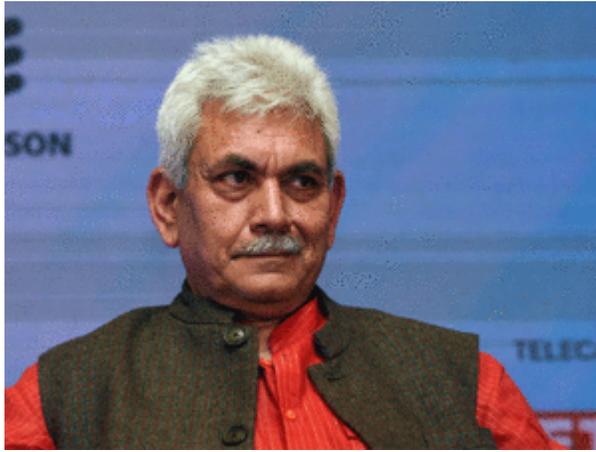


1.55 lakh post offices to be empowered as Payments Banks: Manoj Sinha

By [Muntazir Abbas](#), ET Bureau | Updated: Apr 18, 2018, 10.13 AM IST

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NEW DELHI: The National Democratic Alliance (NDA)



government aims to empower 1.55 lakh post offices after integration with 650 [Payments Banks](#) to enable an array of digital services including financial inclusion for 130 crore Indians.

“In 5-6 months, 1.5 lakh postal offices will function as Post Payments Banks. In a lesser time, nearly 32 crore have opened bank accounts, and hence the government decided to open Payments Banks to facilitate transactions for all citizens ” Communications and Railways Minister [Manoj Sinha](#) Tuesday said.

Sinha said that after pilot in Raipur and Ranchi, Payments Banks will also be started in rest of the 648 locations soon, and to provide direct benefit transfer (DBT) to a larger number of citizens, the government would be able to quickly integrate post offices in every nook and corner of the country including 1.29 lakh in rural regions.

[India Post](#) Payments Bank (IPPB) launched pilot services in Raipur and Ranchi in January 2017 after the Reserve Bank of India ([RBI](#)) had in 2015 approved Payments Banks to 11 entities, including the Department of Posts to accept deposits of up to Rs 1 lakh per individual or a small business.

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani-owned [Reliance Jio](#) Infocomm (Jio), Bharti Airtel, Aditya Birla Nuvo, Vodafone M-Pesa and Paytm have also started banking operations in the private sector space.

Sinha also launched Digital Advancement of Rural Post Office for a New India or Darpan program at an outlay of Rs 1,300 crore, under the ambitious IT modernisation initiative to facilitate 1.29 branch post offices in rural India for digital transactions and online postal services.

“IT modernisation project started at a cost of Rs 1,300 crores has now completed at 62,000 post offices,” the minister said, adding that the Internet has opened up a lot of big opportunities.

Sunil Mittal-driven Bharti Airtel is providing Machine-to-Machine (M2M) SIM cards for postal department’s modernisation initiative that has covered as much as 40% of the postal footprint across India.

IT firms such as Infosys and TCS are vendor-partner in the department’s modernisation drive.

Sinha, citing the Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that a postman is an Indian government representative and plays a role in building a nation, and added that the initiative to digitise 1.55 lakh post offices will make postal and banking services easier for a common man especially in rural India.

The initiative will, however, enable a range of digital services in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s prestigious Digital India umbrella program that aims to provide digital access and accelerate digital service delivery for 130 crore Indians in a cost-friendly manner.

The department, according to Sinha, has now extended the ambit of Postal Life Insurance (PLI) to cover people other than those employed with it with lesser premium and more returns, and the extended scope, he said, helped to garner Rs 6 crore of additional revenue within four months of its launch.

Out of the projected 250 Aadhaar enrolment and updation centres and Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSK), 178 have now become fully functional, Sinha informed.

Parliamentarian from New Delhi Meenakshi Lekhi said that the postal department has used its infrastructure and manpower optimally

and the initiatives taken by it were commendable with programs such as Aadhar enrolment and offering insurance schemes.

Ramesh Bidhuri, another lawmaker from Tughlakabad area said that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's prestigious initiatives led by Sinha have started to bear fruits, and a common man can now benefit from digital empowerment, and can also reach to any nearby post office for banking needs.

Sinha also launched Darpan-PLI app that allows renewal of pension including premium collection and indexing of maturity of claims.