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Title: Need to introduce helicopter services for pilgrims visiting Thiruvannamalai, a temple town of Tamil Nadu.

SHRI D. VENUGOPAL (TIRUPPATTUR): In Tamil Nadu, the age old temple town Thiruvannamalai in my constituency is a world renowned spiritual and pilgrim centre. Pilgrims and tourists throng this place in a huge number. Every year the annual celebration of Karthikai Deepam draw lakhs of people. Devotees in Lakhs both from within the country and several parts of the world gather for the monthly Bhakti move called 'Girivalam' of going round the Thiruvannamalai hills on every full moon day. People of different hues are attracted to this tourist destination because of its proximity to Sathanur dam. But transport facilities for visiting to Thiruvannamalai from different parts of Tamil Nadu is very meager and needs to be augmented further. In order to increase transport facilities and for development of rail connectivity and to strengthen highways and road connectivity, steps are on the anvil. Still it needs to be considered that it takes several hours to reach Thiruvannamalai from major cities of Tamil Nadu and places like Bangalore, Hyderabad and Pondicherry the capital cities of the neighbouring states. Hence, there is an urgent need to introduce Helicopter services linking major cities with Thiruvannamalai. This will add up to the efforts to utilize tourism potential and to earn more foreign exchange. The number of foreign tourists visiting this historical pilgrim tourist town is on the increase, hence, I urge upon the Union Civil Aviation Ministry to provide infrastructure facilities and to introduce Helicopter services towards the promotion of tourism in and around Thiruvannamalai.