

Shortage of staff is due to vacancies arising on account of retirement, promotion, death and deputation. Vacant posts are being manned by appropriately redeploying the available staff to ensure that postal services are not affected.

(c) and (d) Recruitment to fill up vacant posts is done periodically by holding departmental examination, direct recruitment through Staff Selection Commission and also by individual Circle as per the provisions of the relevant recruitment rules. Further, Departmental Promotion Committee is convened regularly for filling up vacancies on the basis of seniority-cum-fitness. Recruitment to fill up vacant posts is a continuous process.

Connectivity under BharatNet

1345. SHRI NARESH GUJRAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Gram Panchayats connected by optical fibre under the BharatNet programme; and

(b) the number of Common Service Centres to provide for Government banking and transaction services under the scheme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI MANOJ SINHA): (a) As on 16.12.2018, a total of 3,03,560 km Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) has been laid, connecting 1,22,274 Gram Panchayats (GPs) by OFC, of which 1,16,543 GPs are service ready.

(b) As part of the BharatNet project, the last mile connectivity through Wi-Fi or any other suitable broadband technology for accessing broadband services, is being provided at all the GPs (approx. 2.5 lakh) in the country. Every GP is to be provided with, on an average, 5 Access Points (APs), *i.e.* 3 APs in Government Institutions, such as school, police station, health institution, etc. and 2 APs at public places. Common Service Centre (CSC)-SPV has been assigned the setting up of Wi-Fi network in 32,828 GPs under the BharatNet project.

4G services by MTNL and BSNL

1346. SHRI AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for MTNL and BSNL not offering 4G services to keep up with market competition, when the private companies are offering 4G services at a very cheaper rate;

(b) whether there is any effort by private operators to scuttle the performance of MTNL and BSNL; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI MANOJ SINHA): (a) Proposals for allotment of spectrum, with Government support, for providing 4G services by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) have been received in Department of Telecommunications (DoT). BSNL has already started 4G services in a few Licensed Service Areas (LSAs).

(b) and (c) MTNL and BSNL have not reported any involvement of private operators trying to scuttle their performance.

Ground Based Towers in rural areas of Nellore

1347. SHRI PRABHAKAR REDDY VEMIREDDY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it has come to the notice of the Ministry that in the absence of Ground Based Towers (GBTs) in rural areas of Nellore district in Andhra Pradesh, BSNL is finding it difficult to provide smooth and fast transmission of mobile coverage;

(b) whether it is a fact that Nellore SSA identified some places for GBTs;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the progress made in construction of GBTs in the identified areas?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI MANOJ SINHA): (a) to (d) For smooth and fast transmission of mobile coverage in rural areas of Nellore district in Andhra Pradesh, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has identified places for setting up Ground Based Towers (GBTs) as detailed below:—

Sl.No.	Name of Place	Status
1.	Koturupalli	Tower erected and mobile services already commissioned.
2.	Sihar	Tower construction completed.
3.	Annekepalli	Tower construction completed.
4.	Annamedu	Foundation work completed and tower to be erected.