

28

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(2021-22)**

SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA

**MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS
(DEPARTMENT OF POSTS)**

**[Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations
of the Committee contained in their Twenty-second Report (Seventeenth
Lok Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2021-22)']**

TWENTY EIGHTH REPORT



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

December, 2021/Agrahayana, 1943 (Saka)

TWENTY EIGHTH REPORT

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS AND
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(2021-22)**

SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA

**MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS
(DEPARTMENT OF POSTS)**

**[Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations
of the Committee contained in their Twenty-second Report (Seventeenth
Lok Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2021-22)']**

Presented to Lok Sabha on 01.12 .2021

Laid in Rajya Sabha on 01.12.2021



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

December, 2021/ Agrahayana, 1943 (Saka)

CONTENTS		Page No.
COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE		(ii)
INTRODUCTION		(iii)
CHAPTER I	Report.....	
CHAPTER II	Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government.....	
CHAPTER III	Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of replies of the Government.....	
CHAPTER IV	Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and require reiteration	
CHAPTER V	Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies are of interim in nature.....	
ANNEXURES		
I.	Minutes of the third sitting of the Committee held on 17 November, 2021.	
II.	Analysis of Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/ Recommendations contained in their Twenty-second Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha)	

(i)

**COMPOSITION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY (2021-22)**

Dr. Shashi Tharoor - Chairperson

Lok Sabha

2. Smt. Sumalatha Ambareesh
3. Ms. Locket Chatterjee
4. Shri Karti P. Chidambaram
5. Dr. Nishikant Dubey
6. Smt. Sunita Duggal
7. Shri Jayadev Galla
8. Smt. Raksha Nikhil Khadse
9. Dr. Sukanta Majumdar
10. Shri Dhairyasheel Sambhajirao Mane
11. Ms. Mahua Moitra
12. Shri Santosh Pandey
13. Shri Natarajan P. R.
14. Col. Rajyavardhan Rathore
15. Dr. Gaddam Ranjith Reddy
16. Shri Sanjay Seth
17. Shri Ganesh Singh
18. Shri Parvesh Sahib Singh
19. Shri Tejasvi Surya
20. Dr. T. Sumathy (A) Thamizhachi Thangapandian
- 21. Vacant**

Rajya Sabha

22. Dr. Anil Agrawal
23. Shri John Brittas
24. Dr. Subhash Chandra
25. Shri Y. S. Chowdary
26. Shri Ranjan Gogoi
27. Shri Suresh Gopi
28. Shri Syed Nasir Hussain
29. Shri Syed Zafar Islam
30. Shri Jawhar Sircar
- 31. Vacant**

Secretariat

- | | | |
|------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Shri Y.M. Kandpal | - | Joint Secretary |
| 2. Shri H. Ram Prakash | - | Director |
| 3. Smt. Rinku Awasthi | - | Assistant Executive Officer |

Committee constituted w.e.f. 13 September, 2021 *vide* Para No.3184 of Bulletin Part-II dated 9 October, 2021.

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson, Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology (2021-22), having been authorised by the Committee, present this Twenty-eighth Report on Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee contained in their Twenty-second Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2021-22)' of the Ministry of Communications (Department of Posts).

2. The Twenty-second Report was presented to Lok Sabha and also laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha on 10th March, 2021. The Department of Posts furnished their Action Taken Notes on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Twenty-second Report on 6th July, 2021.

3. The Report was considered and adopted by the Committee at their sitting held on 17 November, 2021.

4. For facility of reference and convenience, Observations/Recommendations of the Committee have been printed in bold in Chapter-I of the Report.

5. An analysis of Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Twenty-second Report of the Committee is given at Annexure-II.

New Delhi;

29 November, 2021
8 Agrahayana , 1943 (Saka)

DR. SHASHI THAROOR,

Chairperson,

**Standing Committee on Communications and
Information Technology.**

CHAPTER I

REPORT

This Report of the Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology deals with action taken by Government on the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee contained in their Twenty Second Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants (2021-22) relating to the Ministry of Communications (Department of Posts).

2. The Twenty Second Report was presented to Lok Sabha on the 10 March, 2021 and also laid in Rajya Sabha, the same day. It contained 16 Observations/Recommendations. Replies of the Government in respect of all the Observations/Recommendations have been received from the Department of Posts and are categorized as under:-

- (i) Recommendations/Observations which have been accepted by the Government:-

Para Nos. 1,2,3,4,5,6,8,10,13,15,16

Total : 11
Chapter II

- (ii) Recommendations/Observations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's replies:-

Para Nos. NIL

Total : NIL
Chapter III

(iii) Recommendations/Observations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and which require reiteration:-

Para No. 9, 12, 14

Total : 03
Chapter IV

(iv) Recommendations/ Observations in respect of which replies are interim in nature

Para No. 7, 11

Total : 02
Chapter V

3. The Committee trust that utmost importance would be given to implementation of the Observations/Recommendations accepted by the Government. The Committee further desire that Action Taken Notes on the Observations/Recommendations contained in Chapter-I and Chapter-V of this Report should be furnished to them at an early date.

4. The Committee will now deal with action taken by the Government on some of their recommendations.

Recommendation (Para No.2)

Revenue Receipts

5. The Committee note that the revenue receipts of the Department have increased from Rs. 13195.68 crore in 2018-19 to Rs. 13558. 20 crore in 2019-20. The receipts have been pegged at Rs. 8539.43 crore (till December, 2020) for 2020-

21 and the BE for 2021-22 witnesses an optimistic target of Rs. 17710.05 crore. The Committee note that the Department are earning revenue from various postal services/items like Speed Post; Business Post; Business Parcel; Bill Mail Service; e-Post; Postage through Franking Machines; Sale of Stamps; Philatelic Ancillaries; MO & IPO; Retail Post; Logistic Post; E. Bill Collection; Railway ticket booking; MGNREGA; Net Receipts from Ministry of Finance, Other Postal Administrations (Other Countries); Savings Bank & Cash Certificate Remuneration etc. Pertinently, the Ministry of Finance have now linked the POSB reimbursement to minimum account balance and resultantly the Department will not be able to get reimbursement from the Ministry of Finance for POSB accounts that fail to maintain a minimum balance of Rs.500. The POSB remuneration target for BE 2020-21 may therefore be difficult to achieve. The Committee are given to understand that the revenue receipt targets for the Department of Posts were reduced from Rs 18710.05 Cr in BE 2020-21 to Rs 12330.05 Cr on account of disruption due to Covid lockdown in 2020-21 which has been the major obstacle for achieving the revenue receipt targets.

Notably, the Department aim to increase their parcel logistics market share to 10% in next 5 years by the measures such as creating a new network for parcels consisting of approximately 190 parcel hubs and Nodal mechanized delivery of parcels from identified delivery offices and hubs in Metros, state capitals and important cities with the use of 2-wheelers and 4-wheelers. In addition, the Department have planned to implement All India Road Transport Network to provide daily connectivity to all States. 68 national routes involving daily run of over 45000 Km per day have been planned. These will be supplemented by 348 state level routes in a hub & spoke manner. A new format of agreement of Many-to-Many model for e-commerce marketplace model has been developed to cater to evolving e-commerce business. Trans-shipment centres are being developed

outside the major cities near the highways to ensure smooth movements and ensuring that trucks are not stuck in city traffic and ensuring faster shipment transit time.

The Committee are well aware, the Postal Department is facing the prospects of declining document volumes due to movement of documents over the internet in digital and soft mode as well as replacement of money order with online money transfer which is available almost free of cost. The Committee note that India Posts have responded to this existential challenge with enhanced focus on merchandise and e-commerce parcels, modern internet enabled banking and insurance services as well as multitude of G2C services such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) wage disbursement, old age pension payments, services available through Common Service Centres, passport and Aadhar services etc. Department of Posts are also focusing on drawing business from international market with an aim to leverage the vast domestic postal network of the Department to enable international connectivity to individuals and organizations for moving goods, information and money. By generating business, the Department thus aim to increase the profitability of their operations. Philately is being promoted to generate additional revenue considering huge potential available there.

While expressing hope that these initiatives will be helpful in increasing the profitability of the Department, the Committee are, however, surprised to note that the Department have no tie-ups with Govt. agencies like KVIC, Tribes India, etc., which could be a big potential revenue driver for them. They, therefore, feel that such avenues may also be explored with aggressive marketing through tie ups with KVIC, Tribes India etc., selling spare vehicle capacity to e-Commerce companies, revision of rentals, monetisation of land parcels, construction of warehouses under

PPP mode on land owned by the Department. etc. The Department may also act as financial intermediary for mutual funds, IPOs etc. in mobilising funds. The Committee are of the opinion that the Department should also exploit their unparalleled reach by tie up with e-commerce companies, etc. to augment their revenue earnings. The use of post office buildings to provide other services should also be explored. The Committee recommend that the Department should aggressively explore such opportunities in the market for growing business and continue with efforts to augment revenue and reduce deficit.

6. In their Action Taken Reply, the Department of Posts have stated as under:

“The Department has already entered into an agreement with TRIFED Tribal Co-operative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd. for sale of tribal goods, artifacts through establishment of TRIBES India Showrooms at Post Offices. At present there are two TRIBES India Showrooms working in Uttarakhand Circle, viz Mussoorie and Nainital. Till date, more than Rs 73 lakh revenue has been earned.

Additionally, the Department is also collaborating with TRIFED (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd.) to support the vision of the Prime Minister to create opportunities to market the products/handicrafts produced by the tribes in North eastern part of India under the brand, ‘Tribes of India’. For this, India Post proposes to provide logistics support by providing parcel services to TRIFED both for its domestic and international market clientele.

Department of Posts is also collaborating with Digital India Corporation (DIC) wherein more than 60 lakh weavers & craftsmen will be on boarded as sellers on e-Commerce portal created by DIC in collaboration with Ministry of Textile. Department of Posts is positioning itself to be the logistic partner for domestic & international operations for handloom and handicraft products made by the weavers and artisans of India available for sale on Digital Market Place Portal.

A Many to Many Model for e-commerce aggregation model has been developed and implemented in the department during COVID time. The first customer for the same is Javikkheti.com portal designed by Agriculture ministry for sale of organic farm produce directly from the producers to the customers.

In-house software solutions like Return Management Solution, is being developed to fulfill the demand of many G2C and private e-commerce players for a dedicated solution to handle reverse logistics of return e-commerce shipments.

To facilitate the devotees, Department of Posts has entered into agreements with various Shrine boards etc for delivery of Prasad. Presently Prasad of following religious places are made currently available/delivered across the country

1. Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple, Varanasi, UP
2. HamunmanGarhi Temple, Ayodhya, UP
3. SabrimalaSwamy, Kerala
4. Shri Mata Vashno Devi Shrine Board, Jammu
5. Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam, Chitoor, Andhra Pradesh
6. Arulmigu Dhandayuthapani Swamy Temple, Palani, Tamil Nadu
7. Mata Shri Chintpurni Devi ji, Himachal Pradesh
8. Shree Somnath Adi Jyotirlinga temple, Gujarat
9. Baba Baidyanath Temple, Deogarh, Jharkhand

In addition, Telangana Circle has also entered into an agreement with Endowment Department of State Government for booking of sevas/ prasadam of 10 major temples.

Despite competition from public sector and private sector banks, DOP has been able to open more than 3 Cr new POSB (Post Office Savings Bank) Accounts in 2020-21. In case of Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, more than 83% of all such accounts in the country have been opened in Post Offices; share of all Banks is only about 17%.

