

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF CULTURE
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.36
ANSWERED ON 01.12.2025

HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE OF SITHANNAVASAL

36. MS. S. JOTHIMANI:

Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is aware of the historical and archaeological importance of Sithannavasal located in Viralimalai Assembly Constituency in Tamil Nadu, an ancient Jain site known for its 7th-century rock-cut cave temple and mural paintings, among the earliest examples of Indian fresco art;
- (b) whether the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) or the State Archaeology Department has taken steps for its conservation, research and promotion, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government proposes to improve infrastructure such as road access, visitor amenities, interpretation centers and tourist facilities at the site;
- (d) if so, the details and timeline for its implementation;
- (e) whether Sithannavasal is included or under consideration for national or international tourism campaigns or heritage circuits, if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (f) whether the Government is likely to consider a comprehensive plan to enhance Sithannavasal's visibility and accessibility as a heritage tourism destination, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF CULTURE AND TOURISM
(SHRI GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT)

- (a) Sittanavasal is a monument of national importance under the care and maintenance of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), located in the Viralimalai Assembly Constituency, Pudukkottai district, Tamil Nadu bears significant historical and archaeological importance. It includes rock shelter featuring Jain ascetic stone beds and Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions, the 7th–9th century CE rock-cut cave temple with rare early mural paintings etc. reflecting early Jain characters and ancient art traditions.
- (b) The ASI has taken continuous steps for the conservation, research, and promotion of the Sittanavasal monuments. ASI ensures conservation through special repair works, annual maintenance and upkeep based on requirement. The mural paintings are in good state of preservation. Further, the cultural awareness programmes are carried out by the circle involving local public, student for better understanding and promotion of heritage.
- (c)& At present, there is no proposal for additional infrastructure development at Sittanavasal.
- (d) However, the site is already equipped with essential tourist facilities like toilet blocks, drinking water, QR-code enabled signage, cultural and monument protection notice boards, stone benches, publication counter, motorable road access, etc.
- (e)& No such proposal is under consideration at present.
- (f)
