50 companies including World Bank, Deutsche Bank and Barclays keen on associating with postal bank initiative: Ravi Shankar Prasad

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SURAT: Around 50 companies including global banking institutions, like the World Bank, Deutsche Bank and Barclays, have expressed eagerness to be associated with the Centre's postal payments bank initiative, Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said today

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"We will begin postal payments banking service from September 16, wherein 1.3 lakh postmen will be given hand-held devices, a moving ATM to provide banking services, insurance, money-order, as well as third-party service," Information Technology Minister said after inaugurating an incubation centre at the Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) here.

"Some 50 companies, including World Bank, Deutsche Bank, Swiss Bank, Barclays, want to be associated with us," said the senior BJP leader.

The Union Cabinet in June had cleared the proposal for postal payments banks with a corpus of Rs 800 crore. The proposal is to set up 650 branches of postal payments banks.

Prasad said his ministry is taking up several initiatives to use IT and related services to improve the services, and asked IT experts to use government services through the STPI to innovate in this direction.

"We will also begin virtual classroom facility so that we can use technology to offer better education through virtual classrooms. As a pilot project, 3,500 government schools will be given the facility, of which 770 schools are from Gujarat," Prasad added.

The minister also spoke about the government initiative to set up BPOs in smaller centres in the country.

"We have started BPO scheme to encourage small centres for call centres, BPOs. We started 48,000 call centres/BPOs and will provide subsidy of Rs 1 lakh for call centres in smaller centres. We are creating a platform across the country for that," Prasad said.

"IT applications will be used for pensioners, distributing scholarships. We want to make India the IT power hub of the world," said the minister.

Prasad later visited Bardoli from where freedom fighter Sardar Patel had started his historic 'Satyagrah' against the British rule.

The minister took a dig at the Congress for delaying by 41 years to confer Bharat Ratna on Sardar Patel.

"Sardar Patel died in 1950, and was conferred Bharat Ratna in 1991. Rahulji (Rahul Gandhi) and Soniaji (Sonia Gandhi) must answer as to why they took 41 years for this. Neither has a single family made India independent, nor has a single family been behind taking the country forward," he said.

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