capped at 2%. Airlines are also encouraged to enter code-sharing agreements to expand their reach.

State Governments: States have committed to reducing VAT on ATF to 1% or less for ten years and providing essential services such as security, fire services, and utility services at reduced rates.

This collaborative framework has fostered an environment where airlines can thrive while serving regions that have long been overlooked.

The RCS-UDAN scheme has played a pivotal role in revitalising the civil aviation industry in India. Over the past seven years, it has catalysed the emergence of many new and successful airlines. Regional carriers such as Flybig, Star Air, IndiaOne Air, and Fly91 have benefited from the scheme, developing sustainable business models and contributing to a burgeoning ecosystem for regional air travel.

The incremental expansion of the scheme has also generated a rising demand for new aircraft of all sizes, broadening the spectrum of planes deployed on RCS routes. This includes a diverse fleet, featuring the Airbus 320/321, Boeing 737, ATR 42 and 72, DHC Q400, Twin Otter, Embraer 145 and 175, Tecnam P2006T, Cessna 208B Grand Caravan EX, Dornier 228, Airbus H130, and Bell 407. Notably, Indian carriers have placed orders for over 1,000 aircraft slated for delivery in the next 10-15 years, significantly augmenting the existing fleet of approximately 800 planes.

RCS-UDAN is not solely dedicated to offering last-mile connectivity to tier-2 and tier-3 cities; it also stands as a prominent contributor to the burgeoning tourism sector. Initiatives like UDAN 3.0 have introduced tourism routes connecting several destinations in the Northeast region, while UDAN 5.1 is focused on expanding helicopter services in hilly areas to stimulate tourism, hospitality, and local economic growth.

Significant destinations like Khajuraho, Deogarh, Amritsar, and Kishangarh (Ajmer) are now more accessible, catering to the religious tourism segment. Furthermore, the introduction of airports in Pasighat, Ziro, Hollongi, and Tezu has spurred growth in the Northeast's tourism industry. Notably, Agatti Island has also been included in the Indian aviation map, enhancing tourism in Lakshadweep.

From Mundra in Gujarat to Tezu in Arunachal Pradesh, and Kullu in Himachal Pradesh to Salem in Tamil Nadu, RCS-UDAN has connected 34 states and Union Territories across the country. A total of 86 aerodromes have been operationalized under UDAN, including ten in the Northeast region and two heliports. Airports like Darbhanga, Prayagraj, Hubli, Belgaum, and Kannur are becoming increasingly sustainable, with many non-RCS commercial flights operating from these locations.

Foreign minister of India S. Jaishankar has paid visit to Islamabad Pakistan ostensibly and clearly had taken part in the SCO summit hosted by Pakistan. It was the first visit of any Indian foreign to Pakistan in last nine years and therefore this visit is considered very significant as it is construed a very positive development to break the chill and ice in the relations between India and Pakistan. Jaishankar has stated in no uncertain terms that his visit is not for bilateral relations but only for taking part in the deliberations in Singhia cooperation organization. There were no formal talks between Indian foreign minister and Pakistan prime minister Shabaz Sharief. However there were casual and informal talks between the two. Besides, there were casual talks between Jaishankar and his Pakistani counterpart. However people of Pakistan and India are expecting that something encouraging, positive and good will come from the visit of foreign minister. Jaishankar has unequivocally stated the Indian stand that terror and talks cannot be held simultaneously. He further said that terrorism, extremism and separatism are the big enemies of peace not only in South Africa but in the whole world. Indian External Affairs

DR. RAJKUMAR SINGH
The Women's Reservation Act, 2023, formally known as the 128th Constitutional Amendment Act, was passed by the Indian Parliament to ensure 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha (Lower House) and State Legislative Assemblies. It aims to enhance women's political participation by reserving one-third of the seats for women in these legislative bodies. The key highlights of the Women's Reservation Act, 2023 include: a. Reservation of 33% Seats: One-third of the seats in both the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies will be reserved for women. The reservation will also extend to seats reserved for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). b. Implementation Timeline: The reservation will come into effect after the delimitation process is conducted based on the 2021 Census (which has not yet been carried out). Experts suggest this may push implementation to 2029 or beyond. c. Duration: The reservation will be applicable for 15 years from the date of its commencement, though Parliament may extend it further through legislation. d. Rotation of Reserved Seats: The seats reserved for women will be rotated after every election, similar to how SC/ST reservations function. e. Exclusions: The 33% reservation does not apply to the Rajya Sabha (Upper House) or Legislative Councils of States. f. Historic Context and Political Journey: Previous attempts to pass similar legislation were made in 1996, 1998, and 2010, but these bills failed due to political opposition. The 2023 Act marks a significant political milestone and was passed by both Houses with overwhelming support, though some opposition parties criticized the delay in its implementation. g. Empowerment of Women: The act is expected to lead to greater representation of women in the political process. h. Delay in Implementation: There are concerns about the time lag since the reservation will only take effect post-delimitation, which could

