

General Arrangement Drawing (GAD) of the same is under approval. Due to limited availability of funds and huge throwforward of already sanctioned works (₹ 31.700 crore), works are progressing to the extent possible.

#### **Cash maternity benefits under NFSA**

\*101. SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether pregnant mothers are entitled to cash maternity benefits under the National Food Security Act (NFSA);

(b) if so, the details thereof along with the reasons for delay in implementation of this provision of the Act; and

(c) the steps taken by Government for early implementation of the provision?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI RAMVILAS PASWAN): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The Act provides for maternity benefit of not less than rupee six thousand to pregnant women and lactating mothers, except those in regular employment with the Central Government or State Governments or Public Sector Undertakings or those who are in receipt of similar benefits under any law for the time being in force, subject to such scheme as may be framed by the Central Government.

The Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) for pregnant women and lactating mothers is being implemented as a pilot since October 2010, which presently covers 53 districts spread across States/UTs. Initially, pregnant women and lactating mothers of 19 years of age or above were receiving maternity benefit of ₹ 4000/- in three installments upon fulfillment of health and nutrition conditions. After enactment of the National Food Security Act, 2013, the maternity benefit was revised from ₹ 4000/- to ₹ 6000/- w.e.f. 5th July, 2013, payable in two installments.

Based on learning from the pilot, inter-Ministerial consultations have been held on a revised and expanded scheme for all districts.

#### **Digitally connecting rural post offices**

\*102. SHRI PAUL MANOJ PANDIAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government is considering to digitally connect rural post offices across the country and enable core banking facilities at 1,20,000 other post offices;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether it is also a fact that Government is considering to set up over 1,000 ATMs in three months for the convenience of post office savings bank customers, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) Yes, Sir. Government is digitally connecting all 1,29,323 Gramin Dak Sewak Post offices in rural areas.

(b) The Rural Information and Communication Technology (RICT) segment under the IT Modernization Project of Department of Posts, which is under implementation phase, will digitally connect 1,29,323 Gramin Dak Sewak Post Offices in rural areas across the country by March, 2017.

Core Banking Service (CBS) is being implemented in all 25,297 Departmental Post Offices of the country. The progress so far made in migration of post offices to CBS platform is as below:

As on 31st May, 2014	:	236 POs
June, 14 to 29-02-16	:	17995 POs
TOTAL	:	18231 POs

The RICT project is in its implementation phase. The software is under development. Once RICT is deployed in Gramin Dak Sewak Post Offices, in rural areas, they will be connected to CBS also. Hence, all the post offices in the country (Departmental and Gramin Dak Sewak Post Offices) will work on common Core Banking platform.

(c) Yes, Sir. Department of Posts is also setting up ATMs (Automated Teller Machine) with the Core Banking Services for the convenience of post office customers. By March, 2016, One thousand ATMs are planned to be installed. The progress made so far in installation of ATMs is as below:

As on 31st May, 2014	:	04 ATMs
June, 14 to 29-02-16	:	572 ATMs
TOTAL	:	576 ATMs

#### **Sponsoring agriculture extension personnel/farmers abroad**

\*103. SHRI BHUPINDER SINGH: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has sponsored Agriculture Extension personnel/farmers outside the country for their exposure and capacity building; and

(b) if so, the number of farmers/ personnel sponsored to different countries during