Further India Post Payment Bank (IPPB) provides Cash Management Services for corporates i.e cash collection at the Post Offices. This enables customers having a housing loan EMI (Equated Monthly Installments) payment to visit the nearest post office and make the repayments. There has also been a tie-up with a Mutual Fund aggregator for referring mutual fund investments on an assisted mode through the end users, enabling last mile financial inclusion.

Department is operating the Digital Life Certificate for Pensioners which is a social scheme regulated by the Department of Pension & Pensioner's welfare. Department is not levying/ charging any fees from the pensioners for the Digital

Life certificate generation at the Jeevan Pramaan Centres being operational at the Head Post Offices across the country.

DoP is making DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) payments for more than 275 Central and State sponsored schemes implemented by various Ministries including Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Generation Scheme (MGNREGS), National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), LPG (Liquified Petroleum Gas) Subsidy, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) etc.

Till date More than 13.5 crores DBT transaction involving an amount of more than Rs. 12000 crores have been disbursed through Department of Posts. In last financial year more than 4.63 crore DBT transactions have taken place wherein an amount of Rs. 4879.73 Crore disbursed to beneficiaries through Aadhaar-Bridge Payment System and Account Credits through POSB. Annual percentage growth in DBT disbursement is around 40% in transactions and 68% in amount disbursed compared to previous FY 2019-20.

For DBT disbursement form 2017-18 to 2020-2021 a total of Rs. 53 crore revenue has been earned by DOP from NPCI (National Payments Corporation of India). Prior to 2017, DOP was receiving Rs 80 per MGNREGA disbursement from MoRD (Ministry of Rural Development). After 2017 as per MoF (Ministry of Finance) circular DoP is receiving 0.25 Paisa per DBT transaction as incentive and Rs 5/- per transactions for MGNREGA wages disbursement.

7. The Committee were surprised to note that the Department of Posts had no tie-ups with Govt. agencies like KVIC, Tribes India, etc. which were some of the country's well known brands with large organization network and had therefore recommended that such avenues may be explored through marketing tie-ups. They had also desired that more revenue be earned by selling spare vehicle capacity to e-Commerce companies, revision of rentals, monetization of

land parcels, construction of warehouses under PPP Mode etc. The Committee were of the opinion that the Department should also exploit its unparalleled reach by tie up with e-commerce companies etc. to augment their revenue earnings and explore the use of post office buildings to provide other services. The Committee appreciate few initiatives taken by the Department in this regard by entering into an agreement with TRIFED for sale of tribal goods, artifacts through establishment of TRIBES India showrooms in Post offices. They also learn that the Department of Posts is positioning itself as logistic partner for TRIFED and DIC for domestic and international operations for handloom and handicraft products made by the weavers and artisans of India. The Committee, are, however, dismayed to note that the reply of the Department is silent on other important suggestions of the Committee regarding tie ups with e-commerce companies and the use of post office buildings to provide ancillary services, revisions of rentals and monetization of land etc. which too could turn out to be the potential revenue drivers for the Government. The Committee would therefore, like to be apprised of the action taken with regard for implementation of the same alongwith other initiatives, if any, taken by the DoP in this direction.

Recommendation (Para No.6)

Minimum Available Balance and biometric authentication – Issues of inclusive growth in POSB

8. The Committee note that the Minimum available balance has been increased from Rs. 50 to Rs. 500 in case of savings accounts of POSB (Post Office Savings Bank) which may be high for poor citizens particularly people belonging to BPL category who are dependent only on certain financial support provided by the Govt. As per the Department, the matter has been taken up with the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance to reconsider the decision in the interest of the public. It is manifest that such a decision would be detrimental to the account holders, notably the Jan Dhan accounts. The Committee strongly recommend the Department that the MOF should not treat Department of Posts like PSU banks and impose unreasonable conditions and withdraw such conditions. The Committee desire the Department to follow up with the Ministry of Finance in the larger interest of the deprived populace as this may well be against the agenda of financial inclusion.

Additionally, the Committee note that there is a provision for opening of POSB accounts of disabled person with guardianship or through a literate person. However, the number of such accounts is not available separately with the Department which is out of sorts with the inclusive growth policy. The Committee desire the Department to update their data with the State-wise details of such accounts and direct their efforts towards promotion of such a facility through different media.

Furthermore, the Committee appreciate that for amputees who are unable to provide fingerprints or in cases of failure of biometric authentication caused by

erosion of fingers due to manual work, the Department have enabled Iris authentication as well thus taking them into the fold of doorstep banking which is particularly relevant in times of a pandemic. The Committee appreciate such an initiative taken by the Department and applaud the efforts in this direction.

9. In their Action Taken Reply, the Department of Posts have stated as under:

“The Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance has considered the request of DOP and has restored Zero Balance Basic Savings Account vide their Gazette Notification dated 09.04.2021.

Further it is also submitted that there is no such provision in the software to ascertain the number of accounts which are opened by disabled persons through guardianship in the Department.”

10. The Committee had noted in their Report that the minimum balance for savings accounts in POSB had been increased from Rs. 50 to Rs. 500 which was detrimental to the account holders and recommended the Dept to follow up with the Ministry of Finance to restore Zero Balance Savings Accounts in the larger interest of the poor people. The Department informed that the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance had considered that request of DoP and has restored Zero Balance Basic Savings Account vide their Gazette notification dated 9.4.2021. The Committee had further noted that the Department does not have the data of the account opened with guardianship of differently-abled persons and desired that the Department should have State-wise data therefor. The Department has, however, come out with a very unsatisfactory reply stating that there is no such provision in their software to ascertain the number of such

accounts. The Committee are not happy with the reply of the Department and reiterate their earlier recommendation to the Dept. to update their software with the details of such data of differently-abled persons and their accounts for the benefit of the disabled and to fulfil the aim of inclusive growth policy.

Recommendation (Para No.9)

Estate Management- Pending Projects

11. The Committee note that the Estates Management Scheme includes construction of postal buildings including Post Offices, mail offices, administrative offices, staff quarters, besides preservation and conservation of heritage buildings and reconstruction of dilapidated buildings. The Committee have been informed that only one postal building was constructed and 29 postal buildings were renovated till 31 Jan, 2021 which provides the ground for the fact that they were able to utilize only Rs. 29.35 crores out of Rs. 120.50 crores allocated to them. They have also informed that all projects which have been approved 10 years ago have either been completed or the work is in progress. However, this statement does not hold credibility since the pendency of 3 projects namely Poojappura, Sasthamangalam and Karamana in the State of Kerala for which approvals have been given long ago has been admitted and regretted by the Department . The Department have set ambitious targets for themselves in BE 2021-22 as they intend to construct 20 buildings and provide facelift to another 50. Evidently, they

need to concentrate on the pending projects including in the State of Kerala while planning for new ones. The Committee urge the Department to redouble their efforts to completing the pending projects and apprise them of the progress in the matter, State-wise.

12. In their Action Taken Reply, the Department of Posts have stated as under:

“During the financial year 2020-21, following 27 new post office buildings have been constructed under Estates Management Scheme, despite various constraints, like disruption in labour and material supply, road and rail movements, etc. faced by the Department due to COVID-19 pandemic:

S.No.	Circle	Project name
1	Bihar	Anandpur Post Office, Darbhanga Division
2		Monigachhi Post Office, Darbhanga Division
3		Begusarai Post Office
4		Sherghati Post Office, Aurangabad Division
5		Jagdispur Post Office, Bhojpur Division
6		Rohtas Post Office
7		Khaira Post Office, Munger Division
8	Delhi	Rohini, Sector -15 Post Office
9	Karnataka	T Narasipura Post Office
10		Harohalli Post Office
11		Sulibele Post Office
12		Shankara Narayana Post Office
13	Madhya Pradesh	Vijaynagar Post Office, Aranyanagar, Indore
14	Odisha	Anantapur Post Office, Balasore
15		Daringbadi Post Office, Phulbani

16		Saranakul Post Office, Puri
17		SubasChowk Post Office, Puri
18		Sohela Post Office, Sambalpur
19		Gondtutum, Sambalpur
20		Malkangiri Mukhya Dak Ghar
21		Salapada Post Office, Keonjhar
22	Tamil Nadu	Regional Office Building/KP Colony Post Office at Sangapur
23	Uttar Pradesh	Lambhua Post Office, Sultanpur, Allahabad
24	West Bengal	Deganga Post Office
25		Betapur Post Office
26		Digha Post Office
27		Bhanger Post Office

In the FY 2021-22, out of the total allocated funds of Rs.55 Cr, funds to the tune of Rs.33.15 Cr have been allotted for a total of 127 projects (35 ongoing projects and 92 new projects), which include six (6) projects in Kerala Circle, namely (a) Kalpetta Post Office, (b) Karamana Post Office, (c) Poojapura Post Office and office of Director of Accounts (Postal), (d) Sasthamangalam Post Office, (e) Edathua Post Office in Alappuzha District and (f) Kunnikode Post Office in Kollam District. For Karamana and Poojapura Post Offices, construction is likely to commence within the current year. In case of Sasthamangalam PO buildup, the Department is making efforts to obtain municipal approvals.

Although, the Department has fixed a target of completion of construction of 20 new post office buildings as informed to the Committee, still the Department is making all possible efforts to have as many post office buildings constructed during this current financial year, despite the constraint being faced currently due to COVID-19 pandemic.”

13. Noting the pendency of the estate management projects especially at Poojapura, Sasthamangalam and Karamana in the State of Kerala for which approvals, had been given long ago, the Committee had urged the Dept. to redouble their efforts to complete the pending projects and apprise them of the progress in the matter.

The Committee are, however, unhappy to observe that construction has not yet commenced for Karamana and Poojapura post offices and in the case of Sasthamangalam, the municipal approvals are yet to be obtained. The Committee have, however been assured that the Department is making all out efforts to complete the task despite the constraints posed by the pandemic. The Committee therefore, reiterate their recommendation and emphasise that all procedural impediments responsible for slow implementation of the projects must be removed. The Committee would like to be apprised of the new timelines for these three projects and the present status in this regard.

Recommendation (Para No.12)

Grievance Redressal in the Department

14. The Committee note that Department has a well laid out procedure for handling public grievances including various channels available for the customer to lodge their grievances like Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS), Social Media (Twitter, Facebook & Instagram), Customer Relationship Management (CRM), India Post Call Centre (IPCC) with IVRS facility. The Committee note that out of 935572 grievances received during 2020-21, more than 5 % i.e. 47995 were still pending as on 31 Jan, 2021. Updations to the Citizens Charter are infrequent with only two updations in the last three years. By the same token, it is also noted that out of a total of 6042 Dak Adalats held in the last five years, the NER

received a raw deal with only 15 held in Arunachal Pradesh, 24 in Assam, 5 in Manipur, 2 in Meghalaya, 7 in Mizoram and lamentably, none in Sikkim. Comparably, only 19 were held in Bihar, 17 in Chhattisgarh, 16 each in Jharkhand and Punjab. None were held in the Union Territories of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Daman & Diu, Dadar & Nagar Haveli, Puducherry, Jammu & Kashmir and Laddakh. To the dismay of the Committee, no Ombudsman has been appointed by the Department for PLI/RPLI grievances. The Committee emphasize that the Department need to shore up by appointing an Ombudsman for PLI and RPLI and pivot their efforts on increasing the frequency of Dak Adalat with special attention to North East, LWE areas, aspirational districts and remote areas along with updations to the Citizens Charter every six months. The Committee also recommend the diarising of receipt of complaint through email on dedicated MIS and would like to be apprised of the progress made in resolution of pending grievances.

