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Title: Regarding modernization of Tuticorin Airport in Tamil Nadu.

SHRI S.S. RAMASUBBU (TIRUNELVELI): Tuticorin (Thoothukudi) in Tamil Nadu is a major port city in the country. It became the centre of the India's Independence movement in the early 20th century. Tuticorin harbour is well known for pearl diving, fishing centre and ship building. Tuticorin is surrounded by Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari, Virudhunagar and Ramanathapuram districts and on the south-east by Gulf of Mannar. Tuticorin is also nearer to Tuticorin Port, Nangeri SEZ, Kudankulam Nuclear Plant and for the visiting tourists to Rameswaram.

Tuticorin is an important centre on the commercial and tourist map of our country and it is presently served only by Spicejet Airlines. In the recent past, the tourist traffic to this city and neighbouring places has increased manifold and most of the tourists prefer to travel by air so that they can utilise their time to the maximum. Considering the commercial and tourism potential, there is not enough service connecting Tuticorin with other important cities. Moreover, people from Tuticorin, Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli and its adjoining districts where population of Muslim community is concentrated often go to various foreign countries especially to Gulf and South East Asian countries. They have to go either to Chennai or Thiruvananthapuram for their onward journey and in the process they suffer financial hardship and also lose considerable time in travel.

In the recent past, Union Government has identified 35 non-metro airports in the country for expansion and modernization. Expansion of runway and other associated facilities at the Tuticorin Airport including introduction of wide bodied aircraft is under consideration of Airports Authority of India. Currently the Airport can accommodate only ATR type aircraft which can carry only about 50 to 70 passengers. Keeping in view the above, I urge upon the Union Government to kindly take necessary steps for runway expansion, modernization, improving infrastructure and night landing facilities at Tuticorin Airport and allot adequate funds without delay.