

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI MANOJ SINHA): (a) No Sir, there is no such plan at present.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

Affordable internet access

4063. DR. KANWAR DEEP SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that less than 30 per cent of Indians have internet access;

(b) if so, what is being done to widen this coverage and making it affordable;

(c) whether the existing regulatory mechanism is unfavourable to Wi-Fi networks; and

(d) if so, what is being done about this?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI MANOJ SINHA): (a) and (b) As per information received from Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), there were 391.50 million Internet subscribers in the country as on 31.12.2016.

Government has allocated 965 Megahertz spectrum through auction in October, 2016 to various telecom service providers for access services. This will enable the telecom service providers to roll-out services which will facilitate proliferation of affordable high speed internet facility and widen the internet coverage.

Further, for provision of broadband facility in rural areas, BharatNet project is also being implemented to provide 100 Mbps broadband connectivity to all Gram Panchayats (approx. 2.5 lakh) in the country by using an optimal mix of underground fibre, fibre over power lines, radio and satellite media.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above.

Committee to study problems of Gramin Dak Sevak

†4064. SHRI MAHENDRA SINGH MAHRA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has constituted a committee to study the problems of Gramin Dak Sevak;

(b) if so, the names of the members of the committee;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) whether the committee has sent its report to the Government, if so, the details of the recommendations made; and

(d) if not, by when the report is expected to be received?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI MANOJ SINHA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. To examine the system of Branch Post Offices, engagement conditions, existing structure of allowances and all other welfare issues pertaining to Gramin Dak Sevaks, a one-man Committee under the Chairmanship of Shri Kamlesh Chandra, Retired Member Postal Services Board was set up.

(c) Yes, Sir. Committee has submitted its report to the Government. The details of the recommendations made by the Committee are given in the Statement (*See below*).

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above.

Statement

Details of the recommendations made by the Committee

- The old system of payment of Time Related Continuity Allowance (TRCA) is dispensed with and replaced with a new wage payment system. Under the new wage payment system, 11 TRCA slabs are subsumed into 3 Wage Scales with two Levels each for BPMs and for other than BPMs. One wage scale would be common for both the categories of GDSs.
- The minimum working hours of GDS Post Offices and GDSs are increased to 4 hours from 3 hours.
- The new working hours for GDS Post Offices will be 4 hours and 5 hours only.
- The Level 1 GDS Post Offices / GDSs will have 4 hours as working hours and Level – 2 will have 5 hours as working hours.
- The Point System for assessment of workload of BPMs has been abolished.
- The new wage payment system is linked to revenue generation of GDS Post Offices. Under the new system, there will be no increase in wages of BPMs from Level -1 to Level -2 on the basis of workload but the same will be increased based on achievement of prescribed revenue norms which is fixed at 100% for normal areas and 50% for special areas.
- The GDS Post Offices not achieving the prescribed revenue norm within the given working hours will have to open GDS Post Offices for minimum of additional 30 minutes beyond the prescribed working hours.

- The GDS BPMs will be paid Revenue Linked Allowance @10% beyond level-2 wage scale if they will be successful in achieving revenue beyond prescribed norms.
- The GDS Post Offices have been categorized into A, B, C and D categories based on the revenue generation norms. The GDS Post Office in A category will achieve 100% revenue norm. The Committee has recommended a set of actions for each category of GDS Post Offices.
- The six approved categories of GDSs are subsumed into two categories only. One category will be Branch Post Master and all other 5 categories of GDSs are subsumed into one Multi Tasking Category.
- The GDSs working in the GDS Post Offices will be known as Assistant Branch Post Master (ABPMs) and those working in the Departmental Post Offices will be known as Dak Sevak (DS).
- The minimum wage has been increased to ₹ 10000/- per month and maximum pay to ₹ 35480/- per month.
- The rate of annual increase is recommended as 3%.
- A Composite Allowance comprising of support for hiring accommodation for GDS Post Offices as well as mandatory residence, office maintenance, mobile and electricity usage charges etc. has been introduced for the first time.
- Children Education Allowance @ ₹ 6000/- per child per annum has been introduced for GDSs.
- Risk and Hardship Allowance @ ₹ 500/- per month for GDS working in the special areas has also been introduced.
- A Financial upgradation has been introduced at 12 years, 24 years and 36 years of services in form of two advance additional annual increases.
- The ceiling of *ex-gratia* gratuity has been increased from ₹ 60,000 to ₹ 5,00,000
- The GDS Contribution for Service Discharge Benefit Scheme (SDBS) should be enhanced maximum up to 10% and minimum up to 3% of the basic wage per month, whereas the Department should contribute a fixed contribution of 3% of the basic wage of the GDSs.
- The coverage of GDS Group Insurance Scheme has been enhanced from ₹ 50000/- to ₹ 5,00,000/
- The contribution of Department in Circle Welfare Fund (CWF) has been increased from ₹ 100/per annum to ₹ 300/per annum.

- The scope of CWF is extended to cover immediate family members such as spouse; daughters, sons and dependent daughters in law in the scheme.
- The Committee also recommended 10% hike in the prescribed limits of financial grants and assistances in the Circle Welfare Funds.
- The Committee has recommended addition of ₹ 10,000/ for purchase of Tablet/Mobile from the Circle Welfare in the head “Financial Assistance of Fund by way of loans with lower rate of interest (5%)”.
- Provision of 26 weeks of Maternity Leave for women GDS has been recommended.
- The wages for the entire period of Maternity Leave is recommended to be paid from salary head from where wages of GDSs are paid.

The Committee has also recommended one week of paternity leave.

- Leave accumulation and encashment facility up to 180 days has been introduced.
- Online system of engagement has been recommended.
- Alternate livelihood condition for engagement of GDSs has been relaxed.
- Voluntary Discharge scheme has been recommended.
- The Discharge age has been retained at 65 years.
- The Limited Transfer Facility has been relaxed from 1 time to 3 times for male GDSs. There will be no restriction on number of chances for transfer of women GDSs. The powers for transfer has been delegated to the concerned Divisional head.
- The *ex-gratia* payment during put off period should be revised to 35% from 25% of the wage and DA drawn immediately before put off.
- The Committee has recommended preferring transfer before put off duty.

**Mobile connectivity in villages of Uttar Pradesh,
Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh**

4065. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of villages in the States of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh do not have mobile connectivity, if so, the details thereof; and

(b) by when these are likely to be covered by mobile connectivity?