15. In their Action Taken Reply, the Department of Posts have stated as under:

“The monthly average receipt of grievances during 2020-21 (Upto Jan, 2021) from Social Media (Twitter, Facebook and Instagram), Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is 93,557 which is 10% of the total grievances received during the year 2020-21 till Jan, 2021. The pendency as on 31.03.2021 was 47995. The resolution time of the grievances committed to the citizens by the Department in its Citizens’ Charter is 60 days. Therefore, while the average receipt per month was 93,557 the pendency was only 47995 i.e. 5%. Grievance Redressal drives were carried out in December 2020, January, February and March 2021 to bring down

the pendency. Further, grievance resolution is monitored at senior levels in the Department

The Citizens' Charter of the Department has been updated twice during the last three years. For the current year (2021), the revision is already notified on 11.06.2021 to the public.

Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram States have one Postal Division in each State. In Arunachal Pradesh Division, 15 Dak Adalats were held from 2016-2020. In Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram 5, 2 and 7 Dak Adalats were held respectively, from 2016-2020. North East Circle has informed that many times notifications were issued but due to non-receipt of grievances, Dak Adalats were not held. Further in 2020, due to Corona pandemic, Dak Adalats could not be held by the concerned Divisions.

In Assam, a total of 24 Dak Adalats were held from 2016 to 2020. The Circle has reported that very less complaints were received resulting in holding of Dak Adalats in limited Divisions only.

Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Sikkim are part of West Bengal Circle and the grievances received for these two units were included in the Dak Adalats held at Circle level by the Chief Postmaster General. Necessary directions have now been given to hold Dak Adalats for these two units separately.

Dadar & Nagar Haveli and Daman UTs are part of Valsad Division. 19 Dak Adalats were held in Valsad Division from 2016-2020. Similarly, Diu is part of Junagadh Division and 19 Dak Adalats were held in Junagarh Division from 2016-2020. Hence 19 Dak Adalats were held in both the UTs as they were clubbed with their Postal Divisions.

Puducherry is the part of Puducherry Division which also includes other parts of Tamil Nadu. 18 Dak Adalats were held in the Division from 2016-2020.

Punjab Circle had inadvertently submitted the information regarding Dak Adalats held at Circle level as 16 from 2016-2020. Punjab Circle has now informed that a total of 312 Dak Adalats were held from 2016-2020. Out of this, 32 were held in Chandigarh Division.

In Chhattisgarh, notifications were issued for the Dak Adalats but due to non-receipt of grievances, less number of Dak Adalats were held.

In Bihar and Jharkhand Circles, Dak Adalats were held at Circle Headquarters. However, instructions have been reiterated to hold Dak Adalats upto the Divisional level.

Due to law and order restrictions, no Dak Adalats could be held in Jammu & Kashmir Circle.

The Postal Directorate has proactively examined the issue of non-holding of Dak Adalats due to non-receipt or less number of grievances in Dak Adalats. To handle this issue, grievances pending on Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) beyond the prescribed timeline, have been integrated with DakAdalats. By this integration, the cases will be reviewed suo moto by the concerned authority, even if there is no response to the notifications of DakAdalats.

Postal Life Insurance (PLI) and Rural Postal Life Insurance (RPLI) are Central Government schemes administered by the Department of Posts and not regulated by insurance regulator Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI). The Department has Citizens' Charter norms regarding policy servicing and grievance redressal for PLI/RPLI policyholders, which is in line with Protection of Policy holders' interest Regulations, 2017 issued by IRDAI. Though there is no insurance Ombudsman in PLI/RPLI, there are sufficient channels for settlement of grievances of PLI/RPLI policy holders. A new set of procedures have been prescribed recently, wherein claimant can now appeal to the next higher authority in case of rejection of death claim.

As regards the diarizing of complaints received on email, a proper mechanism is being put in place to handle the grievances received on emails along with a dedicated MIS report for analysis and followup."

16. Noting that the Department had updated the Citizens' Charter only twice in the last three years, the Committee had recommended updations in every six

months. The Department have informed that they have revised it on 11.6. 2021. Noting the less number of Dak Adalats held in the UTs, remote and NE areas, the Committee had also recommended to the Department of Posts to take all possible measures to increase the frequency of Dak Adalats with special attention to NE, LWE, aspirational districts and other remote areas. The Department have informed that the postal Directorate had examined the issue of non-holding of Dak Adalats due to non-receipt or less number of grievances in Dak Adalats and have decided that the grievances pending on CPGRAMS beyond the prescribed timeline of 60 days will be integrated with Dak Adalats and will be reviewed suo moto by the concerned authority. In their reply to the Committee's recommendation about appointing an Ombudsman for the insurance business, the Committee have been informed that the PLI and RPLI are not regulated by the IRDAI and though there is no insurance Ombudsman, there are sufficient other channels for settlement of grievances but the Dept. have not given details of such channels. The Committee would like to be apprised of the same. The Committee had also recommended the diarizing of complaints received through email to which the Department have responded that they are putting together a mechanism for the same along with a dedicated MIS report. The Committee recognize that this is an ongoing work in progress and would like to impress upon the DoP to accord sustained emphasis on its speedy roll out. The Committee

would reiterate their view that PLI/RPLI policy holders should have a proper grievance settlement system with multiple tiers.

Recommendation (Para No.14)

Dormant Accounts

17. The Committee note that all-out efforts are being made to settle maximum unclaimed accounts by giving wide publicity and by launching special drives at Circle level including notices and publicity in newspapers. Door to door campaign and special drives are also being launched at Divisional /Regional/Circle level through the Gramin Dak Sevaks/Postman. Further continuous monitoring is also being made with all the Head of Circles for settlement of maximum accounts as per the existing rules. The Committee note that Rs.11435.35 crores unclaimed amount has been lying with the Department as on 30th September, 2019.

The Committee have also been informed of a huge number of accounts with no nomination. The numbers are very large with 141121410 accounts for Saving Banks, 5369522 accounts for term deposits, 3036647 accounts for Monthly Income Scheme, 26730044 accounts for National Saving Certificates, 25416658 accounts for Kisan Vikas Patras, 71394332 accounts for other schemes making a total of 273068613 accounts. With the combined efforts of all Circles, 62,271 accounts with an amount of Rs 105.56 Crores have been settled under Senior Citizen Welfare Fund all over the country till September-2020. Nonetheless, the amount is a mere 0.92 % of the total unclaimed amount of Rs.11435.35 crores. The Committee are unhappy to note that such large amount of public money is lying unclaimed with the Department and also the lack of serious efforts by them to identify the beneficiaries

of such accounts. The Committee recommend that the Department should make registering of Mobile numbers and seeding the Aadhaar numbers with these accounts as mandatory for receiving alerts for various services and an annual exercise at a specified period to renew the nomination records in order to avoid hassles at the time of settlement. They may also publicise the information regarding dormant accounts through print and electronic media and apprise the Committee of the headway made in this matter.

18. In their Action Taken Reply, the Department of Posts have stated as under:

“With the combined efforts of all Circle 68,720 accounts with an amount of Rs. 117.45 Crores have been settled up-to May-2021. Door to door campaign and special drives are also being launched at Divisional/Regional/Circle level for settlement of maximum accounts so that the rightful owners or legal heirs/nominees may get the amount as per the existing rules. Weekly monitoring is also being done at Directorate level to keep an eye over settlement of accounts. As regards the suggestion to make mobile and Aadhaar numbers mandatory for POSB accounts, this may create problems for customers who do not have a mobile or Aadhaar number.

19. The Committee noted that an amount of Rs. 11435.35 crores had been lying with the Department as unclaimed on 30th September, 2019. The Committee also noted that a total of 27.31 crore accounts including Savings, term deposits, monthly income scheme, NSCs and KVPs were without nomination which could lead to issues with their settlement in future. The Committee had, therefore, recommended that the Department should make registering of mobile numbers and seeding the Aadhaar numbers with these accounts as a mandatory

annual exercise and also to publicise the details of the dormant accounts through print and electronic media. The Department informed in their reply that door to door drives have been launched for settlement of maximum accounts and they have been able to settle 68720 accounts with an amount of Rs. 117.45 crores . The Department also submitted that mandatory seeding of mobile and Aadhaar numbers for POSB accounts may pose problems for the customers who don't have any. The Committee are not satisfied with the reply as the amount settled is a mere 1.03 percent of the pending amount in dormant accounts. The reply of the Department does not hold good in this digital age, when mobile penetration is very high in the country and already many other agencies like banks, DBT etc. use mobile numbers mandatorily. The Committee therefore, expect the Dept. to accelerate its efforts through all available tools as well as through social media in order to trace the heirs/nominees of the account holders within a defined deadline. The seeding of Aadhaar may also be substituted with alternative photo IDs wherever Aadhaar is unavailable.

Recommendation (Para No.15)

Claim Settlement and surrender of PLI/RPLI policies

20. The Committee note that the PLI (Postal Life Insurance) and RPLI (Rural Postal Life Insurance) policies have an impressive claim settlement ratio ranging from 0.84 to 0.97 in case of PLI and 0.80 to 0.97 in case of RPLI since 2017-18.

23239 PLI and 39709 RPLI policies were surrendered in 2017-18, 26265 PLI and 41484 RPLI policies were surrendered in 2018-19, 23921 PLI and 41941 RPLI policies were surrendered in 2019-20, 2589 PLI and 3440 RPLI policies were surrendered in 2020-21. However, the Department could not provide the number of lapsed policies. The Committee feel that the figures must stir the Department to action thus necessitating the need for stemming the surrender of policies. The Committee feel that concrete action must be taken to revive the lapsed policies by suitable relaxations and other measures. The Committee note that insurance is highly competitive business and already a number of companies are in the field and hence the Department must also consider to introduce new innovative and attractive plans in order to appeal to a large customer base so as to ensure earning more revenues. The Committee recommend that the country has a significant youth population which can be targeted for insurance product tailor made for them. The Committee further recommend the Department to utilise the network they have built in the rural/ tribal and hilly areas and many tier II/III cities and aspirational districts by introducing specific features to target the customers for the PLI/RPLI policies and would like to be apprised of the action taken in this regard.

21. In their Action Taken Reply, the Department of Posts have stated as under:

“Several measures have been taken by DoP to ensure revival of lapsed policies. Prior to September 2019, a PLI/RPLI policy could be revived only two times during the entire term of a policy. However, in order to stemming the surrender of policies, the restrictions were removed and now PLI/RPLI policies can be revived any number of times during the policy term. Further, products available under PLI/RPLI may be availed by youth aged above 18 years as per the eligibility. The products have been designed in such a way that young people pay less premium and earn more bonus during the term of the policy.”

22. Noting the high rate of surrender of PLI/RPLI policies , the Committee had recommended that the Dept. must try to revive the lapsed policies by providing suitable relaxations to which the Dept. responded that the policies can be revived any number of times during the policy term as compared to only two previously. The Committee had also recommended that the Department must introduce new innovative plans in order to appeal to a large customer base and target the youth population alongwith utilizing the network in smaller cities and aspirational districts to target customers. The reply of the Department has been found to be silent on this aspect and misses out on the crucial target market of young people. Hence, the Committee reiterate their recommendation and stress that the significant youth population needs to be attracted by the Department towards the PLI/RPLI schemes by tailor made niche products which are attuned to the demography of the country.

