

Need to modernize airports in Tamil Nadu including Chennai Airport

SHRI P. WILSON (Tamil Nadu): Thank you hon. Chairman for giving me this opportunity. I rise today to bring to the attention of hon. Minister of Civil Aviation, through this august House the need to modernise various Airports in Tamil Nadu in order to cater to the needs of the industries, trade and commerce and tourism sectors and for the benefit of the citizens. Sir, there is a quote, "A mile of a highway will take you only a mile but a mile of a runway will take you anywhere." So, airports are catalysts for economic growth. A State like Tamil Nadu which is in the top three of any growth maker, therefore, deserves and requires world class airports.

Sir, the State's capital - Chennai has the highest domestic and international traffic in the State. Yet, Chennai's airport is far from modern, let alone international standard. Chennai's airport should be on par with Delhi, Bombay or Bangalore; yet sadly, it is not. Chennai is thus losing business. The Ministry of Civil Aviation has to expedite establishment of the planned second airport with ultra-modern international facilities so as to make Chennai the commercial hub of South India. Sir, the focus of the Ministry is required not only for Chennai, but also Madurai, the second largest city in the State of Tamil Nadu. Madurai is the gateway for 13 southern and central districts including Dindigul, Theni, Virudhunagar, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari. These districts have a total population of 2,32,93,738 which accounts for 29 per cent of the State's population. Every year, lakhs of passengers travel from Madurai to foreign countries. However, due to lack of direct air connectivity to many other international destinations, tourism, export and economic growth has been stunted in this region. This also results in explosion of traffic in the Chennai Airport. Non-inclusion of the Madurai Airport as a 'point of call' airport for other international destinations by the Ministry has been preventing foreign airlines from operating direct services to Madurai. Several foreign airlines have already requested the Civil Aviation Ministry for addressing this concern, on which no actions have been taken yet. The appointment of the current plant officer at the international cargo terminal at Madurai Airport is also pending for a long time, which has hampered export and import via Madurai Airport. Sir, cargo operations are also delayed due to customs. The airport lacks CISF staff and is not working around the clock. However, no steps have been taken in spite of repeated requests to make Madurai an International Airport with such facilities of imports and exports. Apart from this, Sir, the plight of Tiruchirappalli and Coimbatore International Airports causes a grave concern. The UDAAN Scheme covers five airports in Tamil Nadu - Salem, Neyveli, Vellore, Ramanad and Tanjore. It has been five years since the plan was launched, but flight operations have begun only from

Salem Airport. Since this is the need of the hour to augment the growth of Tamil Nadu, I request the hon. Union Minister of Civil Aviation, through this august House, to address the aforementioned issues expeditiously and also inform the status of disbursal of funds for all airports. Thank you, Sir.

SHRI R. GIRIRAJAN (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

DR. V. SIVADASAN (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I also associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

DR. KANIMOZHI NVN SOMU (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I also associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

SHRIMATI SHANTA CHHETRI (West Bengal): Sir, I also associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

SHRI ABIR RANJAN BISWAS (West Bengal): Sir, I also associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

SHRI PABITRA MARGHERITA (Assam): Sir, I also associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

SHRI M. SHANMUGAM (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I also associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

DR. JOHN BRITTAS (Kerala): Sir, I also associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

DR. AMAR PATNAIK (Odisha): Sir, I associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

SHRI M. MOHAMED ABDULLA (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I also associate myself with the matter raised by the hon. Member.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Saroj Pandey; not present. Now, Shri Sanjay Singh.