

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

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 4322
TO BE ANSWERED ON 18TH MARCH, 2026**

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY IN RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS

†4322. **SHRI SANJAY UTTAMRAO DESHMUKH:**

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has expedited the implementation of the BharatNet project to enhance digital connectivity in rural and remote areas of the country and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the details of progress made under the said project in the Washim-Yavatmal Lok Sabha Constituency;
- (c) whether priority is being given to the expansion of 5G services, particularly in developing and underserved regions and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether the Government has taken any new initiatives to promote banking, insurance and e-commerce services in rural areas through the India Post and if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) whether any technological reforms have been undertaken to make the spectrum allocation process more transparent and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

**MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
(DR. PEMMASANI CHANDRA SEKHAR)**

- (a) BharatNet project is being implemented in a phased manner to provide broadband connectivity to all Gram Panchayats (GPs). In BharatNet Phase-I and Phase-II 2,14,921 GPs have been made Service Ready. Further, Government has approved the Amended BharatNet Program (ABP) on through which Optical Fiber Connectivity is to be provided to approximately 2.64 lakh GPs and approximately 3.8 lakh non-GP villages on demand basis across the country.
- (b) Out of 1196 GPs of Washim-Yavatmal Lok Sabha Constituency, 1165 GPs have been made Service Ready under the BharatNet project.
- (c) 5G services have been rolled out in all States/UTs across the country and presently it is available in 99.9% of the districts in the country. Government has taken several initiatives for expansion of 5G services, which, inter alia, include the following:
 - i. Auction of spectrum for 5G mobile services in 2022.
 - ii. Financial reforms to rationalize Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR), Bank Guarantees (BGs) and interest rates.
 - iii. Removal of Spectrum Usage Charges for spectrum acquired in auction of 2022 and thereafter.
 - iv. Simplification of procedure for SACFA (Standing Advisory Committee on Radio Frequency Allocations) clearance.
 - v. Launch of GatiShakti Sanchar portal and RoW(Right of Way) Rules to streamline RoW permissions and clearance of installation of telecom infrastructure.
- (d) Department of Posts is leveraging its vast network of 1.65 lakh post offices by focusing on facilitating access to vital public services and ensuring inclusivity for all citizens, especially in rural and remote areas. To promote banking, insurance and e-commerce services in rural areas, following initiatives have been taken by Department of Posts:

(A) Banking Services and insurance services :

- (i) The Post Office Savings Bank (POSB) operates on a Core Banking Solution (CBS) platform. It provides modern digital services, including ATM access, DBT payment, internet banking, mobile banking, NEFT/RTGS, e-Passbook and UPI. These services are also fully available through rural Post Offices through DREAM (Digital Rural Enterprise Application for Mobile) app operated via mobile devices given to Branch Postmasters.
- (ii) India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) through the network of Post Offices provides various citizen-centric and financial services including Digital Life Certificate, Child Aadhaar enrolment, mobile number update in Aadhaar and Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AePS). Financial services include account opening, Aadhaar seeding, cash deposit and withdrawal, remittances (IMPS/NEFT/RTGS/UPI), bill payments, merchant onboarding, insurance loan in referral mode and payments for Department of Posts products such as PPF, SSY and PLI.
- (iii) Funds have been allocated to Circles/Regions/Divisions for promoting awareness of Rural Postal Life Insurance (RPLI) and the incentive structure for the sales force has been revised to enhance the sale of Postal Life Insurance (PLI) and RPLI including in rural areas. PLI/RPLI policyholders can pay premiums online through the customer portal using debit/credit cards, wallets, BHIM/UPI and net banking, through IPPB, and through standing instructions from POSB and bank accounts.

(B) e-commerce services:

The Department of Posts has taken several initiatives to promote e-commerce services Pan India including rural areas.

- (i) The Department has also introduced an All-India Road Transport Network (RTN) to expedite the safe and secure delivery of parcels across the country. At present, 88 national routes are operational running over 62,000 km per day. The establishment of a dedicated National RTN for parcels is facilitating connectivity to a significant number of tier-2 and tier-3 towns, and it is serving as a crucial government infrastructure initiative that extends the advantages of e-commerce to rural areas also.
 - (ii) Department has entered into Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and is actively partnering with prominent e-commerce and logistics platforms such as Amazon, Shiprocket, Decathlon, and DTDC for the delivery of their shipments.
- (e) Technological reforms undertaken in spectrum allocation process are as follows:
- i. The end-to-end process for spectrum assignment has been digitized and made available online through the Saral Sanchar portal.
 - ii. Spectrum is assigned to Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) through Simultaneous Multiple Round Ascending (SMRA) e-auctions conducted over the internet.
 - iii. The Government has also enabled spectrum trading, sharing and liberalization to facilitate more efficient and optimal utilization of spectrum by TSPs.