CHAPTER II

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN

ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

Recommendation Sl.No. 1

Department of Posts Budget

The Department of Posts have laid the Detailed Demands for Grants (2021-22) for a total amount of Rs. 35173.27 crore consisting of Rs. 34263.18 crore under Revenue Section and Rs. 910.09 crore under Capital Section. An analysis of the budgetary allocation during 2020-21 indicates that under Revenue section, an amount of Rs.34057.22 crore had been allocated at BE which was reduced to Rs. 32229.83 crore at RE and the actual utilisation made till December, 2020 was Rs. 23281.58 crore. Under Capital section in 2020-21, an amount of Rs. 1131.21 crore had been allocated at BE which was reduced to Rs. 871.05 crore at RE and the actual utilisation made till December, 2020 was Rs. 465.16 crore. The Committee note that the gross revenue expenditure of the Department has been gradually increasing over the years from Rs. 27994.35 crore in 2018-19, Rs. 29139.74 crore in 2019-20 and Rs. 23281.58 crore (till December, 2020) in 2020-21 . The Committee note a sharp increase in the expected revenue expenditure for the year 2021-22 to the tune of Rs. 34263.18 crore at BE. The Committee further note that the gross capital expenditure of the Department which was Rs. 811.27 crore in 2018-19 dropped to Rs. 730.56 crore in 2019-20 and was Rs. 465.16 crore (upto December, 2020). The gross capital expenditure of the Department show an increase during BE 2021-22 to the tune of Rs. 910.09 crore.

The Committee note that 90% of the Department's expenditure is on account of pensions, salaries, and wages, which are determined by the Gol regulation, increase in salaries due to routine Annual Increment, Leave Travel

Concession etc. In the remaining 10% of gross expenditure, major expenses are for mail/parcel transportation, etc. However, the Department is steadily moving mail transmission from rail to road transport network which is significantly cheaper than the other two modes of transmission. Besides, the Department also follow the austerity measures circulated by Ministry of Finance from time to time. Further, the Department have stated that the expenditure on office expenses, stationery, Advertisement & Publicity, minor works, and payment for professional Services etc. has been reduced during the year 2020-21. The Committee observe that the major obstacles faced by the Department to control gross expenditure are Universal Service Obligation to provide postal services in rural and remote areas where the earnings do not cover the operational expenses and the huge burden of Pension and Salaries which are continuously rising. They also observe that the Department is one of the oldest Departments of the Govt. and has an enormous brand reach. Its Universal Service Obligation needs to be allied with its role as a service provider. The Committee are of the opinion that the Department need to follow the best practices of the postal departments of other countries in order to reduce their spending and earn more revenue from their overseas activities and look forward to better operational efficiency as a service provider. The Committee while being aware of the challenges being encountered by the Department to control gross expenditure feel that the Department may not be sustainable in the long run if adequate steps are not taken timely to boost their revenue. Instead of relying on budgetary support to offset some of their expenditure, they desire that the Department must focus on efficient utilization of available resources and identify areas where technology can be brought in to ensure efficiency and profitability. They also desire that all possible steps be taken to ensure optimum utilization of existing manpower and resources. In this regard, a number of

suggestions have been aired in the hearings of the Committee. The Committee would like to be apprised of the initiatives taken by the Department in this regard.

Reply of the Government

A. The Department of Posts is among the few Departments of the GoI which have fully adopted technology across its entire network. Today, Department of Posts fully operates on an online IT platform and its entire counter as well as back office operations are fully online. Technology has enabled the Department to not only expand its services, but also move to newer areas such as door step delivery of its services, online financial services, offering hundreds of G2C and B2C services in rural areas etc. The Department has been consistently expanding its revenue base in spite of declining mail volumes.

B. Postal organizations across the world are seeing a revival of parcel business in the new era of e-commerce. With a view to unlock the potential of India's postal network so that it becomes a driver for the Indian economy as well as deliverer of benefits to the common man, a new Parcel Directorate was setup in 2018 as an independent business unit, within the department. Parcel Directorate handles all aspects ranging from operations, technology, market research, product development, sales and marketing, customer relationship management (CRM) and business development. As per the strategy adopted by the Department, by establishing parcel processing centres, ecommerce parcel processing centres, Nodal delivery centres, Transshipment centres, and Road Transport Network, a totally new infrastructure has been created to handle parcels separately. A large number of ecommerce customers have been on boarded and Cash On Delivery (COD) facility has also been provided. This has helped the Department to retain and manage its parcel business during the Pandemic.

C. Department of Posts is making constant efforts to adopt the best practices of the Postal administration of other countries in order to improve efficiency, reduce operational expenditure as well as to maximize revenues from mail operations. The details of these initiatives are as under:

(i)Real Time Delivery Updation: In order to meet the demand of customers to update the delivery status of postal articles on a real-time basis, Department of Posts has undertaken delivery of Speed Post, Registered Letters/Parcels, Money Order and Cash on Delivery (COD) articles through a mobile based delivery application known as Postman Mobile Application (PMA), which has been designed and developed in- house by the Department. More than 50,000 mobile phones have already been supplied to the postmen in the urban areas and more than 1 Lakh in the rural areas, for real time delivery updation.

(ii) Electronic Clearance of Letter Boxes

In order to have a digital foot print of the clearance of street letter boxes, the Department of Posts has implemented electronic clearance of letter boxes through in-house developed “Nanyatha” software. e-Clearance of letter boxes has brought about more visibility in the clearance of letter boxes and a mechanism to monitor the letter box clearance digitally to reduce the manual supervision. As on 31st May, 2021, e-Clearance of Letter Boxes has been implemented in 43,266 letter boxes across the country.

(iii) Introducing Barcoded bag labels for Unregistered Mail

In order to put in place a mechanism to track the transmission of unregistered mail, which hitherto was handled manually, Department of Posts has introduced barcoded bag labels for unregistered bags and its scanning, so as to improve the quality of service for unregistered mail. The initiative has made the tracking of the transmission of unregistered mail possible, thereby resulting in the improved processing and delivery of unregistered mail. On an average around 9 Lakh unregistered bags are being tracked on an average per month.

D.In order to simplify and ease the customs clearance of International articles, customs processes needed automation and made paperless. The present system of manual filing of Postal Bill of Exports (PBE) and physical presentation of articles to the customs is time consuming, cumbersome and results in delay in export of e-commerce articles. In this regard, testing of software for electronic Postal Bill of Exports is currently being done by the Department. The online filling of PBE and Customs clearance in digital mode will enable the exporters to file PBE online.

An agreement for electronic exchange of customs data of Postal shipments has been signed between India Post and United States Postal Service in October, 2020. This agreement shall enable transmission of electronic customs data of International Postal items before their physical arrival at the destination country and faster customs clearance of Postal items for better customer service.

Looking at the potential of e-commerce export, cost-effective, trackable packet product to meet the demand of e-commerce exporters has been introduced for 15 countries in Asia Pacific Region. Bilateral discussion with other postal administrations are on to expand it to more countries.

E. The initiatives taken by the Department in case of PLI/RPLI are as follows:

- Premium can now be paid online at the customer portal through debit/credit card, net banking, BHIM/UPI wallet and Rupay card.
- Customer Portal offers convenience for any time and any-where premium payment option to policyholders and allows policyholders to view the status of their policies on a real time basis.
- To further enhance digital enablement for PLI/RPLI customers, facilities like interactive voice response system (IVRS), offering more choices of payment gateways have also been introduced.

(Ministry of Communications/Department of Posts's O.M. No.28-5/2021/BGT (PA)/22nd Report dated 30 -06-2021)

Recommendation Sl.No. 2

Revenue Receipts

The Committee note that the revenue receipts of the Department have increased from Rs. 13195.68 crore in 2018-19 to Rs. 13558. 20 crore in 2019-20. The receipts have been pegged at Rs. 8539.43 crore (till December, 2020) for 2020-21 and the BE for 2021-22 witnesses an optimistic target of Rs. 17710.05 crore. The Committee note that the Department are earning revenue from various postal services/items like Speed Post; Business Post; Business Parcel; Bill Mail Service; e-Post; Postage through Franking Machines; Sale of Stamps; Philatelic Ancillaries; MO & IPO; Retail Post; Logistic Post; E.

Bill Collection; Railway ticket booking; MGNREGA; Net Receipts from Ministry of Finance, Other Postal Administrations (Other Countries); Savings Bank & Cash Certificate Remuneration etc. Pertinently, the Ministry of Finance have now linked the POSB reimbursement to minimum account balance and resultantly the Department will not be able to get reimbursement from the Ministry of Finance for POSB accounts that fail to maintain a minimum balance of Rs.500. The POSB remuneration target for BE 2020-21 may therefore be difficult to achieve. The Committee are given to understand that the revenue receipt targets for the Department of Posts were reduced from Rs 18710.05 Cr in BE 2020-21 to Rs 12330.05 Cr on account of disruption due to Covid lockdown in 2020-21 which has been the major obstacle for achieving the revenue receipt targets.

Notably, the Department aim to increase their parcel logistics market share to 10% in next 5 years by the measures such as creating a new network for parcels consisting of approximately 190 parcel hubs and Nodal mechanized delivery of parcels from identified delivery offices and hubs in Metros, state capitals and important cities with the use of 2-wheelers and 4-wheelers. In addition, the Department have planned to implement All India Road Transport Network to provide daily connectivity to all States. 68 national routes involving daily run of over 45000 Km per day have been planned. These will be supplemented by 348 state level routes in a hub & spoke manner. A new format of agreement of Many-to-Many model for e-commerce marketplace model has been developed to cater to evolving e-commerce business. Trans-shipment centres are being developed outside the major cities near the highways to ensure smooth movements and ensuring that trucks are not stuck in city traffic and ensuring faster shipment transit time.

The Committee are well aware, the Postal Department is facing the prospects of declining document volumes due to movement of documents over the internet in digital and soft mode as well as replacement of money order with online money

transfer which is available almost free of cost. The Committee note that India Posts have responded to this existential challenge with enhanced focus on merchandise and e-commerce parcels, modern internet enabled banking and insurance services as well as multitude of G2C services such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) wage disbursement, old age pension payments, services available through Common Service Centres, passport and Aadhar services etc. Department of Posts are also focusing on drawing business from international market with an aim to leverage the vast domestic postal network of the Department to enable international connectivity to individuals and organizations for moving goods, information and money. By generating business, the Department thus aim to increase the profitability of their operations. Philately is being promoted to generate additional revenue considering huge potential available there.

While expressing hope that these initiatives will be helpful in increasing the profitability of the Department, the Committee are, however, surprised to note that the Department have no tie-ups with Govt. agencies like KVIC, Tribes India, etc., which could be a big potential revenue driver for them. They, therefore, feel that such avenues may also be explored with aggressive marketing through tie ups with KVIC, Tribes India etc., selling spare vehicle capacity to e-Commerce companies, revision of rentals, monetisation of land parcels, construction of warehouses under PPP mode on land owned by the Department. etc. The Department may also act as financial intermediary for mutual funds, IPOs etc. in mobilising funds. The Committee are of the opinion that the Department should also exploit their unparalleled reach by tie up with e-commerce companies, etc. to augment their revenue earnings. The use of post office buildings to provide other services should also be explored. The Committee recommend that the Department should aggressively explore such opportunities in the market for growing business and continue with efforts to augment revenue and reduce deficit.

Reply of the Government

The Department has already entered into an agreement with TRIFED Tribal Co-operative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd. for sale of tribal goods, artifacts through establishment of TRIBES India Showrooms at Post Offices. At present there are two TRIBES India Showrooms working in Uttarakhand Circle, viz Mussoorie and Nainital. Till date, more than Rs 73 lakh revenue has been earned.

Additionally, the Department is also collaborating with TRIFED (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd.) to support the vision of the Prime Minister to create opportunities to market the products/handicrafts produced by the tribes in North eastern part of India under the brand, 'Tribes of India'. For this, India Post proposes to provide logistics support by providing parcel services to TRIFED both for its domestic and international market clientele.

