

**Title :Need to protect the interests of farmers and agricultural labourers settled in Railway ""waste"" land on either side of Kollam - Virudhunagar metre gauge railway line in Kerala .**

SHRI CHENGARA SURENDRAN (ADOOR): Sir, the Kollam-Virudhunagar metre gauge railway line comes under the jurisdiction of Madurai division of Southern Railway having its headquarters at Chennai. There is forest land to the extent of 100 to 500 metres on either side of the line. During the period of grave situation of scarcity of food in 1964, the State and Central Government authorities persuaded the landless agricultural labourers and farmers to take possession of the railway land for cultivation and settlement with a view to grow more food. Thus, several farmers and agricultural labourers cultivated major crops such as rubber, coconut, arecanut, cashew, etc. in this land. Now they have to cut and remove these aged trees for replanting as well as for their personal use. But when they try to cut and remove the trees, the Railway Protection Force turn up, arrest the farmers and put them in jail.

So, I urge upon the Government to instruct the RPF personnel not to stop the poor farmers and agricultural labourers and assign the possessed land to the farmers.