push meaningful change several years into the future. This act reflects a major step towards gender parity in Indian politics, though its delayed implementation remains a point of debate.

Background and development
The journey toward women's reservation in Indian politics is rooted in historical movements for gender equality, constitutional debates, and policy initiatives aimed at increasing women's participation in governance. Its aspects include: a. Pre-Independence Period: Colonial-Era Reforms: In the British era, women's participation in the freedom struggle (led by figures like Sarojini Naidu and Kasturba Gandhi) sparked a movement for equal rights. The Government of India Act, 1935 introduced some electoral reforms, but there was little political representation for women. Women's Role in Freedom Struggle: Many leaders from the Indian freedom movement highlighted the need for women's empowerment, which laid the foundation for post-independence gender policies. b. Post-Independence: Constitutional Provisions: India's Constitution, adopted in 1950, guarantees equality before the law (Article 14) and prohibits gender-based discrimination (Article 15). Article 39 of the Directive Principles of State Policy urges the state to promote gender equality and ensure equal opportunities for both men and women. Reservation for Women in Panchayats: The first significant step toward women's reservation came with the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (1993), which introduced 33% reservation for women in Panchayats (rural governance) and Urban Local Bodies (municipal governance). This was a transformative move that brought millions of women into grassroots politics and provided momentum for further political reservations. c. Earlier Women's Reservation in Parliament and Assemblies: First Women's Reservation Bill (1996): The Women's Reservation Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha by the United Front govern-

ment led by Prime Minister Deve Gowda, proposing 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. However, the bill lapsed due to strong opposition from certain political groups, particularly those demanding quotas within quotas (for women from marginalized communities). d. Subsequent Attempts: 1998 and 1999: The bill was reintroduced by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, but it failed to pass due to political disagreements. 2010: The Manmohan Singh government managed to pass the bill in the Rajya Sabha, but the legislation was never taken up for a vote in the Lok Sabha. e. Push for Women's Reservation: 2014-2023: Increasing Demand for Representation: As the number of women in Parliament hovered around 10-14% in various elections, the demand for 33% reservation resurfaced, supported by various political parties and women's organizations. f. Momentum under the BJP Government: Narendra Modi's government pledged to pass the Women's Reservation Bill in the run-up to several elections. In 2023, the bill was finally tabled during a special session of Parliament, leading to the enactment of the 128th Constitutional Amendment Act. Thus, the Women's Reservation Act, 2023, builds on decades of advocacy, policy experiments at local levels, and multiple legislative attempts. Though the reservation will take effect only after delimitation based on the 2021 Census, it represents a historic step toward gender equality in India's political landscape.

Prospects of Women's Reservation
The Women's Reservation Act, 2023 holds the potential to transform India's political landscape by increasing women's representation. Below are some key prospects and potential benefits of implementing the 33% reservation policy: a. Enhanced Political Representation for Women: The one-third reservation in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies will significantly increase the number of women legislators. This will provide greater gender diversity in decision-making