Department of Posts is also collaborating with Digital India Corporation (DIC) wherein more than 60 lakh weavers & craftsmen will be on boarded as sellers on e-Commerce portal created by DIC in collaboration with Ministry of Textile. Department of Posts is positioning itself to be the logistic partner for domestic & international operations for handloom and handicraft products made by the weavers and artisans of India available for sale on Digital Market Place Portal.

A Many to Many Model for e-commerce aggregation model has been developed and implemented in the department during COVID time. The first customer for the same is Javikkheti.com portal designed by Agriculture ministry for sale of organic farm produce directly from the producers to the customers.

In-house software solutions like Return Management Solution, is being developed to fulfill the demand of many G2C and private e-commerce players for a dedicated solution to handle reverse logistics of return e-commerce shipments.

To facilitate the devotees, Department of Posts has entered into agreements with various Shrine boards etc for delivery of Prasad. Presently Prasad of following religious places are made currently available/delivered across the country

10. Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple, Varanasi, UP
11. HamunmanGarhi Temple, Ayodhya, UP
12. SabrimalaSwamy, Kerala
13. Shri Mata Vashno Devi Shrine Board, Jammu

14. Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam, Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh
15. Arulmigu Dhandayuthapani Swamy Temple, Palani, Tamil Nadu
16. Mata Shri Chintpurni Devi ji, Himachal Pradesh
17. Shree Somnath Adi Jyotirlinga temple, Gujarat
18. Baba Baidyanath Temple, Deogarh, Jharkhand

In addition, Telangana Circle has also entered into an agreement with Endowment Department of State Government for booking of sevas/ prasadams of 10 major temples.

Despite competition from public sector and private sector banks, DOP has been able to open more than 3 Cr new POSB (Post Office Savings Bank) Accounts in 2020-21. In case of Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, more than 83% of all such accounts in the country have been opened in Post Offices; share of all Banks is only about 17%.

Further India Post Payment Bank (IPPB) provides Cash Management Services for corporates i.e cash collection at the Post Offices. This enables customers having a housing loan EMI (Equated Monthly Installments) payment to visit the nearest post office and make the repayments. There has also been a tie-up with a Mutual Fund aggregator for referring mutual fund investments on an assisted mode through the end users, enabling last mile financial inclusion.

Department is operating the Digital Life Certificate for Pensioners which is a social scheme regulated by the Department of Pension & Pensioner's welfare. Department is not levying/ charging any fees from the pensioners for the Digital Life certificate generation at the Jeevan Pramaan Centres being operational at the Head Post Offices across the country.

DoP is making DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) payments for more than 275 Central and State sponsored schemes implemented by various Ministries including Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Generation Scheme (MGNREGS), National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), LPG (Liquified Petroleum Gas) Subsidy, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) etc.

Till date More than 13.5 crores DBT transaction involving an amount of more than Rs. 12000 crores have been disbursed through Department of Posts. In last financial year more than 4.63 crore DBT transactions have taken place wherein an amount of Rs. 4879.73 Crore disbursed to beneficiaries through Aadhaar-Bridge Payment System and Account Credits through POSB. Annual percentage growth in DBT

disbursement is around 40% in transactions and 68% in amount disbursed compared to previous FY 2019-20.

For DBT disbursement form 2017-18 to 2020-2021 a total of Rs.53 crore revenue has been earned by DOP from NPCI (National Payments Corporation of India). Prior to 2017, DOP was receiving Rs 80 per MGNREGA disbursement from MoRD (Ministry of Rural Development). After 2017 as per MoF (Ministry of Finance) circular DoP is receiving 0.25 Paise per DBT transaction as incentive and Rs 5/- per transactions for MGNREGA wages disbursement.

(Ministry of Communications/Department of Posts's O.M. No.28-5/2021/BGT (PA)/22nd Report dated 30-06-2021)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para no. 7 of Chapter I)

Recommendation no. 3

Recoveries

The Committee note that the Department are earning recoveries on the various services such as Collection of Custom Duty, Commission on payment of pension to Railway, Commission on disbursement of pension of DOT/ BSNL/ MTNL, Share of spread margin received from Western Union Money Transfer, Remuneration to the Department for Postal Life Insurance (PLI) and Rural Postal Life Insurance (RPLI), Input Tax Credit on GST paid for inputs procured by the department etc. The income earned from the Recoveries was Rs. 821.29 crore in 2018-19, Rs. 768.40 crore in 2019-20, Rs. 619.87 crore in 2020-21 (till Dec, 2020) with an ambitious target of Rs. 935 crore in 2021-22. However, the Committee have also been informed that an amount of Rs. 129.60 crore has been pending as dues with different Central Govt. Departments like Department of Telecommunications, Railways, Employees' Provident Fund Organisation and Coal Mines Provident Fund Organisation. Also, a sum of Rs. 500.37 crore is pending with BSNL/MTNL

as Rent and P&T audit charges. The above amounts are pending for the period January 2019- December 2020 despite regular communications regarding the same.

The Committee are concerned to note that such a huge amount is still due from the Organisations and it certainly reflects on the poor management of funds. The Committee desire that all the pending dues must be cleared without any further delay and all efforts may be directed towards the same including highest level interventions. The Committee further recommend that the Department while taking advantage of their nationwide reach should also make efforts to use their network as a shared service for the Government as a whole and market their nationwide reach to earn more revenue from associating with Census exercise, other activities like COVID vaccinations, enrolment for Voter I-cards, Public Distribution System etc. in order to increase their receipts.

Reply of the Government

As regards the pending recoveries from various Departments/Government organizations, it is to intimate that out of the Rs. 129.60 crore, an amount of Rs. 47crore has since been recovered. Instructions have been issued to the concerned authorities for realization of the outstanding amount in respect of DOT (Department of Telecom), Railway EPFO (Employee Provident Fund Organisation), CMPF (Coal Mines Provident Fund).

Common Service Centre (CSC) Services through Post Offices was launched on 04.05.2020 in 22 Pilot Post Offices selected from 11 Circles. Subsequently, it was expanded to 21,446 Departmental Post offices. More than 100 G2C and B2Cservices are presently offered through these POs.CSC services are now being launched in over 1.3 lakh rural Post Offices also. Training has been completed for 230 BPMs selected 10 each from 23 Circles and pilot of providing CSC Services through these 230 Branch Post Offices has started with effect from May 2021.

The Department is also entering into a MoU with the Election Commission of India for registration of voters as well as delivery of EPICs to registered voters.

(Ministry of Communications/Department of Posts's O.M. No.28-5/2021/BGT (PA)/22nd Report dated 30-06-2021)

Recommendation no. 4

Rural business and access to postal network-opening of Branch Offices in LWE and aspirational districts

The Committee note that the Department had a target of opening 2890 post offices in high priority areas and LWE districts in 2020-21. The Committee are, however, distressed to note that as against the physical targets of 2890, a mere 31 was met as the Ministry of Finance were opposed to the proposal. The Committee further note that the target for opening BOs in high priority areas has been downsized to a minuscule 200 for the Financial year 2021-22 . The Committee are surprised to note that such an important proposal to open Post Offices in high priority areas has not been accorded due priority by the Ministry of Finance despite the proposal having been cleared by the Cabinet Committee on Security. They, therefore, desire that the proposal may be taken up at the highest level by the Department.

Further, the Department have stated that in the past three years, six post offices have been opened in North East circle and 1856 Post Offices have been opened in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) districts and aspirational Districts. It was further brought to the notice of the Committee that out of 1862 post offices, in the last three years, only one post office was opened in the State of Arunachal Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Punjab, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu, two in Manipur and UP, three in Mizoram and West Bengal. This lamentable state of affairs apparently points to the neglect of the geographically challenged North Eastern States and is evidence of the apathy. Amongst other reasons, scarcity of post offices will also lead to a setback to the financial inclusion agenda of the Government. The Committee, taking cognizance of the above facts, in addition to the

LWE districts, exhort that aspirational and NER districts may be given priority in opening new BOs and impediment to this end may be removed by taking up the matter with the other Ministries including M/o Finance, DONER and Niti Ayog/ Cabinet Secretariat.

Reply of the Government

Earlier, this matter was taken up by the Hon`ble Minister of Communications, Law & Justice and Electronic and Information Technology with the Hon`ble Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs and the approval had not been received.

Further, DoP requested MHA (Ministry of Home Affairs) to take up the matter with DoE (Department of Expenditure), MoF to relax the financial/ economic conditions and to grant approval for opening of remaining 3114 post offices. It was also requested to exempt economic and financial conditions for these offices as done previously in case of '1789 such BOs. The same proposal has again been taken up through ID note to Secretary (Expenditure) on 26.03.2021 for opening of remaining 3114 Branch Post Offices in LWE (Left Wing Extremist) districts.

Under the Scheme "Rural Business & Access to Postal Network", funds are allotted to North East Circle for opening of BOs/ SOs by relocation/ redeployment under the separate head of account. This is a continuous process under the ongoing scheme wherein BOs/ SOs are relocated/ redeployed to needy areas.

Further, in addition to post offices opened in LWE (Left Wing Extremist) districts and aspirational districts of the state of Kerala, Karnataka, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, UP and West Bengal, Department has opened 97 post offices in other districts of these states during the last three years.

Department has strengthened its services in North East Region by providing postal and financial services to customers such as Money withdrawal, deposits, collecting postal life insurance premiums, booking/ delivery of mail articles. In addition, in order to improve mail transmission to North eastern India, 4 Road Transport Network (RTNs) have been introduced, thereby reducing transit time and security of mails and parcels significantly.

(Ministry of Communications/Department of Posts's O.M. No.28-5/2021/BGT (PA)/22nd Report dated 30-06-2021)

Recommendation no. 5

Reliable broadband connectivity in POSB

The Committee note that non availability of network connectivity in remote rural areas is a substantial challenge and has resulted in absence of Core Banking Solution roll-out in more than 1700 Post Offices and non-issue of ATM Cards. Further, the Department of Posts have provided connectivity through two service providers at all locations- primary and secondary service provider (NSP1 & NSP2). The primary connectivity at Departmental Post Offices is mainly through BSNL/MTNL. The impact of link failure of NSP-1 has been minimized by providing secondary connectivity at more than 90% of the post offices. Funds have been allotted to the circles for provision of 4G dongles in about 41,000 BOs.

The Committee note that as on 01.01.2021, the Primary Network Connectivity (NSP1) services is provided in 24456 Post Offices through MPLS (Multiprotocol Label Switching) technology, Fibre to the home (FTTH), National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN), APSFL (Andhra Pradesh State FiberNet Limited), 3rd party internet and IDR/VSAT (Very small aperture terminal) etc. and nowhere NSP1 (Network Service Provider) connectivity has been provided on 2G and 3G Technology. For NSP2, connectivity at 15479 locations has been provided on 2G and 3G technology. The Department have decided to upgrade all these 3G dongles into 4G connectivity in a phased manner. Accordingly, 3000 locations are to be upgraded to 4G connectivity and 1606 locations to RF (Radio Frequency) Media during this Financial Year.

The Committee further observe that it has been made mandatory for all the Departments and the Ministries of Government of India to utilize the network of BSNL/MTNL for internet/broadband and leased line services. However, for provisioning

alternative network connectivity, Department is not constrained for choosing any feasible network service provider including State owned service providers provided BSNL/MTNL is unable to provide feasible connectivity. The Committee recommend that the alternative connectivity may be provided through other Central or State PSUs or private NSPs in that order through a transparent bidding process, considering that BSNL/MTNL have not yet upgraded to 4G. The Committee also emphasise that the SLAs (Service Level Agreement) as pre-decided for the awarding of the contract must also include a minimum of 95% of uninterrupted connectivity with competitive speed along with penal provisions. The Committee further enjoin the Department to update them about the status of utilization of the funds allocated for 4G dongles and routers, State-wise. The Committee also recommend that the relaxation of the mandate from using the network of BSNL/MTNL may also be considered in order to set them at liberty for the grant of NSP1.

