

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF PANCHAYATI RAJ
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO- 248
ANSWERED ON- 27.11.2024

STATUS OF THE THREE-TIER PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM

248 SHRI LAHAR SINGH SIROYA:

Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

- (a) the status of the three-tier Panchayati Raj system in the States, especially in terms of regular elections and devolution of powers;
- (b) whether Government is working to enhance the financial autonomy of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), especially in the light of the recommendations of the 15th Finance Commission;
- (c) the measures that are being taken to increase the effective participation of women in PRIs beyond the mandatory 33 per cent reservation; and
- (d) the initiatives that have been taken to improve the capacity and skills of elected representatives at all three levels of PRIs?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR PANCHAYATI RAJ

(PROF. S. P. SINGH BAGHEL)

(a) Three-tier Panchayati Raj System has been established with the insertion of Part-IX in the Constitution of India by way of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992. Article 243B under Part-IX of the Constitution of India provides that Panchayats at the village, intermediate and district levels shall be constituted in every State. Panchayats at the intermediate level may not be constituted in a State having a population not exceeding twenty lakhs. At present, States of Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Sikkim and Union Territories of Lakshadweep, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu have two-tier Panchayati Raj System while the remaining States & Union Territories have three-tier Panchayati Raj System.

Article 243E(1) of the Constitution of India provides holding of elections to the Panchayats every five years. Further Article 243E(3) of the Constitution states that elections to constitute a Panchayat shall be completed before the expiry of its duration of five years or before the expiration of a period of six months from the date of its dissolution. Therefore, the timely conduct of Panchayat elections in a State or Union Territory is a Constitutional requirement.

Article 243G of the Constitution of India empowers the Legislature of a State to make provisions, by law, for the devolution of power and responsibilities upon Panchayat at

appropriate level, subject to such conditions, as may be, specified with respect to the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice and implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them including those in relation to matters included in the Eleventh Schedule. The State legislatures are to consider the 29 subjects illustratively set out in the Eleventh Schedule for devolution to the Panchayats.

Accordingly, the States and Union Territories have made provisions in their State Panchayati Raj laws relating to the establishment of three-tiers of Panchayats, holding of elections to the Panchayats and devolution of powers to the Panchayats.

(b) Fifteenth Finance Commission (XV FC) Grants are provided to the Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) in all the three tiers of Panchayats and Traditional Bodies in 28 States. The allocation of these grants were Rs. 60,750 Crores for the interim period of 2020-21 and Rs. 2,36,805 Crores for the period 2021-26. XV FC Grants have two components; namely, Basic (Untied) Grants and Tied Grants. The Basic (Untied) grants can be used for felt needs of facilities under the 29 subjects enshrined in the XI schedule, except for salaries and other establishment costs. The Tied Grants are to be utilised towards facilities for drinking water and sanitation. Some Panchayats are also working on their own sources of revenue for strengthening their financial status.

(c) Article 243D of the Constitution of India provides not less than one-third reservation for women out of 'total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat' and 'total number of offices of chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level'. However, 21 States and 2 Union Territories have gone even further and have made provisions of 50% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions in their respective State Panchayati Raj Acts/Rules. In respect of remaining States and Union Territories, Constitutional provision as prescribed in Article 243D (i.e. not less than one-third reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions) applies.

The Ministry undertakes extensive capacity-building exercises for Elected Representatives, including Elected Women Representatives, through the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan scheme. This effort aims to develop the capabilities of Elected Women Representatives in Panchayats to enable them to function effectively and discharge their leadership roles efficiently.

The Ministry has issued advisories to States to facilitate the holding of separate Ward Sabha and Mahila Sabha meetings before Gram Sabha meetings. Additionally, advisories have been issued to enhance women's presence and participation in Gram Sabha and Panchayat meetings, including in preparing Gram Panchayat Development Plans, implementing schemes at Panchayats, and allocating Panchayat funds for women-centric activities.

(d) The Ministry is implementing the revamped Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) starting from the financial year 2022-23. The primary objective of this scheme is to empower Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) by providing training to all elected representatives (ERs) and other stakeholders, enhancing their governance capabilities for leadership roles. This is aimed at enabling Gram Panchayats to function effectively and achieve Sustainable Development Goals through localization at the

grassroots level.

Furthermore, the scheme supports various activities such as training needs assessment, development of training materials (including written, audio-visual, and other forms), training of master trainers, face-to-face training courses for ERs and Panchayat functionaries, and a satellite-based system for virtual training. It also includes exposure visits within and outside the states to enhance capacity building and training under the scheme.

Recently, the Ministry has also initiated the Management Development Program for ERs at the Indian Institute of Management, Institute of Rural Management Anand, and other Institutes of Excellence. This program focuses on the leadership development of ERs, aiming to upgrade their skills for effective rural governance and public service delivery.
