(d)   Ministry of Environment and Forests has not received any proposal to protect the rich biodiversity at Araku valley.

Use of GM foods

1268. PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a)   whether Government has seen the news reports that the Association of Retired Judges of Supreme Court and High Courts of India have called for a 'moratorium' on use of Genetically Modified (GM) foods in the country, in view of all the 'facets and risks' to environment, people and public health;

(b)   if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto;

(c)   whether it is a fact countries like China, Spain etc. have already banned commercial planting of GE Rice, Wheat, Corn and Soyabean or imposed five years blanket moratorium on GM crops; and

(d)   if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (d) The Ministry has not received any communication from the Association of Retired Judges of Supreme Court and High Courts of India calling for a 'moratorium on use of genetically modified (GM) foods in the country. However, during the public consultation on Bt brinjal, some of the State Governments, NGOs and some sections of the scientific and farming communities have expressed apprehensions on the long term impacts of GM foods on the environment and human health.

(c) and (d) No. Sir; Biotech crops are being grown worldwide in 25 countries including / China and Spain. The GM crops approved for commercial cultivation in China include GM cotton, Poplar, Papaya, Petunia, Sweet Pepper Tomato, Rice and Phytase Maize whereas GM Maize is being cultivated in Spain. As of date, GM wheat is under research and development in several countries and has not reached the stage for commercialization. Soybean is being cultivated in ten countries globally.

Progress of river cleaning projects

1269. SHRI N.K. SINGH: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state: