

NT>

Title: Need to drop the move of takeover of Sri Arunachaleswarar Temple in Tamil Nadu by Archaeological Survey of India

*SHRI D. VENUGOPAL (TIRUPPATTUR): Sir, Thiruvannamalai has got the ancient temple of Sri Arunachaleswarar with the presiding deity dwelling there in the form of '*Agni*'. This historical temple, sung by several religious Saints, has got about 280 festivals throughout the year with all the six *pujas* performed every day. This temple is known for its annual '*Karthigai Deepam*' festival which attracts lakhs of devotees from all over the country. This pilgrim centre attracts lakhs of devotees on every full moon day for the *Girivalam*. This temple which is thronged by devotees full of faith would be rendered into a haunted place full of bats, if this living temple is taken over as an archaeological monument. Already we notice the plight of Thanjavur Big Temple, Gingee Fort, Thiruvannamalai Kanthashramam, etc., which lack maintenance under the Archaeological Department.

Hence, I appeal to the Union Government, on behalf of all the devotees, to give up the proposal to take over Sri Arunachaleswarar temple. Let the temple be with the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Board of Tamil Nadu. The devotees would be happy if the Centre does not go further than merely giving modern technological assistance for the upkeep of this ancient temple.

* English translation of speech originally delivered in Tamil