bodies and reduce the existing gender imbalance in Indian politics (currently, women constitute only around 14% of Parliament). b. Better Governance and Inclusive Policy-Making: Women's participation can lead to more inclusive policies, especially on issues related to health, education, social welfare, and gender equality. Research from Panchayats and local bodies shows that women leaders tend to prioritize issues like sanitation, water, and healthcare, improving public service delivery. c. Greater Focus on Social Issues: Women leaders are more likely to advocate for policies related to domestic violence, child welfare, maternal health, and workplace safety. A higher presence of women in politics could also enhance laws and enforcement on issues like gender-based violence and equal pay. Global Parity with Other Democracies: Several countries, such as Rwanda, Sweden, Norway, and Mexico, have successfully implemented gender quotas in their parliaments. India's move towards 33% reservation aligns it with global efforts to ensure gender-balanced governance and will improve its ranking in international gender equity indices. d. Challenges and Considerations: Implementation Delay: The Act's effect is contingent on delimitation after the 2021 Census, which could delay real benefits until 2029 or later. Quota within Quota: Some political groups demand sub-reservations within the women's quota for OBC and minority women, which could spark political debates. Patriarchal Mindsets: Overcoming societal resistance and tokenism will be essential to ensure that women leaders function effectively and independently. Capacity Building: Efforts will be required to train and empower new women leaders, especially those from marginalized backgrounds. In conclusion, the Women's Reservation Act, 2023 presents a significant opportunity to reshape India's political system by bringing more women into leadership roles.

(The author is a youth motivator and former Head of the University Department).

Broccoli- A Multi-Faceted Vegetable for Health

DR. BANARSI LAL
The use of natural bioactive constituents from various sources for anticancer proposes has become popular across the globe. Broccoli (Brassica oleracea var. italica) is on top of the vegetables. Broccoli belongs to the cruciferous vegetable family which includes cabbage, cauliflower, kale, brussel sprouts, turnips etc. It is a tasty vegetable and rich in dozens of nutrients. Consuming fruits and vegetables of all kinds have long been associated with a reduced risk of many diseases. Broccoli decreases the risk of obesity, diabetes, cancer, heart disease and overall mortality. It is also useful for a healthy complexion and hair, increases energy and lowers body weight. Broccoli is a nutrition powerhouse which supplies lot of nutrients. Broccoli can ensure sound health and long life. Broccoli has anti-cancer properties. Broccoli has cancer fighting and immune boosting properties like other cruciferous vegetables such as cauliflower, brussel sprout and cabbage. The most important health benefit of broccoli is its ability to fight against the cancer. Broccoli isothiocyanates, sulforaphane and indole-3-carbinol have cancer fighting properties. Eating of broccoli has been associated with a lower risk of lung and colon cancer. Studies have suggested that sulforaphane, the sulfur-containing compound that gives broccoli the cancer-fighting power. It has been observed through various researches that sulforaphane can inhibit the enzyme histone deacetylase which is known to be involved in the progression of cancer cells. The ability to stop such enzymes could make sulforaphane-containing foods a potentially powerful

part of cancer treatment. Sulforaphane delays or impedes cancer with promising results shown in melanoma, esophageal, prostate and pancreatic cancers. Broccoli may affect estrogen level and contains important vitamin known as folate which is known to decrease the risk of breast cancer in women. Intake of dietary folate has also shown promise in protecting against colon, stomach, pancreatic and cervical cancers. Scientists believe that folate's protective effects have its role in DNA and RNA production and in the prevention of unwanted mutations. Recently it has been observed through many researches that broccoli sprout extract also act as a protective agent against head, neck and liver cancer. More research is needed in this direction.

Broccoli helps for heart health and keeps the blood vessels strong. The sulforaphane in broccoli is also an anti-inflammatory and can prevent the damage of blood vessel linings caused by chronic blood sugar. Broccoli can slow down the damage to joints associated with osteoarthritis. Sulforaphane present in broccoli may help the patients suffering from arthritis because this chemical can block the enzymes that cause joint destruction by preventing a key molecule known to cause inflammation. Vitamin B-complex can help to regulate or reduce excessive homocysteine. Excessive homocysteine, an immuno acid builds up after eating the red meat that increases the risk of coronary artery disease. Like carrot, broccoli is good for eyes as it contains compound antioxidant known as lutein. Another antioxidant present in broccoli is called as zeaxanthin which is also beneficial. Both

these chemicals help against macular degeneration, an incurable condition that blurs central vision and cataracts, a clouding of the eye lens.