Reply of the Government

Post offices are being brought on CBS (Core Banking Solutions) platform once the network connectivity is established there. Due to constant effort on the part of the Department, as of now only 1649 Post Offices are left for migration under CBS Platform.

With respect to the recommendation of the Committee that “the relaxation of the mandate from using the network of BSNL/MTNL may also be considered in order to set them at liberty for the grant of NSP1 (Network Service Provider)” , it is submitted that Postal Circles have been directed that in case BSNL / MTNL is unable to provide stable connectivity by regular / alternate media, then the Heads of Circles may consider to provide other alternate connectivity options through other service providers (after checking compatibility). As and when BSNL/MTNL is able to provide stable connectivity on NSP1, Circles will switch over back to BSNL / MTNL connectivity. It is also submitted that this recommendation of the committee will also be incorporated in the EOI/RFP (Expression of Interest/ Request for Proposal) proposed to be issued this year for Network Integrator contract for the next phase of the IT Project (IT 2.0).

The recommendation of the Committee that "SLAs (Service Level Agreement) for awarding of the contract for NI (Network Integration) Project must also include a minimum of 95% of uninterrupted connectivity with competitive speed along with penal provisions" will be incorporated in the EOI/ RFP proposed to be issued this year for the next phase of the IT Project (IT 2.0)

With regard to fund utilisation for providing 4G dongles in about 41,000 Branch Post Offices, it is submitted that Funds were allotted to the Circles through Rural Business Division for procurement of these devices through GeM. The Circle wise details of fund allocated , number of device allocated , the amount of funds utilised and number of devices procured in Financial year 2020-21 is placed at Annexure -I . Further, funds to the tune of Rs 4,97,76,000 have been allocated to Circles vide letter No. DR-13/2/2020-DBT and RICT (Rural Information Communication Technology) dated 10-06-2021 for procurement of 4G Dongles and placed as Annexure -II .

With regard to provision of 4G Compatible router at the Post Offices, it is submitted that out of the total order for 4G connectivity at 3000 locations, 4G devices have been delivered at all 3000 locations and installed and commissioned at 1759 locations. Out of RF (Radio Frequency) order at 1606 locations, at 1495 locations RF connectivity have already been commissioned. On 08.06.21, order for providing 4G devices to 12599 Class D&E Post office locations across the country has been issued and the installation and commissioning work is expected to be completed in Financial Year 2021-22.(Please refer Annexure -III)

(Ministry of Communications/Department of Posts's O.M. No.28-5/2021/BGT (PA)/22nd Report dated 30-06-2021)

Recommendation no. 6

Minimum Available Balance and biometric authentication - Issues of inclusive growth in POSB

The Committee note that the Minimum available balance has been increased from Rs. 50 to Rs. 500 in case of savings accounts of POSB (Post Office Savings Bank) which may be high for poor citizens particularly people belonging to BPL category who are dependent only on certain financial support provided by the Govt. As per the Department, the matter has been taken up with the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance

to reconsider the decision in the interest of the public. It is manifest that such a decision would be detrimental to the account holders, notably the Jan Dhan accounts. The Committee strongly recommend the Department that the MOF should not treat Department of Posts like PSU banks and impose unreasonable conditions and withdraw such conditions. The Committee desire the Department to follow up with the Ministry of Finance in the larger interest of the deprived populace as this may well be against the agenda of financial inclusion.

Additionally, the Committee note that there is a provision for opening of POSB accounts of disabled person with guardianship or through a literate person. However, the number of such accounts is not available separately with the Department which is out of sorts with the inclusive growth policy. The Committee desire the Department to update their data with the State-wise details of such accounts and direct their efforts towards promotion of such a facility through different media.

Furthermore, the Committee appreciate that for amputees who are unable to provide fingerprints or in cases of failure of biometric authentication caused by erosion of fingers due to manual work, the Department have enabled Iris authentication as well thus taking them into the fold of doorstep banking which is particularly relevant in times of a pandemic. The Committee appreciate such an initiative taken by the Department and applaud the efforts in this direction.

Reply of the Government

The Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance has considered the request of DOP and has restored Zero Balance Basic Savings Account vide their Gazette Notification dated 09.04.2021.

Further it is also submitted that there is no such provision in the software to ascertain the number of accounts which are opened by disabled persons through guardianship in the Department.

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para no.10 of Chapter I)

(Ministry of Communications/Department of Posts's O.M. No.28-5/2021/BGT (PA)/22nd Report dated 30-06-2021)

Recommendation no.8

Estates Management- Gender Concerns and Accessibility issues

The Committee note that under the Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan, the Department are providing ramps and rails for improving the accessibility of Post Offices for differently abled persons as part of the Estate Management scheme. The Committee were informed that construction of new buildings is done in accordance with requirement of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 and during the last three years, 347 postal buildings have accordingly been retrofitted and 34 ramps and rails were constructed till 31 Jan, 2021 which is a minuscule figure in the 156721 strong network of post offices. The Department are conspicuously silent on the number of adaptive rest rooms, Braille signages, tactile flooring and auditory signals constructed /installed in post offices for the differently-abled during the last three years. Singularly, it is also noted that no access audit of the post office buildings has been conducted in the last five years in order to enforce accessibility standards and guidelines. Further, the Committee note that only four ladies retiring rooms and 96 ladies rest rooms were constructed during three years in the entire post office network. It is also advised that gender concerns may be adequately reflected in the construction of new postal buildings and /or repair of existing ones. The Committee, therefore, recommend that annual access audits may be conducted

countrywide and they may be apprised of the audit conclusions and the steps taken on the same.

Reply of the Government

The Circles are being instructed to install and construct rails, ramps, adaptive rest rooms, braille signages etc in the remaining post office buildings, where these do not exist at present. All new postal buildings being constructed are having separate ladies toilets reflecting the gender concern. Department is taking all possible steps to increase the number of ladies toilets, ladies retiring rooms and ladies rest rooms, so that gender concerns are adequately reflected in construction of new postal buildings as well as renovation of the existing buildings. The recommendation of the Committee has been noted and Annual Access Audits will be conducted in order to enforce accessibility standards and guidelines in all postal buildings and the report of the audit along with the action taken thereon will be intimated to the Committee.

Additionally, a Post Office information booklet in braille was printed by Gujarat Circle and the same was distributed to visually disabled people and different organizations of Gujarat.

(Ministry of Communications/Department of Posts's O.M. No.28-5/2021/BGT (PA)/22nd Report dated 30-06-2021)

Recommendation no. 10

Human Resource Management

The Committee note that the Human Resource Management scheme deals with provisions of training to be imparted through conventional and innovative methods like e-learning particularly blended learning and distance learning. The BE for 2020-21 stands at Rs. 47.20 crores which plummeted to Rs. 16.04 crores and the utilisation till 31 Dec, 2020 was Rs. 10.37 crores. As per National Training Policy 2012, in order to make available a vast resource of learning material and courses online, a learning management solution "MEGH SHIKSHAK" is being developed. It is a Cloud-based e-Learning Systems

which include features Like Online Registration and Approval, Single Sign-on, Interface for Upload of Course and Assessment Content, MIS etc. The scheme also covers the provision provided under iGOT Mission Karmayogi, the National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building (NPCSCB), which is making use of e-learning technologies to cover the training needs of a large number of officials who currently have little or no access to opportunities for quality training. In addition, in order to strengthen the training infrastructure, the provisions of upgradation of all Postal Training Centres and upgradation of Workplace Training Centres also form part of the scheme.

The Committee are all praises for the scheme, however, considering that the post office is a one stop shop for a plethora of services and is competing with international commerce including the BFSI sector, advise that the personnel need to be sensitised and trained for competitive awareness. The Committee feel that being a major service Department, they should be ready with training modules for understanding the role of customers, need to manage customer relationships and at the same time be ready to handle technology related changes in the working of the Department. The training module should contain both social commitment portion and service oriented module for services delivered by the Department and the HR Exercise should marry both of these in training. The staff and officials must therefore, be given training on motivational counselling and IT Training in order to prepare them for the working culture into an all encompassing role along with preparing them to deal with the unlettered and/ or senior citizens which form a large chunk of customers in a rapidly ageing populace.

Reply of the Government

During 2020-21, an amount of Rs. 46.20 Cr. at BE stage was received for training purposes. Further, funds revised to Rs. 17.55 Cr at FG stage and Rs. 19.27 Cr booked during 2020-21.

Soft skills training is being imparted as a component of Induction/mid-career training through outsourcing to improve wider reach to the Indian populace through more customer interaction channels, better customer service, growth through new lines of business and IT enablement of business processes and support function. More motivational and skills development training through audio-visual media is proposed to be imparted in the current year. Funds of Rs. 23.26 Cr. (BE) for the year 2021-22 under Human Resource Management scheme have been received, which have been allotted to Circles and training centres.

The focus of training of the Department is now being aligned with 'Mission Karmyogi' and special emphasis is being laid on training for all and training on demand. The Department has already engaged an agency for training content development. This content shall be made available on iGOT (Integrated Government Online Training) portal and more and more online training shall be rendered to Postal employees.

(Communications/Department of Posts's O.M. No.28-5/2021/BGT (PA)/22nd Report dated 30-06-2021)

Recommendation no. 13

Vigilance Administration

The Committee note that a total of 1395 major penalty proceedings (Rule-14 & Rule-9) and 1232 minor penalty proceedings were pending against the Departmental officials/officers as on 31.12.2020. These have been initiated as part of vigilance administration against postal employees, but the Department could not provide the data regarding the exact number of disciplinary cases initiated in connection with misappropriation out of the above disciplinary cases.

The Committee also note that information regarding incidences of pilferages of MNREGA wages and /or pensions and /or SukanyaSamriddhi deposits by errant postal employees that have been reported in the last three years was not readily available with the Department. Such evasive replies point to gross negligence on part of the Department and fail to act as deterrent to such offenders. The Committee strongly

deprecate the laxity of the Department on such serious disciplinary matters and expect them to make amends and recommend that the Department must conduct and close the proceedings at the earliest. The Committee also desire that the Department should ensure prudent surveillance including measures like installation of CCTVs in post offices to impede such offenders. The Committee would like to be apprised of the status.

Reply of the Government

2763 disciplinary proceedings were initiated during the period from 01.01.2020 to 31.12.2020 against different Group B, Group C and GDS officials in connection with cases of misappropriation.

During the last three years (from 01.01.2018 to 31.12.2020) 764 incidents of pilferage in MGNRGS wages, pension and Sukanya Samridhi Accounts, involving Rs. 34.34 Crore have been reported. On detection of frauds, departmental investigation is carried out in all the cases and remedial action is taken to avoid such cases in future. Principal offenders, co-offenders and subsidiary offenders are identified, and efforts are made to recover the amount from the offenders by asking them to make good the loss or recovery of loss is made from the offenders by awarding statutory penalties under the relevant conduct rules, based on the lapses on their part. A complete verification of the past work of the main offender is also carried out to ensure that no other fraud has been committed by him. Criminal Cases are invariably registered with local police/CBI, in all the cases, involving more than Rs. 50,000/- Recovery of loss from the offenders is an ongoing process and till now an amount of Rs. 11.25 Crore has been recovered from the offenders of the aforementioned 764 cases.

CCTVs have been installed in the counter areas of bigger Post Offices.

