

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) Rapid urbanization and industrialization and abundance of vehicles have been major reasons of air pollution in metropolitan cities. Ambient air quality is regularly being monitored under the National Air Monitoring Programme (NAMP) by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) along with State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) and the Pollution Control Committees (PCCs) in 35 metropolitan cities as per 2001 census.

Ambient air quality data for the last 03 years has revealed that air quality is within the ambient standards with respect to Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂). However, the levels of Oxides of Nitrogen (NO_x) are exceeding the ambient air quality norms in residential areas at 08 locations in Kolkata, Howrah and Delhi. The levels of Respirable Suspended Particulate matter (RSPM) are exceeding the norms in 86 out of 125 cities and towns monitored during 2008.

(b) Yes, Sir. The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in its Order, dated 5th April, 2002 directed the Government to phase out diesel buses by introducing Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses in the National Capital Territory. The CNG as automotive fuel has been introduced in the cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Ankleshwar, Vadodara, Surat, Kanpur, Bareilly, Agra, Lucknow and Agartala.

Under the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Act, 2006, City Gas Distribution (CGD) Networks would be built and operated across the country. The priority for CGD is being decided on the basis of likely availability of gas through the pipeline by the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB). Separately, the Board is trying to ensure that a National Gas Grid is in place on a priority basis by identifying the gaps in the existing pipeline network for which the Board may consider inviting bids on *suo moto* basis so that natural gas is available across the country including metropolitan cities and is distributed through the CGD networks. However, the concerned State Governments are responsible for introducing/converting CNG buses in the metropolitan cities and to take steps to switch over to CNG.

(c) The term green or eco-friendly vehicle is used loosely and denotes vehicles with low or zero emissions, fuel efficiency, etc. Vehicle manufacturers have recently introduced vehicles that run on electricity and hybrid fuel which are more eco-friendly in comparison to vehicles running on diesel or petrol. The Government provides concession in excise duty on import of components for CNG and LPG kits.

Regulatory mechanism for bio-safety

3219. SHRI NANDAMURI HARIKRISHNA:
SHRI M.V. MYSURA REDDY:
SHRI R.C. SINGH:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is no regulatory mechanism for bio-safety of GM products in the country;

(b) whether Supreme Court has given an interim directions recently to Government to publish all results of trials on the safety of Genetically Modified food items in the country;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether any assessment of the impact of unregulated release of GM grains and vegetables on public health and environment, in the Indian environment has been made;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) The Ministry of Environment and Forests has formulated the 'Rules for the Manufacture, Use, Import and Export and Storage of Hazardous Micro-Organisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells, 1989', notified under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. These Rules cover the areas of research as well as activities involving manufacture, use, import, export, storage and large scale applications of Genetically Modified (GM) Organisms and products made therefrom throughout India. The Rules are supported by biosafety guidelines for evaluation environmental and health safety aspects of GM products. The guidelines and protocols are updated regularly and are in line with the international norms prescribed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, CODEX Alimentarius Commission and International Plant Protection Convention.

(b) and (c) The hon'ble Supreme Court of India has allowed the field trials of GM crops subject to compliance of stringent norms such as (i) maintaining a crop specific isolation distance as well as biological and physical barriers as per the 'Minimum Indian Seed Certification Standards' recommended by the Indian Council of Agriculture Research; (ii) submission of a validated event specific protocol to detect the level of contamination at 0.01% level of detection before initiating the field trials; and (iii) designating a lead scientist responsible for the field trials. The Ministry of Environment Forests has informed the Hon'ble Supreme Court that biosafety data on Bt cotton and BT brinjal are available at websites www.envfor.nic.in and www.dbtbiosafety.nic.in for public scrutiny. It has been further committed that biosafety data of other crops will also be posted on the websites as and when the studies are completed.

(d) The Ministry has not received any report regarding the release of unregulated grains and vegetables in the country.

(e) and (f) Do not arise.

Problems at Sabarimala shrine

3220. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state: