

having population less than 50,000 in North Eastern states and Sikkim and also Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected districts as notified by the Government of India are also considered as equivalent to opening of banking outlets in unbanked rural centres.

Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) was launched *inter-alia* with the objective to provide universal access to banking facilities. Under the scheme all rural and semi-urban areas were mapped into 1.59 lakh Sub-Service Areas (SSAs) where one SSA catering to 1,000 to 1,500 households. While 0.33 lakh SSAs have been covered with bank branches, 1.26 lakh SSAs have been covered by deployment of interoperable Bank Mitras. The number of Branch less mode/Business Correspondents (BCs) of Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) in rural areas has also increased from 3.37 lakh in March, 2014 to 5.15 lakh in March, 2018. The deployment of interoperable BCs with micro-ATMs is also augmenting the services provided by bank branches, especially in rural areas.

Funds for backward areas based on population

3390. DR. K.V.P. RAMACHANDRA RAO: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of Government is drawn to the reports that the sanction of funds for the development of backward areas taking districts as a unit is creating problems for highly populated districts in same States;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government has any proposal to sanction funds to the backward areas based on the population of the district instead of taking district as a unit?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI ANURAG SINGH THAKUR): (a) to (c) As per information received from NITI Aayog, Union Government is not aware of any adverse report against districts being taken as a unit of development in backward areas. Further, Government of India has identified 112 districts across the country which have shown relatively less progress on key social indicators and have termed them as 'Aspirational Districts' under 'Aspirational Districts Programme' with convergences of existing schemes of the Central and State Governments which have their own funding arrangements and with a scheme to provide incentive to districts which secure good ranking in the selected Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).