

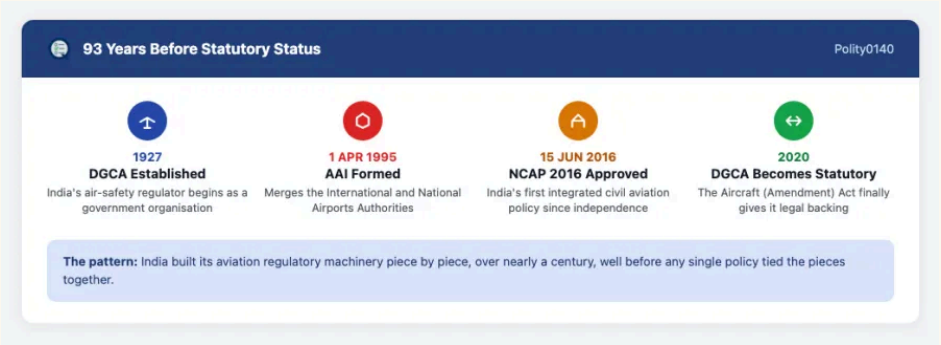
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Indian Civil Aviation: DGCA, AAI, and NCAP 2016

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Indian Civil Aviation: DGCA, AAI, and NCAP 2016

India’s civil aviation regulator worked for 93 years before Parliament gave it a law. That is a long time to run on administrative orders alone. This lesson covers the bodies and the policy that run Indian civil aviation today. It also covers the 2016 policy that changed the rules for airlines, and the latest news on pilot training.



Indian civil aviation at a glance.

> **1927** DGCA begins as a government organisation.
> **1 Apr 1995** AAI formed by merging two older authorities.
> **15 Jun 2016** NCAP 2016 approved.
> **2020** DGCA becomes statutory.

DGCA: Directorate General of Civil Aviation. Air safety regulator.

AAI: Airports Authority of India. Builds and runs airports.

BCAS: Bureau of Civil Aviation Security.

AERA: Airports Economic Regulatory Authority.

1 Chapter 1: Four Bodies, Four Jobs

Must Know

DGCA versus AAI

- The **DGCA** regulates air safety, airworthiness and air transport services.
- The **AAI** builds, maintains and runs airports.
- Exams love to swap these two. Keep them apart.
- DGCA began in **1927**. It sits in New Delhi, opposite Safdarjung Airport.
- The AAI was formed on **1 April 1995**.
- It merged the International Airports Authority and the National Airports Authority.

Two more bodies

- **BCAS** sets airport and flight security standards.
- **AERA** regulates airport tariffs and service standards.
- All four bodies sit under the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

Who investigates accidents?

- A separate body investigates an accident or a Serious Incident.
- It is the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB).
- It stands apart from the DGCA, so the regulator does not investigate itself.
- Read more: Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) and Central Industrial Security Force (CISF).

Remember: DGCA = safety. AAI = airports. BCAS = security. AERA = tariffs.

Quick check 1. The DGCA builds and runs India's airports. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

2 Chapter 2: NCAP 2016

Must Know

India's first integrated aviation policy

- The Cabinet approved the National Civil Aviation Policy on **15 June 2016**.
- It was India's first integrated aviation policy since independence.
- It covers regional connectivity, safety, bilateral traffic rights, fiscal support and "Make in India" aircraft manufacturing.
- All of it is in one document.

From "5/20" to "0/20"

- The old "5/20" rule asked airlines for five years of domestic flying and 20 aircraft before going abroad.
- NCAP 2016 made it "0/20".
- No waiting period is needed any more.
- An airline needs 20 aircraft, or 20% of its total capacity, on domestic routes, whichever is higher.
- Capacity means the average seats across all its departures.

UDAN

- NCAP 2016 also conceptualised **UDAN**.
- UDAN is India's regional connectivity scheme. It was launched that same October.

- It links smaller Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.
- Read more: UDAN Regional Connectivity Scheme.

Remember: NCAP 2016: 0/20 rule, UDAN, Make in India in aviation.

> **Quick check 2.** NCAP 2016 replaced the “5/20” rule with a “0/20” rule. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

3 Chapter 3: Greenfield or Brownfield?

Good to Know

Two kinds of airports

- A **Greenfield** airport is built from scratch on new land.
- A **Brownfield** airport is upgraded from existing infrastructure.

- Donyi Polo Airport (Itanagar) and Kushinagar International Airport are Greenfield.
- Vijayawada International Airport was upgraded from an existing domestic airport, so it is Brownfield.
- Read more: Andhra Pradesh.

> **Quick check 3.** Vijayawada International Airport was built as a Greenfield project. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

> **Think it through: Think it through: why split the sector into four bodies?**
>
> If one body made rules, ran airports and set prices, nobody could check it. Splitting safety, security, tariffs and infrastructure means no single body controls every lever.

