

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF PANCHAYATI RAJ
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1360
ANSWERED ON 11.02.2026

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNANCE AND GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT

1360 # SHRI TEJVEER SINGH:

Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

- (a) the steps taken recently to empower Panchayats financially and administratively and for effective implementation of schemes at the grassroots level;
- (b) the details of recent policy initiatives relating to e-Gram Swaraj, the Panchayat Advancement Index and capacity-building; and
- (c) the tangible improvements achieved so far in rural service delivery, transparency and local development as a result of these initiatives?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ

(SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH)

(a) “Panchayat”, being “Local Government”, is a State subject and part of State List of Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India. Panchayats are set up and operate through the respective State Panchayati Raj Acts which may vary from State to State, subject to the provisions of the Constitution. Article 243G of the Constitution empowers the Legislature of a State to make provisions, by law, for the devolution of powers 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 29 subjects included in the Eleventh Schedule to the Constitution. Accordingly, all matters relating to panchayats including empowerment of Panchayats financially and administratively falls within the purview of State Government.

For financial empowerment of Panchayats / Rural Local Bodies (RLBs), the States are provided with financial grants recommended by the Central Finance Commission. The Fifteenth Finance Commission has recommended allocation of Rs. 60,750 crores for the period of FY 2020-21 for Rural Local Bodies (RLBs). Further, for the period FY 2021-26, it

has recommended allocation of Rs. 2,36,805 crores for RLBs.

Ministry of Panchayati Raj is actively involved in assisting the RLBs towards augmenting their Own Source Revenues (OSR), thereby assisting in their autonomy and self-sufficiency. The Ministry has also undertaken a significant step to digitise the OSR collection of the Panchayats by developing the SAMARTH Panchayat portal, a dedicated digital platform that facilitates the generation of tax & non-tax demands & collection thereof, maintenance of tax registers, and online tracking of revenue. This digital empowerment is designed to bring transparency, efficiency, and scalability to local financial administration.

The Ministry is also implementing a Centrally Sponsored Scheme called Revamped Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) w.e.f. financial year 2022-23, with the main objective of supporting the capacity building of Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs) by imparting training to Elected Representatives and other stakeholders to develop their governance capabilities for leadership roles, enabling Gram Panchayats to function effectively across all States/Union Territories (UTs).

(b) & (c) The Ministry is implementing the e-Panchayat Mission Mode Project (MMP) under RGSA, which has significantly enhanced transparency, efficiency, and governance at the grassroots level. The e-Gram Swaraj application, developed as part of the e-Panchayat MMP, has facilitated digital planning, accounting, monitoring, and online payments at the Panchayat level. The integration of e-Gram Swaraj with the Public Financial Management System (PFMS) enables real-time payments to vendors and service providers, ensuring seamless fund flow and reducing delays.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has also developed the Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) as a composite assessment framework to measure the performance of Gram Panchayats/Equivalent to Gram Panchayats across nine themes aligned with the Localisation of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs). The PAI provides theme-wise and overall scores through scorecards and dashboards, enabling identification of performance gaps, relative strengths, and areas requiring focused attention at the Panchayat level. PAI Version 1.0 for FY 2022-23 was released in April 2025. Total 29 States/UTs have submitted validated PAI Data in a dedicated Portal (www.pai.gov.in) covering 2.16 lakh Gram Panchayats/Equivalent to GPs across India. The exercise for PAI Version 2.0 (FY 2023-24) was launched in May 2025.

Under the RGSA scheme, capacity building and training for elected representatives, functionaries, and other stakeholders of Panchayats is supported under different categories, viz. basic orientation and refresher training, thematic training, specialized training, Panchayat development plan training, etc. A total of 1,47,74,778 participants provided training from the FY 2022-23 to 2025-26 (till 31st January 2026). Additionally, the scheme also supports exposure visits for the elected representatives & functionaries of Panchayats to the Beacon Panchayats for exchange of learning of the exemplary practices on various development sectors. In addition to this, training modules and

materials are developed to augment the knowledge on different subjects of rural governance.

Capacity building of elected representatives and functionaries of PRIs has been rolled out through institutes of excellence such as Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs)/ Indian Institute of Technology (IITs) under the Leadership/Management Development Programme (MDP) to enhance their knowledge & leadership skills.

To enhance the financial self-reliance of Gram Panchayats, a dedicated Own Source Revenue (OSR) training module was developed in collaboration with IIM Ahmedabad. Additionally, the Ministry has launched a Specialized Training Module for the Women Elected Representatives (WER) of Panchayats to develop leadership & managerial skills for effective delivery of their roles & responsibilities.

“Audit Online” application was launched in April 2020, for online audit of Panchayat accounts, financial management and transparent auditing of Central Finance Commission grants utilization.

The Ministry has also introduced Sabha Saar, an AI-enabled voice-to-text and meeting summarization platform, to support accurate and timely documentation of Gram Sabha and Panchayat meetings. The platform facilitates multilingual transcription, agenda-wise summarization of proceedings, validation of minutes by Panchayat functionaries prior to finalization, and structured recording of resolutions and action points. SabhaSaar is intended to enhance transparency, efficiency, and follow-up in grassroots governance.

Furthermore, the Ministry has strengthened the e-Gram Swaraj platform through integration with other national digital platforms. Integration with the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) facilitates transparent, efficient, and rule-based procurement by Gram Panchayats. Integration with Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) enables Gram Panchayats to apply for internet connectivity at the Panchayat level. Integration with BHASHINI enables multilingual access to e-Gram Swaraj, thereby improving accessibility in regional languages. In addition, integration of weather forecast information supports informed local planning and timely decision-making, particularly in the areas of agriculture and disaster preparedness.

As on 05.02.2026, during the financial year 2025–26, a total of 2,53,992 Gram Panchayats across the country uploaded their Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GDPDs) on the e-Gram Swaraj platform. Further, for the audit period 2023–24, audit reports for 2,51,974 Gram Panchayats have been generated through the Audit Online. Further, a total of 1,15,115 Gram Panchayats across States and Union Territories have used the Sabha Saar platform for automated summarisation of Gram Sabha and Panchayat meetings.
