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Title: Need to expedite expansion of Mangalore Airport to facilitate customs/immigration and cargo handling operations.

SHRI VINAY KUMAR SORAKE (UDUPI): It is an established fact that Mangalore has large revenue generating potential for both domestic and overseas sectors when the existing airport is upgraded. Being a tourist/pilgrim destination both for domestic and foreign tourists, regular flow of traffic is ensured. Lakhs of NRIs settled in Gulf and belonging to Dhakshina Kannada region want direct flight facilities from Gulf to Mangalore as also a sizeable number of Haj pilgrims from this region who make to holy Mecca every year.

The State Government of Karnataka has fulfilled its obligations in terms of acquisition of land and handing it over to the Airport Authority of India officials. The private sector is also willing and ready to invest in hotel and transport sectors whenever the new airport facility comes up. When expansion work has already been taken up, it would be worthwhile to provide customs/immigration and cargo handling facilities in order to cater to the needs of international travellers. I urge the Centre to ensure that adequate provisions are given in the current budget 2003 so that the work is taken up in right earnest and the new facility is commissioned well in time.