4 Chapter 4: 93 Years on Orders Alone

Great to Know

A late law

- The DGCA became a statutory body in **2020**, through the Aircraft (Amendment) Act.
- That was 93 years after it began.
- It shows how long an Indian institution can run on administrative authority alone.

Aviation as a growth lever

- NCAP 2016 bundled connectivity, investment rules and manufacturing incentives together.
- India treats aviation as an economic growth lever, not only a safety matter.
- Read more: Indigenous Technology Development and Make in India.

A model copied for ports

- BCAS's airport security model is now being copied for ports.
- The Bureau of Port Security (BoPS) is meant to play the same role for ports.
- Read more: Bureau of Port Security (BoPS), Land Border Management in India, Indian Coast Guard and App-Based Services in India.

> **Quick check 4.** The DGCA became a statutory body in 2020 through the Aircraft (Amendment) Act. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

5 Chapter 5: In the News, 2026

Current Affairs

11 new flying training organisations

- On **5 August 2026**, Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu awarded Letters of Intent for 11 new Flying Training Organisations (FTOs).
- They will operate across seven AAI airports.
- They should add **750** pilot-training seats a year.

- India now has 41 FTOs across 63 flying bases. Six were added in two years.
- (Source: Swarajya.)
- The training-aircraft fleet grew from 324 to 385. Annual flying hours rose 25%.
- Commercial Pilot Licences rose from 1,347 in 2024 to 1,652 in 2025. That is the highest in a decade.
- (Source: ANI.)
- The event also launched the FTO IFR Slot Booking App for instrument flight-training at AAI airports.
- (Source: DD India.)

Electric seaplanes

- On 5 August 2026, Pawan Hans signed an MoU with Norway's Noemi Aerospace (Elfly AS).
- The aim is to explore electric seaplane technology for regional links.
- The MoU is exploratory. It carries no money, buying or investment promise.
- (Source: DD India.)

Airport passenger flow

- On 8 July 2026, Home Minister Amit Shah and Minister Naidu reviewed airport facilities, security and immigration.
- They asked that all 62 airports be taken up in order of passenger traffic.
- Shah called for one framework linking entry lanes, check-in, security and immigration.
- A phased rollout of Automatic Tray Retrieval Systems (ATRS) will cut manpower costs.

- The target is all 62 airports within two years.
- (Source: PIB.)

First private heliport approach

- On 1 July 2026, India approved its first private Point-in-Space (PinS) Instrument Approach Procedure.
- It is for helicopters at Undavalli Heliport, Andhra Pradesh.
- AAI developed it. DGCA approved it under ICAO standards.
- PinS uses satellite navigation for precise approaches without conventional landing aids.
- It helps emergency medical services, disaster relief and Char Dham pilgrim flights, even in bad weather.
- (Source: PIB.)

> **Quick check 5.** The Pawan Hans MoU on electric seaplanes carries no financial or investment commitment. *(True or False?)*
>
> See answer ↓

UPPCS Special: Which airports does Uttar Pradesh have?

Must Know

Which UP airports are international?

- Uttar Pradesh has several international airports. The main ones are **Lucknow**, **Varanasi**, **Kushinagar** and **Ayodhya**.
- Lucknow's airport is named after **Chaudhary Charan Singh**. Varanasi's is named after **Lal Bahadur Shastri**.

- Kushinagar International Airport was inaugurated on 20 October 2021. It serves Buddhist pilgrims and is a Greenfield airport.
- Ayodhya's airport is named after **Maharishi Valmiki**. It was inaugurated on 30 December 2023. Commercial flights began on 10 January 2024.
- A new airport at **Jewar**, near Noida, has also started commercial flights. Its first flight came in June 2026.

Why do so many UP airports sit near pilgrim towns?

- Kushinagar, Varanasi and Ayodhya are major pilgrim centres. Air links bring visitors from abroad to them.
- Kushinagar is where the Buddha attained mahaparinirvana. So it anchors the Buddhist circuit.
- These airports also fit the UDAN scheme, which aims to link smaller towns by air.

What should you know about Lucknow and Varanasi airports?

- Lucknow is the capital's airport and one of the busiest in the state. It handles both domestic and international flights.
- Varanasi's airport serves the holy city on the Ganga. Many foreign pilgrims and tourists land here each year.
- Lucknow airport is run by Lucknow International Airport Ltd, an Adani group company. It works under a 50-year concession from the Airports Authority of India (AAI), which began on 2 November 2020. Together the two airports link the state's capital and its holiest city to the world.
- The Jewar airport near Noida is meant to ease pressure on Delhi's airport.

