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Title: Need to connect Mettupulayam with Chennai by rail via Sathyamangalam, Gopichettipalayam, Cithod and Erode.

SHRI C. GOPALAKRISHNAN (NILGIRIS): Madam, Speaker, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to raise an important matter. With the blessings of my leader Madam Amma, I rise to request the Government to connect Mettupalayam with Chennai *via* Sathyamangalam, Gopichettipalayam, Cithod and Erode to Chennai to fulfil the genuine demand of the people of Western Tamil Nadu. Mettupalayam is about 55 kilometres from Ooty which is the capital of Niligiris district and a well-known tourist centre and also the most popular destination of Indian film industry. Tourists and local people coming to or going from Ooty have to alight at Mettupalayam and continue their further journey. Mettupalayam lies deep in the Kongu region and it does not have rail connectivity to Erode *via* Sathyamangalam, Gopichettipalayam and Cithod.

Erode is a business centre for marketing textile products of handloom, powerloom and readymade garments in addition to turmeric which has medicinal value. The Bannari Amman Temple is a famous temple located near Sathyamangalam in Erode district which is in my parliamentary constituency of Niligiris. People throng the temple from Erode, Coimbatore and from all over Tamil Nadu throughout the year. If Mettupalayam is connected to Erode by a broad gauge line, then people can easily reach Chennai as Erode is already connected to Chennai.

At present a project to construct a new railway line from Chamrajnagar to Sathyamangalam, Gopichettipalayam and Erode is in progress. But the progress of the work is slow. The line has to be extended over a stretch of 46 kilometres. If this is completed, then Mettupalayam adjoining Ooty will be connected to Chennai by a rail line *via* Sathyamangalam, Gopichettipalayam, Cithod and Erode to Chennai at a very nominal cost. The railway line is a dire need of the local people as also the tourists.

I would like to urge upon the Government to construct this line on priority basis.