(Ministry of Communications/Department of Posts's O.M. No.28-5/2021/BGT (PA)/22nd Report dated 30-06-2021)

Recommendation no. 15

Claim settlement and surrender of PLI/RPLI policies

The Committee note that the PLI (Postal Life Insurance) and RPLI (Rural Postal Life Insurance) policies have an impressive claim settlement ratio ranging from 0.84 to 0.97 in case of PLI and 0.80 to 0.97 in case of RPLI since 2017-18. 23239 PLI and 39709 RPLI policies were surrendered in 2017-18, 26265 PLI and 41484 RPLI policies were surrendered in 2018-19, 23921 PLI and 41941 RPLI policies were surrendered in 2019-20, 2589 PLI and 3440 RPLI policies were surrendered in 2020-21. However, the Department could not provide the number of lapsed policies. The Committee feel that the figures must stir the Department to action thus necessitating the need for stemming the surrender of policies. The Committee feel that concrete action must be taken to revive the lapsed policies by suitable relaxations and other measures. The Committee note that insurance is highly competitive business and already a number of companies are in the field and hence the Department must also consider to introduce new innovative and attractive plans in order to appeal to a large customer base so as to ensure earning more revenues. The Committee recommend that the country has a significant youth population which can be targeted for insurance product tailor made for them. The Committee further recommend the Department to utilise the network they have built in the rural/ tribal and hilly areas and many tier II/III cities and aspirational districts by introducing specific features to target the customers for the PLI/RPLI policies and would like to be apprised of the action taken in this regard.

Reply of the Government

Several measures have been taken by DoP to ensure revival of lapsed policies. Prior to September 2019, a PLI/RPLI policy could be revived only two times during the entire term of a policy. However, in order to stemming the surrender of policies, the

restrictions were removed and now PLI/RPLI policies can be revived any number of times during the policy term. Further, products available under PLI/RPLI may be availed by youth aged above 18 years as per the eligibility. The products have been designed in such a way that young people pay less premium and earn more bonus during the term of the policy.

(Ministry of Communications/Department of Posts's O.M. No.28-5/2021/BGT (PA)/22nd Report dated 30-06-2021)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para no.22 of Chapter I)

Recommendation no. 16

COVID Initiatives

The Committee note that Department of Posts started the "Service at Doorstep on request" during the sudden outburst of the Covid-19 (Coronavirus Disease) to facilitate the customers particularly the Senior Citizens &Divyangjans by providing the essential postal services at their doorstep which helped in providing the necessary postal services. About 314557 Service Requests have been disposed of since its launch on 24th April, 2020. To retain a reliable communication link of migrant workers with their home & also to transfer goods to their families & to meet the urgent national requirement at a critical time, a dedicated nationwide Road Transport network (RTN) for shipment of essential items especially ventilators, medicines, Covid Kits, etc., was planned and operationalized by the Department for the first time in its history of 166 years. 56 national routes connecting 75 important cities & 266 regional routes were operationalised from 24 April 2020. Around 3700 tonnes of essential items in 7.5 lakh bags were transported during the lockdown through this network. This Road Transport network (RTN) for shipment of essential items especially ventilators, medicines, Covid Kits etc was planned to connect tier -2 and tier-3 cities and reach out to the rural areas including aspirational districts,

State & District level road transport routes were also operationalized. These routes were connected to the National routes in a hub and spoke mechanism. Most of the aspirational districts were covered under State & district level routes. During COVID 19, Special arrangements were made by Head of Circles to ensure mail / parcel transmission & delivery in all districts including aspirational districts. The Committee while appreciating the efforts made by the Department hope that the Department would continue with their efforts and also explore new opportunities/avenues to tap the market potential during pandemic times to boost their revenue and also to turn the slogan 'Apda me Avsar' into a reality.

Reply of the Government

The Road Transport Network which was rolled out during the first Covid wave in 2020, has now been extended from 56 national routes to 64 routes. The number of regional routes have also been enhanced from 266 to 280. Approx. 18000 parcels bags weighing more than 105 Tons are currently being transported every day. Delivery of fruits through postal parcels and logistics service has been strengthened in several states like Karnataka, Telengana and Bihar to boost revenue and help farmers. New opportunities are being explored during Pandemic.

Department of Posts offers various services viz. mail, financial, retail etc. To avail the services, one has to visit the post office. In order to further facilitate the customer, the Department of Posts has started the "Service at Doorstep on request" for the needy. This has been extremely helpful in providing the necessary postal services in emergency situation like sudden outburst of the Covid -19. During the second Covid wave in 2021 (April and May), about Rs 1400 Cr has been delivered at the doorsteps of citizens through over 41 lakh AePS transactions. In addition, over 36 lakh eMoney Orders with a value of about Rs 461 Cr has also been delivered at the doorsteps of customers. The Department's Postmen and GraminDakSewaks have delivered about 4.93 Cr Speed Post articles in the same period, despite enormous personal risk.

New sources for generating Speed Post revenue being explored by the Department are as under:

I. Tie-up with different Government Ministries/Agencies such as Regional Transport offices, Traffic Police, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, High Courts, etc. have been made to deliver driving licenses, vehicle registration certificates, Traffic Challans, Passports, Summons, etc.

II. Continuous liasioning with UIDAI for delivery of Order Aadhaar Reprint letters, Aadhaar PVC Cards and Aadhaar Validation Letters.

III. Tie up with the Supreme Court of India for delivery of Summons/ Notices through Speed Post is under implementation.

IV. Tie up with the Central Board of Secondary Examination (CBSE) for delivery of pre-examination as well as post-examination material for Class-X & XII examination.

V. Delivery of Ration Cards through Speed Post has been undertaken in some Postal Circles

VI. New business avenues with banking, insurance industry etc. is being explored. A large number of players in these sectors have already been on boarded under Book Now Pay Later Scheme.

VII. Delivery of PVC (Polyvinyl Chloride) Electors Photo Identity Card (EPIC) to the first time voters at their doorstep through Speed Post, is being done in Tamil Nadu on pilot basis with an assured revenue of Rs. 8 Cr. per annum.

VIII. Delivery of 'Prasadam' of major temples to the doorsteps of devotees, have been started in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, etc. using parcel services.

IX. Launch of a new international express delivery product in tie-up with private international courier is being explored.

(Ministry of Communications/Department of Posts's O.M. No.28-5/2021/BGT (PA)/22nd Report dated 30 -06-2021)

CHAPTER III

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH THE COMMITTEE DO NOT DESIRE TO PURSUE IN VIEW OF THE REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT

-NIL-

CHAPTER IV

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE AND REQUIRE REITERATION

Recommendation no.9

Estates Management- Pending projects

The Committee note that the Estates Management Scheme includes construction of postal buildings including Post Offices, mail offices, administrative offices, staff quarters, besides preservation and conservation of heritage buildings and reconstruction of dilapidated buildings. The Committee have been informed that only one postal building was constructed and 29 postal buildings were renovated till 31 Jan, 2021 which provides the ground for the fact that they were able to utilize only Rs. 29.35 crores out of Rs. 120.50 crores allocated to them. They have also informed that all projects which have been approved 10 years ago have either been completed or the work is in progress. However, this statement does not hold credibility since the pendency of 3 projects namely Poojappura, Sasthamangalam and Karamana in the State of Kerala for which approvals have been given long ago has been admitted and regretted by the Department . The Department have set ambitious targets for themselves in BE 2021-22 as they intend to construct 20 buildings and provide facelift to another 50. Evidently, they need to concentrate on the pending projects including in the State of Kerala while planning for new ones. The Committee urge the Department to redouble their efforts to completing the pending projects and apprise them of the progress in the matter, State-wise.

Reply of the Government

During the financial year 2020-21, following 27 new post office buildings have been constructed under Estates Management Scheme, despite various constraints, like disruption in labour and material supply, road and rail movements, etc. faced by the Department due to COVID-19 pandemic:

S.No.	Circle	Project name
1	Bihar	Anandpur Post Office, Darbhanga Division
2		Monigachhi Post Office, Darbhanga Division
3		Begusarai Post Office
4		Sherghati Post Office, Aurangabad Division
5		Jagdispur Post Office, Bhojpur Division
6		Rohtas Post Office
7		Khaira Post Office, Munger Division
8	Delhi	Rohini, Sector -15 Post Office
9	Karnataka	T Narasipura Post Office
10		Harohalli Post Office
11		Sulibele Post Office
12		Shankara Narayana Post Office
13	Madhya Pradesh	Vijaynagar Post Office, Aranyanagar, Indore
14	Odisha	Anantapur Post Office, Balasore
15		Daringbadi Post Office, Phulbani
16		Saranakul Post Office, Puri
17		SubasChowk Post Office, Puri
18		Sohela Post Office, Sambalpur
19		Gondturum, Sambalpur
20		Malkangiri Mukhya Dak Ghar
21		Salapada Post Office, Keonjhar
22	Tamil Nadu	Regional Office Building/KP Colony Post Office at Sangapur
23	Uttar Pradesh	Lambhua Post Office, Sultanpur, Allahabad
24	West Bengal	Deganga Post Office
25		Betapur Post Office
26		Digha Post Office
27		Bhanger Post Office

In the FY 2021-22, out of the total allocated funds of Rs.55 Cr, funds to the tune of Rs.33.15 Cr have been allotted for a total of 127 projects (35 ongoing projects and 92 new projects), which include six (6) projects in Kerala Circle, namely (a) Kalpetta Post Office, (b) Karamana Post Office , (c) Poojapura Post Office and office of Director of Accounts (Postal), (d) Sasthamangalam Post Office, (e) Edathua Post Office in Alappuzha District and (f) Kunnikode Post Office in Kollam District. For Karamana and Poojapura Post Offices, construction is likely to commence within the current year. In case of Sasthamangalam PO buildup, the Department is making efforts to obtain municipal approvals.

Although, the Department has fixed a target of completion of construction of 20 new post office buildings as informed to the Committee, still the Department is making all possible efforts to have as many post office buildings constructed during this current financial year, despite the constraint being faced currently due to COVID-19 pandemic.

(Ministry of Communications/Department of Posts's O.M. No.28-5/2021/BGT (PA)/22nd Report dated 30 -06-2021)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para no. 13 of Chapter I)

Recommendation no. 12

Grievance Redressal in the Department

The Committee note that Department has a well laid out procedure for handling public grievances including various channels available for the customer to lodge their grievances like Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS), Social Media (Twitter, Facebook & Instagram), Customer Relationship Management (CRM), India Post Call Centre (IPCC) with IVRS facility. The Committee note that out of 935572 grievances received during 2020-21, more than 5 % i.e. 47995 were still pending as on 31 Jan, 2021. Updates to the Citizens Charter are infrequent with only two updates in

the last three years. By the same token, it is also noted that out of a total of 6042 DakAdalats held in the last five years, the NER received a raw deal with only 15 held in Arunachal Pradesh, 24 in Assam, 5 in Manipur, 2 in Meghalaya, 7 in Mizoram and lamentably, none in Sikkim. Comparably, only 19 were held in Bihar, 17 in Chhattisgarh, 16 each in Jharkhand and Punjab. None were held in the Union Territories of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Daman & Diu, Dadar & Nagar Haveli, Puducherry, Jammu & Kashmir and Laddakh. To the dismay of the Committee, no Ombudsman has been appointed by the Department for PLI/RPLI grievances. The Committee emphasize that the Department need to shore up by appointing an Ombudsman for PLI and RPLI and pivot their efforts on increasing the frequency of DakAdalat with special attention to North East, LWE areas, aspirational districts and remote areas alongwith updates to the Citizens Charter every six months. The Committee also recommend the diarising of receipt of complaint through email on dedicated MIS and would like to be apprised of the progress made in resolution of pending grievances.

