

that they would like to undertake the exercise of demarcating ESA by physical verification as has been already done by the State of Kerala.

This Ministry has decided to give an opportunity to State Governments of Western Ghats region for undertaking demarcation of ESA by physical verification within their jurisdiction, if they so desire, except for Kerala State which has already undertaken such an exercise, and submit their proposals to the Ministry by 9th August 2014.

Dilution of green norms to help fast track infra projects

3094. SHRI KALPATARU DAS: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state :

- (a) whether it is proposed to dilute green norms to help fast-track infra projects in the tribal hot bed forests in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the details of road projects that are proposed to be executed in the regions that are proposed to be executed under relaxed norms in Odisha region?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE (SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR): (a) and (b) Central Government *vide* letter dated 4th July, 2014 accorded general approval under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for diversion of forest land, not located within the protected areas, for construction of two lane public roads by Government Departments in 117 Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected districts, **irrespective of the area of forest land involved in such projects.**

(c) As per the information provided by the Nodal Officer, the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 in the Government of Odisha, a proposal seeking prior approval of Central Government under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for diversion of forest land required for construction of a road from Jamkhar to Mahanpali village in the LWE affected district of Bargarh has been forwarded to the Divisional Forest Officer, Bargarh Forest Division by his office on 8th August, 2013 for processing. The said proposal will now be considered by the Government of Odisha for approval as per the said general approval accorded by the Central Government *vide* letter dated 4th July, 2014.

India's rank in UNs Environmental Performance Index

3095. SHRI A.W. RABI BERNARD: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state :

- (a) whether the United Nations (UNs) Environmental Performance Index (EPI) has ranked India at a low 155th position among 178 countries on how well they perform on high priority environmental issues;

(b) whether India is also behind neighboring countries China, Pakistan and Nepal in that list; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by Government to improve the performance?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE (SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR): (a) to (c) The United Nations or any of its organizations has not brought out any report on Environmental Performance Index (EPI) for ranking various countries. However, a report on EPI has been recently produced jointly by a team of experts in Yale University and Columbia University which ranks countries on the basis of their environment performance. The report has ranked 178 countries based on 20 indicators tracked across nine areas. The report has taken only PM_{2.5} as the pollutant for its analysis and not all the twelve pollutants covered under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), notified by the Government of India. The report relies on Satellite data in place of actual monitored data. India's EPI rank is 155. Rank of neighboring country is 118 for China, 139 for Nepal and 148 for Pakistan.

Various step taken to improve ambient air quality in the country *inter-alia* include, supply of cleaner fuels as per auto fuel policy, use of gaseous fuel for public transport, pollution under control (PUC) certificate for in use vehicles, stringent source specific emission standards and strict compliance therein, use of beneficiated coal in thermal power plants, strengthening public transport, implementation of revised emission norms for gensets, implementation of city specific action plan in 16 cities, etc.

Trial of new varieties of GM crops like rice and wheat

3096. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government has approved field trials for 21 new varieties of GM crops including staples like rice and wheat;

(b) whether Government feels that GM crops can help improve yields by re-engineering the genetic code and stabilise food prices at a time when deficient rainfall is likely to adversely affect the crop production; and

(c) whether the Supreme Court is still deliberating on the bio-safety of GM crops, ever since a moratorium was clamped on the field trials of GM Brinjal ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE (SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR): (a) Yes, Sir. The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) has approved 21 varieties of GM crops which includes rice and wheat.

(b) Some research on GM crops is aimed at increasing the yield through genetic engineering interventions.

(c) The matter related to GM crops is subjudice in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.