

have lost their lives in the year 2014 at Alang Soshiya Ship Breaking Yard out of which 5 workers died when a fire broke out on 20th June 2014 during the process of cutting a tank of a ship, named D.V Perin, with the help of gas-cutter.

(b) and (c) These unfortunate accidents have taken place in spite of strict safety and precautionary measures in place. Under the Ship Breaking Code 2013, tankers are required to obtain 'fit for work' certificates issued by Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organization (PESO) or any competent agency authorized by Directorate of Industrial Safety and Health, under the Factories Act, before beaching for the purposes of breaking. The vessels are required to complete gas freeing operation and obtain certificates failing which the vessels will be sent off. Besides, the Ship Breaking Code also provides for elaborate provisions for safety compliance like space for safe passage, fire fighting equipments, appointing qualified Safety Officers for supervision, distance to be maintained during cutting operations, providing personal protection equipments, displaying of 'dos and don'ts', inspection by state government officials, training of workers, etc.

#### **Declaration of State Highways as National Highways**

2449. DR. CHANDAN MITRA: Will the Minister of ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has decided to declare certain State Highways as National Highways;

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise;

(c) the reasons for achieving even the halfway mark of its annual construction target; and

(d) the fresh steps taken by Government to expedite development of newly identified State Highways as National Highways?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI RADHAKRISHNAN P.): (a) and (b) Expansion of National Highway network is a continuous process and declaration of new National Highways is taken up from time to time depending upon requirement of connectivity, *inter-se-priority* and availability of funds.

(c) 2212 km. have been constructed upto November, 2014 against the annual target of 6300 km. This is mainly due to the fact that pace of construction picks up after October *i.e.* completion of Monsoon season.

(d) After declaration of National Highway, project reports are prepared and development works are taken up keeping in view the feasibility, *inter-se-priority* and availability of funds.

**Tax rationalisation for taxis and maxis**

2450. SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: Will the Minister of ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government proposes to rationalize taxes for taxis and maxis operating within a State and also inter-State;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the fresh steps taken by Government to promote free movement of taxis and maxis in States in order to encourage tourism ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI RADHAKRISHNAN P.): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Taxation of motor vehicle is a State subject and it is governed by the respective State laws/rules. The issue regarding rationalization of motor vehicle taxes was discussed in the 35th meeting of Transport Development Council (TDC) held on 23.10.2013 under the Chairmanship of Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways. The TDC decided to rationalize taxes for Taxis/Maxis by State Governments at floor rate of 6% or more on the sale price by 31.03.2014 and on taxi/maxi operating on inter-State route by 30.09.2014. Taxation of motor vehicle being State Subject, the States are required to notify the rationalization of motor vehicle taxes in their respective States in consonance with the decision taken by Transport Development Council.

(c) All State Governments and Union Territories Administration were requested on 12.12.2013, 06.06.2014 and subsequently in the 36th TDC meeting held on 28.10.2014 for issuing notifications for rationalization of Motor Vehicle Taxes in their respective States/UTs as per the decisions taken in the 35th TDC Meeting held on 23.10.2013.

**Construction of Tripunithura bypass**

2451. SHRI P. RAJEEVE: Will the Minister of ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry has received any proposal from Kerala Government for approval of the revised land acquisition estimate for Tripunithura bypass; and