Quick check 6. Kushinagar International Airport is a Greenfield airport. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick check 7. Commercial flights at Ayodhya's airport began in 2021. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Remember two dates: Kushinagar opened in October 2021, and Ayodhya in December 2023. Kushinagar came first.

Sources: Airports Authority of India and Ministry of Civil Aviation announcements.

6 Previous Year Questions

Exam angle: real questions on this topic.

Quick Q&A

- **DGCA began?** 1927.
- **AAI formed?** 1 April 1995.
- **NCAP approved?** 15 June 2016.
- **DGCA statutory?** 2020.
- **New FTOs 2026?** 11.

Practice MCQs

1. Kushinagar International Airport in Uttar Pradesh was opened in which year?

A. 2019

B. 2021

C. 2023

D. 2017

See answer ↓

2. Ayodhya's airport, opened in December 2023, is named after which sage?

A. Maharishi Vyasa

B. Maharishi Bharadwaj

C. Maharishi Vishwamitra

D. Maharishi Valmiki

See answer ↓

3. The Airports Authority of India (AAI) was formed on 1 April 1995 by merging which two earlier bodies?

A. DGCA and BCAS

B. Ministry of Civil Aviation and DGCA

C. International Airports Authority and National Airports Authority

D. AERA and BCAS

See answer ↓

4. The National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP) was approved on 15 June 2016. What made it historically significant?

A. It banned foreign airlines from Indian airspace

B. It was India's first integrated civil aviation policy since independence

C. It created the DGCA for the first time

D. It privatised all Indian airports at once

See answer ↓

5. NCAP 2016 replaced the old '5/20' rule for airlines starting international operations with which rule?

A. The '1/25' rule

B. The '0/20' rule

C. The '3/15' rule

D. The '10/10' rule

See answer ↓

6. Which body regulates airport tariffs and service-quality standards, distinct from DGCA's safety mandate?

A. AERA

B. BCAS

C. AAI

D. Ministry of Civil Aviation

See answer ↓

7. On 1 July 2026, India approved its first Private Point-in-Space (PinS) Instrument Approach Procedure for helicopter operations, at which location?

A. Undavalli Heliport, Andhra Pradesh

B. Shillong Heliport, Meghalaya

C. Rishikesh Heliport, Uttarakhand

D. Juhu Aerodrome, Maharashtra

See answer ↓

8. PinS (Point-in-Space) Instrument Approach Procedures rely primarily on which navigation technology to guide helicopters to heliports lacking conventional landing infrastructure?

A. Radio beacon triangulation

B. Ground-based radar only

C. Satellite-based navigation

D. Visual flight rules alone

See answer ↓

9. Consider the following airports:

1. Donyi Polo Airport

2. Kushinagar International Airport

3. Vijayawada International Airport. In the recent past, which of the above have been constructed as Greenfield projects? (UPSC CSP 2024, GS Paper I)

A. 1 and 2 only

B. 2 and 3 only

C. 1 and 3 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **B.** Kushinagar International Airport was inaugurated on 20 October 2021. It serves the Buddhist circuit around Kushinagar. It is a Greenfield airport, built on new land. ↑ Q1
2. **D.** It is called Maharishi Valmiki International Airport. It was inaugurated on 30 December 2023, and commercial flights began on 10 January 2024. ↑ Q2
3. **C.** AAI was formed on 1 April 1995 by merging the International Airports Authority and the National Airports Authority. ↑ Q3
4. **B.** NCAP 2016 was India's first integrated civil aviation policy since independence, covering connectivity, safety, and investment rules together. ↑ Q4
5. **B.** NCAP 2016 replaced the '5/20' rule with a '0/20' rule, letting any airline with 20 aircraft fly international routes regardless of age. ↑ Q5
6. **A.** The Airports Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA) regulates airport tariffs and service standards, separate from DGCA's safety role. ↑ Q6
7. **A.** India's first Private PinS Instrument Approach Procedure was approved for Undavalli Heliport in Andhra Pradesh, on 1 July 2026. ↑ Q7
8. **C.** PinS procedures use satellite-based navigation, enabling safe, precise helicopter approaches even without conventional ground-based navaids. ↑ Q8
9. **A.** The correct answer is 1 and 2 only. Donyi Polo Airport (Itanagar) and Kushinagar International Airport were both built from scratch as genuine Greenfield projects. Vijayawada International Airport was upgraded from an existing domestic airport, making it a Brownfield project, not Greenfield. ↑ Q9

Quick-check answers

1. **False.** ↑ 1
2. **True.** ↑ 2
3. **False.** ↑ 3
4. **True.** ↑ 4
5. **True.** ↑ 5
6. **True.** ↑ 6
7. **False.** ↑ 7

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