

- (ii) Deployment of Rural Information and Communication Technology (Rural ICT) solution in all the 1,30,000 rural Branch Post Offices.
- (iii) Establishment of IT Infrastructure, viz., Data Centre, Disaster Recovery Centre and Wide Area Network (WAN) based networking.
- (iv) Development of software applications covering all core operations of the Department. Through these initiatives, the achievements on the project, as on date, are as under:
  - Data Centre has started functioning at Navi Mumbai since April 2013 and Disaster Recovery Centre at Mysore is operational since May 2015.
  - 27561 Departmental Post offices including mail offices and administrative offices have been networked as single Wide Area Network (WAN) and connected to Data Centre.
  - Core Banking Solution (CBS) has been rolled out in 2590 Post Offices.
  - ATMs have started functioning at 117 locations.

Additionally, 'Project Arrow' executed by the Department from 2008-09 onwards has improved the quality of postal 'Core Operation' and also provided a standardized 'Look and Feel' to the Post Offices across the country. The 'Mail Network Optimization Project' has improved mail operations.

#### **Action plan to strengthen Department of Posts**

†559. SHRI NARESH AGRAWAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been sharp rise in the business of courier companies due to corruption, shirking of work and negligence prevailing in the Department of Posts;

(b) if so, whether it should not be considered to either shut down or to hand over the postal department to private parties; and

(c) whether Government is having any action plan to strengthen the Department of Posts, so as to enable it to compete with the courier companies?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) No, Sir. As per a study conducted by M/s IMRB International covering the period 2010-11 to 2012-13, the rate of growth of the courier industry has decreased from 10% in 2011-12 to

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

6% in 2012-13. On the other hand, the booked figures of Department of Posts during the same period show increase in rate of growth of Speed Post revenue from 19% in 2011-12 to 42% in 2012-13 as shown in table below:

Year	Size of Courier Industry in ₹ in crore	Year on Year growth of courier industry	Revenue of Speed Post in ₹ in crore	Year on Year growth of Speed Post	Percentage of Speed Post in courier industry
a	b	c	d	e	f
2010-11	4500	-	748.82	9%	16.64%
2011-12	4950	10%	889.64	19%	17.97%
2012-13	5246	6%	1261.47	42%	24.04%

Data in column (b) is based on Market Research on Speed Post conducted by IMRB International.

Data in column (d) is based on booked figures of Speed Post revenue.

While the courier industry data for years subsequent to the IMRB study is unavailable, the Speed Post revenue has grown from ₹ 1372.21 crores in 2013-14 to ₹ 1470.53 crores in 2014-15.

It is pertinent to note that the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (C&AG) in their Report No. 20 of 2015 on Communications and IT Sector (laid in the Parliament on 8th May, 2015) has evaluated the services of Speed Post *vis-à-vis* the private couriers. Para 3.1.9.4 of the said Report states that after actually posting and testing the quality of delivery through customer feedback, it was found that 98% letters were delivered by Speed Post in local areas as compared to 93.55% by private couriers. In major cities, 99.05% letters were delivered by Speed Post as against 92.17% by private couriers. In respect of Tehsil level, delivery performance of Speed Post was 100% as compared to 83.54% by private couriers.

The C&AG concluded that Speed Post service of the Department of Posts was better than the services provided by the private couriers.

(b) The question does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) Yes, Sir. Various schemes have been/are being implemented by the Department for strengthening the Department of Posts, namely, IT Modernization Project, Project Arrow and Mail Network Optimization Project (MNOP). Track and Trace facility has also been made available to all kinds of accountable mail, *i.e.* Speed Post, Registered letters and parcels as well as Money Orders. 27215 Post Offices, Mail Offices and Administrative Offices have been connected through a nation-wide Wide Area Network (WAN). The IT Modernization Project envisages

connecting all 1,30,000 rural Post Offices through biometric, solar charged hand-held devices with wireless connectivity to provide mails, money remittance, savings bank and Post Office life insurance services and information including Track and Trace, along with a plethora of Government as well as private sector services and new public facilities. In addition, several new services have also been launched by the Department to further improve its competitiveness *vis-à-vis* private couriers, viz., Express Parcel, Business Parcel, Cash on delivery, etc. Track and Trace/Pincode/Post Office search and information on Post Office Savings Schemes have also been made available to mobile users through a recently launched Mobile App.

**Debit cards to post office account holders**

†560. SHRI LAL SINH VADODIA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that Government is seriously contemplating to provide debit cards to the account holders of post offices;
- (b) if so, whether Government has taken any step in this regard, so far; and
- (c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Under the IT modernization project of Department of Posts, 122 Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) have been installed recently across the country in pilot phase and 5834 ATM/Debit Cards have been issued to Post Office Savings Bank account holders.

**BSNL comeback through data services**

561. SHRIMATI WANSUK SYIEM: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether public sector telecom pioneer Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) after losing out during the voice boom for six years between 2006 and 2012, has now planned to make a strong comeback with data services as its prime focus;
- (b) whether to make up for the scarcity of spectrum, BSNL is likely to capitalize on its landline and optical fibre assets through Wi-Fi for digital penetration;
- (c) whether BSNL proposes to tie up with private players for operating its hotspots; and

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