Poor vitamin K intake is associated with a high risk of bone fracture and osteoporosis. Just one cup of chopped broccoli provides 92 micrograms of vitamin K. Daily adequate consumption of vitamin K improves bone health by improving calcium absorption and reducing urinary excretion of calcium. Broccoli can also contribute to our daily need for calcium by providing 43 milligrams in one cup. Broccoli provides 81 milligrams of vitamin C in just one cup. That is more than what we need in the whole day. The antioxidant vitamin C, when eaten in its natural form can help to fight skin damage done by the sunlight and pollution and thus reduces wrinkles and improves overall skin texture. Vitamin C plays a vital role in the formation of collagen, the main support system of the skin. Broccoli also provides Vitamin A and vitamin E which are also crucial for healthy skin. Broccoli is a good source of beta-carotene. It also contains vitamins such as B1, B2, B3, B6, iron, magnesium, potassium and zinc. One cup of chopped raw broccoli (approximately 91 grams) contains 31 calories, 0 grams of fat, 6 grams of carbohydrate (including 2 grams of sugar and 2 grams of fiber) and 3 grams of protein. One cup of broccoli provides over 100% of your daily need for vitamin C and vitamin K and is also a good source of vitamin A, folate and potassium.

Broccoli is a rich source of fiber and low in calories. Fibres help to maintain healthy bacteria in the intestines. It helps

to draw cholesterol out of our body. Broccoli can prevent constipation and is helpful to maintain a healthy digestive tract and reduces the risk of colon cancer. Adequate fiber is crucial for the daily excretion of toxins through the bile and stool. Recent studies have shown that dietary fiber may also play a role in regulating the immune system and inflammation. A cup of broccoli has as much protein as a cup of rice or corn with half of calories. Broccoli is safe to eat and its side effects are not so serious. It can cause gas or bowel irritation. The patients eating blood-thinning medications should watch the broccoli intake as the Vitamin K in it may interfere with the medications effectiveness. Phytochemicals such as glucoraphanin, gluconasturtin and glucobrasincin compose a terrific trio in broccoli and aid in body detoxification process from activation to neutralization and elimination of contaminants. It has been observed through researches that high fiber intake lowers the risks of developing coronary heart disease, stroke, hypertension, diabetes, obesity and certain gastrointestinal diseases. Increased fiber intake has also been shown to lower the bloodpressure and cholesterol levels, improves insulin sensitivity and enhances weight loss for obese persons. Always buy the fresh, compact, bright, firm textured heads of broccoli with rich flavour. If possible purchase organic broccoli for maximum benefits. Avoid overcooking of the broccoli as it can destroy its half of beneficial substances.

(The writer is Chief Scientist & Head of KVK Reasi (Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology-Jammu) (SKUAST-J).

Did Jaishankar's visit break the ice between India & Pakistan?

OMKAR DATTATRAY
Foreign minister of India S. Jaishankar has paid visit to Islamabad Pakistan ostensibly and clearly had taken part in the SCO summit hosted by Pakistan. It was the first visit of any Indian foreign to Pakistan in last nine years and therefore this visit is considered very significant as it is construed a very positive development to break the chill and ice in the relations between India and Pakistan. Jaishankar has stated in no uncertain terms that his visit is not for bilateral relations but only for taking part in the deliberations in Singhia cooperation organization. There were no formal talks between Indian foreign minister and Pakistan prime minister Shabaz Sharief. However there were casual and informal talks between the two. Besides, there were casual talks between Jaishankar and his Pakistani counterpart. However people of Pakistan and India are expecting that something encouraging, positive and good will come from the visit of foreign minister. Jaishankar has unequivocally stated the Indian stand that terror and talks cannot be held simultaneously. He further said that terrorism, extremism and separatism are the big enemies of peace not only in South Africa but in the whole world. Indian External Affairs

Minister S. Jaishankar had casual conversations with Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his counterpart Isaq Dar during the SCO summit in Islamabad. However there were no formal bilateral discussions. The smooth completion of the first visit by an Indian foreign minister to Pakistan in nearly 9 years is being viewed by Indian government as a positive step. Jaishankar expressed gratitude in a post on X, thanking Shehbaz & Dar for their hospitality. The interactions were described by Indian government as casual, while Pakistani officials mentioned a brief pull -aside lasting 5 to 7 minutes between Jaishankar and Dar during a dinner hosted by Shebaz Sharif. Pakistani Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, who is also the chief of the Pakistani Cricket Board, joined Jaishankar and Dar. Pakistan suggested resuming bilateral cricket ties to "break the ice". Naqvi described Jaishankar's visit as an ice-breaker, despite no formal bilateral meeting being proposed. Pakistan hopes to host the Champions Trophy next year and wants India's participation. India and Pakistan's relationship has been strained since the unsuccessful attempt to resume dialogue in 2015 and further deteriorated after India's revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status in