Reply of the Government

The monthly average receipt of grievances during 2020-21 (Upto Jan, 2021) from Social Media (Twitter, Facebook and Instagram), Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is 93,557 which is 10% of the total grievances received during the year 2020-21 till Jan, 2021. The pendency as on 31.03.2021 was 47995. The resolution time of the grievances committed to the citizens by the Department in its Citizens' Charter is 60 days. Therefore, while the average receipt per month was 93,557 the pendency was only 47995 i.e. 5%. Grievance Redressal drives were carried out in December 2020, January, February and March 2021 to bring down the pendency. Further, grievance resolution is monitored at senior levels in the Department

The Citizens' Charter of the Department has been updated twice during the last three years. For the current year (2021), the revision is already notified on 11.06.2021 to the public.

Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram States have one Postal Division in each State. In Arunachal Pradesh Division, 15 Dak Adalats were held from 2016-2020. In Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram 5, 2 and 7 Dak Adalats were held respectively, from 2016-2020. North East Circle has informed that many times notifications were issued but due to non-receipt of grievances, Dak Adalats were not held. Further in 2020, due to Corona pandemic, Dak Adalats could not be held by the concerned Divisions.

In Assam, a total of 24 Dak Adalats were held from 2016 to 2020. The Circle has reported that very less complaints were received resulting in holding of Dak Adalats in limited Divisions only.

Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Sikkim are part of West Bengal Circle and the grievances received for these two units were included in the Dak Adalats held at Circle level by the Chief Postmaster General. Necessary directions have now been given to hold Dak Adalats for these two units separately.

Dadar & Nagar Haveli and Daman UTs are part of Valsad Division. 19 Dak Adalats were held in Valsad Division from 2016-2020. Similarly, Diu is part of Junagadh Division and 19 Dak Adalats were held in Junagarh Division from 2016-2020. Hence 19 Dak Adalats were held in both the UTs as they were clubbed with their Postal Divisions.

Puducherry is the part of Puducherry Division which also includes other parts of Tamil Nadu. 18 Dak Adalats were held in the Division from 2016-2020.

Punjab Circle had inadvertently submitted the information regarding Dak Adalats held at Circle level as 16 from 2016-2020. Punjab Circle has now informed that a total of 312 Dak Adalats were held from 2016-2020. Out of this, 32 were held in Chandigarh Division.

In Chhattisgarh, notifications were issued for the Dak Adalats but due to non-receipt of grievances, less number of Dak Adalats were held.

In Bihar and Jharkhand Circles, Dak Adalats were held at Circle Headquarters. However, instructions have been reiterated to hold Dak Adalats upto the Divisional level.

Due to law and order restrictions, no Dak Adalats could be held in Jammu & Kashmir Circle.

The Postal Directorate has proactively examined the issue of non-holding of Dak Adalats due to non-receipt or less number of grievances in Dak Adalats. To handle this issue, grievances pending on Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) beyond the prescribed timeline, have been integrated with Dak Adalats. By this integration, the cases will be reviewed suo moto by the concerned authority, even if there is no response to the notifications of Dak Adalats.

Postal Life Insurance (PLI) and Rural Postal Life Insurance (RPLI) are Central Government schemes administered by the Department of Posts and not regulated by insurance regulator Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI). The Department has Citizens' Charter norms regarding policy servicing and grievance redressal for PLI/RPLI policyholders, which is in line with Protection of Policy holders' interest Regulations, 2017 issued by IRDAI. Though there is no insurance Ombudsman in PLI/RPLI, there are sufficient channels for settlement of grievances of PLI/RPLI policy holders. A new set of procedures have been prescribed recently, wherein claimant can now appeal to the next higher authority in case of rejection of death claim.

As regards the diarizing of complaints received on email, a proper mechanism is being put in place to handle the grievances received on emails along with a dedicated MIS report for analysis and followup.

(Ministry of Communications/Department of Posts's O.M. No.28-5/2021/BGT (PA)/22nd Report dated 30 -06-2021)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para no. 16 of Chapter I)

Recommendation no. 14

Dormant Accounts

The Committee note that all-out efforts are being made to settle maximum unclaimed accounts by giving wide publicity and by launching special drives at Circle level including notices and publicity in newspapers. Door to door campaign and special drives are also being launched at Divisional /Regional/Circle level through the

GraminDakSevaks/Postman. Further continuous monitoring is also being made with all the Head of Circles for settlement of maximum accounts as per the existing rules. The Committee note that Rs.11435.35 crores unclaimed amount has been lying with the Department as on 30th September, 2019.

The Committee have also been informed of a huge number of accounts with no nomination. The numbers are very large with 141121410 accounts for Saving Banks, 5369522 accounts for term deposits, 3036647 accounts for Monthly Income Scheme, 26730044 accounts for National Saving Certificates, 25416658 accounts for KisanVikasPatras, 71394332 accounts for other schemes making a total of 273068613 accounts. With the combined efforts of all Circles, 62,271 accounts with an amount of Rs 105.56 Crores have been settled under Senior Citizen Welfare Fund all over the country till September-2020. Nonetheless, the amount is a mere 0.92 % of the total unclaimed amount of Rs.11435.35 crores. The Committee are unhappy to note that such large amount of public money is lying unclaimed with the Department and also the lack of serious efforts by them to identify the beneficiaries of such accounts. The Committee recommend that the Department should make registering of Mobile numbers and seeding the Aadhaar numbers with these accounts as mandatory for receiving alerts for various services and an annual exercise at a specified period to renew the nomination records in order to avoid hassles at the time of settlement. They may also publicise the information regarding dormant accounts through print and electronic media and apprise the Committee of the headway made in this matter.

Reply of the Government

With the combined efforts of all Circle 68,720 accounts with an amount of Rs. 117.45 Crores have been settled up-to May-2021. Door to door campaign and special drives are also being launched at Divisional/Regional/Circle level for settlement of maximum accounts so that the rightful owners or legal heirs/nominees may get the amount as per the existing rules. Weekly monitoring is also being done at Directorate level to keep an eye over settlement of accounts. As regards the suggestion to make mobile and Aadhaar

numbers mandatory for POSB accounts, this may create problems for customers who do not have a mobile or Aadhaar number.

(Ministry of Communications/Department of Posts's O.M. No.28-5/2021/BGT (PA)/22nd Report dated 30-06-2021)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para no. 19 of Chapter I)

CHAPTER V

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT ARE INTERIM IN NATURE

Recommendation no. 7

Revision of rates of remuneration of POSB and rationalisation of Postal Services

The Committee note that the Post Office Saving Bank holds 36.79 crore Saving Bank Live accounts and 4.84 crore National Saving Certificates/KisanVikasPatras. As per the Annual Costing Exercise which reflects the cost per account in the year 2018-19, the Department is incurring a loss of Rs. 95.12 per saving account and Rs. 133.89 per cash certificate on an yearly basis. The costing exercise for the years 2019-20 is underway. Considering the huge number of the POSB accounts and certificates, the low rate of remuneration at present translates into an annual loss of Rs.3499.46 crores for SB accounts and Rs.647.69 crores for the Savings Certificates. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry of Finance may consider revising the rates of remuneration to the POSB in order to offset their losses.

The Committee further note that the traditional services like postcard, printed books, parcel, speed post are priced much lower than their actual unit cost. A postcard costing Rs. 12.08 is sold for 50 paise while a money order costing Rs. 49.80 is priced at Rs. 18.45. The Committee note that the loss incurred per post card is Rs. 11.58 which amounts to a loss of Rs. 156 crores in the year 2018-19 on post cards. The aggregate loss for the year 2018-19 on postal services stood at Rs. 10435 crores. While the traditional offerings like Post Card/ Money Orders are priced below their cost price, the Committee are of the opinion that the unit cost of postcard at Rs. 12.08 and unit cost of Money Order at Rs. 49.80 appears to be very high and the Department should explore all possibilities to reduce the cost per unit of these postal services so that their losses are minimized and their Universal Service Obligation mandate is also fulfilled. The

Committee desire that the Department should conduct a study to find out the financial viability of these traditional services keeping in view their demand and apprise the Committee of the initiatives taken in this regard.

Reply of the Government

The matter regarding revision of Agency Charges paid to the Department of Posts on various POSB Schemes has been taken up with Ministry of Finance. As a result, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance has decided to set up an "Expert Group" to review the various aspects of the scheme and make recommendations in the matter.

As regards the costing and tariff realization of mail products, the cost of the Department in delivering these services is much more than their current tariff, mainly on account of the high establishment cost of the Department. The issue of tariff is a complex one and cannot be approached solely on the basis of cost plus tariff policy, as the prevailing market situation and paying capacity of customers also needs to be considered. In case the market is not willing to pay a higher tariff for a certain Postal service, then tariff enhancement can prove to be counterproductive and would result in a decline in traffic. The Tariff and Costing division of the Department is seized of the matter and does due diligence in matters pertaining to costing, tariff and prevailing market situation.

(Ministry of Communications/Department of Posts's O.M. No.28-5/2021/BGT (PA)/22nd Report dated 30 -06-2021)

Recommendation no. 11

Conversion of IPPB into small finance bank

The Committee note that the fundamental mandate of India Post Payments Bank is to remove barriers for the unbanked & underbanked and reach the last mile by leveraging the reach of the Postal network. The IPPB faces regulatory headwinds (Zero MDR charges on NEFT/RTGS), cost sensitivity of the target customer group (No Doorstep charges for DBT Disbursement at Doorstep) and limitations like savings and current account with maximum end of the day limit of Rs. One lakh. Further, it is noted that Payments bank cannot offer other saving products like time deposit, recurring deposits which restrict the

prospective customers. Due to this limitation of Rs. one lakh, Payments bank is not in a position to offer end to end service to any business verticals either government or private. The Committee recognise that conversion of IPPB into a Small Finance Bank shall help the overall objective of furthering financial inclusion agenda of the Government by provision of savings vehicles, and supply of credit to small business units, small and marginal farmers, micro and small industries and other unorganized sector entities, through the medium of the post office and postman. Even so, as per Draft Guidelines for 'on tap' Licensing of Small Finance Banks in the Private Sector released by RBI on September 13, 2019, public Sector entities are not eligible to apply for a SFB license. The Committee desire that IPPB should move to the next level from a payment bank to small finance bank and recommend the Department to take up the matter with the RBI and the MoF for relaxation in the regulatory guidelines issued by RBI. The Committee also expect that Ministry of Finance/Reserve Bank of India may favourably consider such a request from the IPPB.

Reply of the Government

As directed by the Committee, Department has taken up the matter with RBI and MoF for relaxation in the relevant guidelines for conversion of IPPB into a Small Finance Bank.

(Ministry of Communications/Department of Posts's O.M. No.28-5/2021/BGT (PA)/22nd Report dated 30 -06-2021)

New Delhi;

29 November, 2021
8 Agrahayana , 1943 (Saka)

DR. SHASHI THAROOR,

Chairperson,

**Standing Committee on Communications and
Information Technology.**

**ANALYSIS OF ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE OBSERVATIONS/
RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THEIR TWENTY SECOND REPORT**

(SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA)

[Vide Paragraph No. 5 of Introduction]

- (i) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government

Rec. Sl. Nos.:- 1,2,3,4,5,6,8,10,13,15,16

Total 11

Percentage 68.75

- (ii) Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue
in view of the replies of the Government

Rec. Sl. No.: Nil

Total Nil

Percentage 0.00

- (iii) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government
have not been accepted by the Committee and require reiteration

Rec. Sl. Nos.:- 9, 12, 14

Total 03

Percentage 18.75

- (iv) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which the replies of the
Government are of interim in nature

Rec. Sl. Nos.:- 7, 11

Total 02

Percentage 12.50