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Title: Need to include tourist destinations in Odisha in the Buddhist Circuit and also upgrade Biju Patnaik Airport, Bhubaneswar to an international Airport.

SHRI BAIJAYANT JAY PANDA (KENDRAPARA): The tourism potential of Bhitarkanika and Gahirmatha wildlife sanctuaries, and the Buddhist circuit of Ratnagiri – Udaygiri-Lalitgiri, in Kendrapara, Odisha is grossly unutilized. Similar problems plague other tourist destinations in Odisha such as the hot springs of Atari, Taptapani, Simlipal National Park to name a few.

Tourism industry is ranked as the second largest in providing employment to semi-skilled and unskilled workers in the country and could facilitate increased economic opportunities to its people. In order to promote tourism in Odisha, the government must consider including it in its proposed tourist circuits. Incorporating Buddhist Centers of Kendrapara in the Sarnath-Gaya-Varanasi Buddhist circuit would help strengthen tourism in the district. Other Schemes like National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana and Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive can be extended to Bhubneswar and Puri Dham respectively.

To augment these efforts, there is an urgent need to expeditiously improve the tourism infrastructure, by upgrading the Biju Patnaik Airport to an international Airport, increasing air connectivity to Bhubaneswar and formulate creative branding and marketing strategies to promote Odisha.