

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.3226
TO BE ANSWERED ON 22ND MARCH, 2017**

TELECOM AND POSTAL SERVICES IN BACKWARD AREAS

† 3226. SHRI GOPAL SHETTY:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the telecommunication and postal services provided in the country particularly in backward and rural areas are insufficient;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government proposes to improve telecommunication and postal services in the country particularly in backward and rural areas;
- (d) if so, the details thereof;
- (e) whether the Government proposes to provide these services in each village of the country and if so, the details thereof, State-wise; and
- (f) the time by which these services are likely to be provided in the said areas?

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF STATE (IC) OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS &
MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(SHRI MANOJ SINHA)**

(a) & (b) As per a survey conducted in 2014, 5,41,939 villages out of total 5,97,608 villages in the country are already covered with mobile services, leaving only 55,669 villages, i.e., 9.31%, without mobile coverage. Department of Posts is providing postal services in all areas of the country including backward and rural areas at affordable rates. Counter services are provided through a network of 1,54,910 Post Offices (as on 31.03.2016) which is the largest network in the world. Postal services of regular delivery and collection of mail and sale of stamps and stationery are provided in all areas. Sale of stamps and stationery is also being offered through Franchise Outlets (FOs) and Panchayat Sanchar Sewa Kendras (PSSKs).

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(c) to (f) The Government has proposed/planned various projects with financial support from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) to ensure mobile telecommunication service to the uncovered villages of the country. Mobile coverage to the uncovered villages is likely to be provided in a phased manner, subject to availability of financial resources. Government has prioritized to provide mobile communication services in uncovered villages in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas, North-Eastern States, Islands, and Himalayan States in the first phase. Action taken by the Government for expansion of telecom infrastructure is as below:

- (i) On 10.09.2014, the Government approved a proposal to implement a Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan for the North-Eastern Region (NER). The Project envisages providing mobile coverage to 8621 identified uncovered villages by installation of about 6673 mobile towers, installation of 321 mobile tower sites along National Highways and strengthening of transmission network in the NER. The estimated cost of implementation is Rs. 5336.18 crore. The Project would be funded from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) and would be completed by December, 2018.
- (ii) 2199 mobile towers are being set up in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected States with a total estimated cost of Rs.3567.58 crore. 2187 mobile towers have already become operational as on 28.02.2017.
- (iii) Telecom Commission has given approval for Comprehensive Telecom Development Plan including provision of mobile connectivity for Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep Islands with a total estimated investment of Rs. 435.87 crore.

Expansion of postal network in the country, particularly backward and rural areas, by opening of new post offices or relocation and redeployment is an on-going activity under the Plan Scheme – “Rural Business & Access to Postal Network” subject to fulfilment of prescribed distance, population and income norms and availability of funds and manpower. Department of Posts planned to open 400 new Branch Post Offices (BOs) in rural and backward areas by redeployment & relocation during 12th Plan Period to increase access of postal services. Out of this, 344 BOs have already been opened during the financial years 2012-13 to 2015-16. Further under Rural Information and Communication Technology (RICT) Project of the Department of Posts, Hand Held Devices are being provided to the Branch Post Offices in rural & backward areas in a phased manner to improve the operational/ functional efficiency of the BOs. The opening of a new post office in any village is subject to fulfilment of prescribed norms, availability of funds and manpower.
