

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1097
ANSWERED ON:02.08.2006
AMENDMENT IN INDIAN POSTAL ACT .
Saradgi Shri Iqbal Ahmed

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) Whether the Union Government has decided to amend the Indian Postal Act;
- (b) If so, the reasons therefor;
- (c) Whether the draft of the said bill has been circulated to get suggestions from the public;
- (d) If so, the main changes proposed to be made in the Postal Act; and
- (e) The time by which it is likely to be introduced?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD)

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Indian Post Office Act, 1898 is more than a century old one. New communication developments have to be taken note of. Competition has to be allowed where needed and possible. The techno-economic developments taking place require a more dynamic Act. The amendment is also required to omit obsolete or redundant references like 'United Kingdom' and 'Her Majesty's Government' etc. available in Indian Post Office Act. 1898.

(c) The proposed Draft Indian Post Office Act (Amendment) Bill 2006 was placed on public domain '<http://www.indiapost.gov.in>' from 19.04.2006 up to 10.05.2006 for calling for the views and comments thereon.

(d) The main changes proposed in the Draft Indian Post Office Act (Amendment) Bill, 2006 are given in the Annexure.

(e) The Indian Post Office Act (Amendment) Bill, 2006 is likely to be introduced in the Winter Session, 2006 of the Parliament.

THE MAIN CHANGES PROPOSED TO BE MADE IN THE INDIAN POST OFFICE ACT, 1898

- (i) Empowering the Central Government to liberalize the exclusive privilege of the Central Government to convey all letters along with incidental services, with certain exceptions;
- (ii) Definition of letter has been proposed to be incorporated;
- (iii) Providing for registration and accountability of private entrepreneurs, commonly known as 'couriers', to safeguard the consumers' interest;
- (iv) Providing for a separate set of fees and annual fee for renewal of registration of the registered service providers operating within and beyond India and those who operate within the territory of India;
- (v) Providing for an independent Mail Regulatory Authority for creating a level playing field for all service providers in the mail sector including the Department of Posts;
- (vi) Providing for Mail Disputers Settlement Tribunal for adjudication of disputes between registering authority and registered service providers, amongst service providers and between service providers and a group of consumers;
- (vii) Providing for revenue sharing by the big registered service providers for meeting a portion of Universal Service Obligation (USO) of the Government of India;
- (viii) Empowering the Central Government to: -
Grant rebate for pre-payment of postage on postal articles by means of stamping machine;

Monitor the usage, maintenance and inspection of postage franking machines.

Introduce e-enabled services, bridging the digital divide in the country;

Introduce customized new services and products to generate adequate resources while meeting also its Universal Service Obligation (USO);

(ix) Providing statutory basis for the Postal Services Board;

(x) The monetary and other penalties imposed for contravention of various provisions of the Act have been raised to make them more effective;

(xi) The scope of penalties has been widened so as to cover not only the post office but also registered service providers in case of violation of the various provisions of the Act.