

## Mustard trials revive hope for GM crops

BT cotton, approved in Gujarat in 2002 under then chief minister Narendra Modi's watch, is the only genetically modified crop approved for commercial cultivation in India after the UPA government placed a moratorium on BT brinjal — the country's first GM food crop — following opposition from anti-GM

NGOs who cited safety and environmental concerns. One of the reasons cited for the moratorium was that brinjal is not critical to India's food security.

After being cagey initially, the Prakash Javadekar-headed environment ministry — with backing from PM Modi — lifted a ban on

field trials of GM crops last August. Since then, some states where the BJP either is in or shares power; such as Punjab and Maharashtra, have opened their doors for GM crop trials, including GM mustard.

The decision has set the regulatory process in motion again which means the government will soon

have to take a call on whether to approve GM crops for commercial cultivation. "We were ready with the technology in 2002. It would have taken four years for all bio-safety trials to conclude had our policy been clearer. By 2007, farmers would have had the technology," Pental said.