

# THE BUSINESS LINE

## Kerala plans airstrips to connect tourists spots

Date : 4.2.2020 | Edition : Delhi | Page : 15 | Clip size (cm) : W: 3 H: 5

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**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

Thiruvananthapuram, February 3

Besides the four international airports, Kerala may soon have a string of airstrips-heliports, which can operate small, single-engine aircraft connecting major tourist destinations.

Unveiling the plan, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Monday said the State had submitted a feasibility study report in this regard to the Civil Aviation Ministry for approval. The objective of the initiative is the comprehensive development of the State's aviation sector, he told the State assembly during question hour.

Under the plan, the airstrip-heliports will be set up at Ashramam maidan in Kollam, Munnar, Thekkadi, Kalpetta, Bekal, Guruvayur, Palakkad, Alappuzha beach, Varkala and Kumarakom, he said. "We are planning to commence airline service connecting the State's major tourist spots by operating tiny single-engine aircraft having 8-10 seats. The plan is to set up the pro-



KeralaCM Pinarayi Vijayan

posed air strips at Bekal, Wayanad and Idukki in the initial phase," he said.

The State government has also requested the Centre to include the proposed air strips under its Regional Connectivity Scheme-UDAN to operate them as feeder ports of the international airports, the Chief Minister added. Steps to set up a greenfield airport to help Sabarimala pilgrims are also in progress, Vijayan said adding a techno economic feasibility report in this regard is under the government's consideration.