2019. The relationship between the two countries has been in a deep freeze since the failed attempt to restart dialogue in 2015, which was labeled as comprehensive bilateral dialogue. Tensions escalated further when Pakistan recalled its high commissioner in August 2019 after India's decision to revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. Indian government noted their appreciation that Shehbaz refrained from raising any bilateral issues in his remarks as the summit host. After External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's visit to Pakistan for the SCO summit, it is to be seen whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Pakistani PM Shebaz Sharif will also break ice on the sidelines of upcoming international events. After Jaishankar's visit to Pakistan to attend SCO summit, there is speculation whether a meeting between the two premiers is also on cards. PM Narendra Modi and Pakistani PM Shebaz Sharif are both expected to attend the UN climate conference in Azerbaijan's Baku on November 11-22. Following the apparently positive exchanges between Jaishankar and Pakistani leaders, it remains to be seen if a Modi-Shehbaz meeting is also on the cards. Jaishankar had positive exchanges with Shebaz and Pak foreign minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar. The two leaders spoke twice within

24 hours and there were discussions between the two over resuming bilateral cricket relationships. EAM Jaishankar had 'casual conversation' with both Pak prime minister Shehbaz Sharif and his counterpart Ishaq Dar over two days even though there was no formal bilateral meeting between the foreign ministers on the margins of the SCO heads of government summit in Islamabad. The fact that the first visit by an Indian foreign minister to Pakistan in almost nine years went off without a hitch was seen as a positive development by the Indian government. When Jaishankar departed after 24 hour stay in Islamabad from the Nur-Khan airbase in Rawalpindi, the EAM, who had said recently India is not passive on Pakistan and will react to positive and negative developments accordingly, thanked Shehbaz and Dar in a post on X for the hospitality and courtesies. While Indian government described the talks as casual conversations, Pakistani officials said there was a pull-aside, which lasted for 5-7 minutes, between Jaishankar and Dar on the sidelines of the dinner hosted by Pakistan Shebaz Sharif. Pakistan's interior minister Mohsin Naqvi, who is also the chief of PCB, is learnt to have joined Jaishankar and Dar. Pakistan suggested resumption of bilateral cricketing

ties as a way of 'breaking the ice'. Naqvi was later quoted as saying that Jaishankar's visit was an ice-breaker even though neither side proposed a bilateral meeting. Pakistan is looking to host the Champions Trophy next year and would like India to participate. Indian government appreciated the fact that Shehbaz didn't rake up any bilateral issue in his remarks as the host of the SCO summit. While Jaishankar's remarks on terrorism were seen as a message for Pakistan, the minister had only spoken about issues that the SCO has identified as key challenges and that other member -states can also relate to. Jaishankar categorically stated from the Pak soil that if activities across borders are characterized by terrorism, extremism and separatism, they are hardly likely to encourage trade, energy flows, connectivity and people to people exchanges in parallel. If trust is lacking or cooperation inadequate, if friendship has fallen short and good neighborliness is missing somewhere, there are surely reasons to introspect and causes to address. Jaishankar learnt to have had another extended conversation with Dar at the SCO lunch table where both were seated next to each other. It was not initially planned that way but later they sat together and spoke over lunch in the presence of

other delegates. However both sides denied that there was any proposal for resumption of dialogue. Shabaz AND Indian PM Modi are expected to come face to face next month at COP29 in Azerbaijan but for any substantive engagement, India will want Pakistan to first reappoint high commissioner. After his return from Pakistan, Jaishankar said in another post on X that India made a positive and constructive contribution to the talks in Islamabad and identified 8 takeaways from India's perspective from the documents that were signed. These included upholding fair and balanced connectivity projects in accordance with international law, the goals and principles of the UN Charter and SCO Charter and a fair, open inclusive and transparent multilateral trading system with WTO at its core. Significantly another Pakistan minister Ahsan Iqbal had told visiting Indian journalists that Pakistan wants the 2 countries to return to the 1999 Lahore Declaration that called both sides to refrain from intervening and interfering in each other's internal affairs. In short we can say that though no bilateral talks were resumed but the Jaishankar's visit has been successful in breaking the ice and chill in relations between the two countries. (The author is a columnist, social and KP activist).