

(b) whether Government is contemplating to change the housing loan policy to meet the target of providing house to all and if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF HOUSING AND URBAN POVERTY ALLEVIATION (SHRI M.VENKAIAH NAIDU): (a) and (b) The Government has set the target of providing pucca houses to all by 2022 as announced in the President's Address to Joint Session of both the Houses of Parliament on 9th June, 2014. Government, at present, is holding consultations with various stakeholders including Banks and Financial Institutions for this purpose.

Criteria for granting special category status to a State

†*325. SHRI RAM NARAIN DUDI: Will the Minister of PLANNING be pleased to state :

(a) the criteria adopted by the Central Government to accord special category status to a State;

(b) the number of states which have been accorded special category status at present in accordance with the prescribed criteria; and

(c) whether in view of odd geographical condition and repeated droughts, the Central Government proposes to accord special category status to Rajasthan, if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI INDERJIT SINGH RAO) : (a) Special Category Status for plan assistance has been granted in the past by the National Development Council (NDC) to some States that are characterized by a number of features necessitating special consideration. These features include: (i) hilly and difficult terrain, (ii) low population density and / or sizeable share of tribal population, (iii) strategic location along borders with neighbouring countries, (iv) economic and infrastructural backwardness and (v) non-viable nature of State finances.

(b) At present 11 States have been accorded Special Category Status. These are Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura and Uttarakhand.

(c) The Government of Rajasthan had made a request for Special Category Status in January, 2012. The request was examined with reference to the existing NDC criteria and it was conveyed to Rajasthan in May, 2013 that Rajasthan did not qualify for grant of Special Category Status based on integrated consideration of various criteria. Another request has been recently received in June 2014 which is under consideration.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.