

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF PANCHAYATI RAJ  
**LOK SABHA**  
**STARRED QUESTION NO. \*93**  
ANSWERED ON-13.12.2022

**PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS**

\*93. SHRI RAJU BISTA:

Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

- (a) whether there is any constitutional barrier for conducting 3-tier Panchayat elections in the districts of Darjeeling and Kalimpong;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the steps taken/being taken to ensure protection of citizens right to grassroots governance as provisioned under the Constitution of India in case there is no such barrier;
- (d) whether the Government is aware that elections to Panchayats have not been conducted in the hilly regions of the districts of Darjeeling and Kalimpong since 2006; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof along with steps taken by the Government to ensure elections to Panchayats in the hilly regions of districts of Darjeeling and Kalimpong?

**ANSWER**

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ

(SHRI GIRIRAJ SINGH)

(a) to (e) : A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

**STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) to (e) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. \*93 FOR ANSWER ON 13.12.2022 REGARDING 'PANCHAYAT ELECTIONS'**

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(a) to (b) No Sir; Provisions of Part-IX of the Constitution of India, including provisions to conduct Panchayat elections, are applicable to all States and Union Territories, excluding areas exempted by Article 243M of the Constitution. Panchayat, being “Local Government”, is a State Subject and part of the State List in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India. Accordingly, Panchayats are set up and operate through the respective State Panchayati Raj Acts and rules, subject to provisions of the Constitution. The State Governments have been empowered by the Constitution to make laws relating to Panchayats, including to ensure protection of citizens right to grassroots governance as provisioned under the Constitution. However, Ministry of Panchayati Raj reviews their performance from time to time, through studies, review meetings, field visits, Common Review Missions etc.

(c) to (e) The responsibility for the conduct of elections to the Rural Local Bodies has been vested in State Election Commissions as per Article 243K of the Constitution of India. Ministry of Panchayati Raj regularly advises States for holding regular and timely elections to Panchayats.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) is aware elections to the Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) in the Hill Districts of Darjeeling and Kalimpong are due since the year 2006. The Ministry has been consistently impressing upon the State Government of West Bengal through verbal and written communications to conduct elections to the RLBs, especially as MoPR has been constrained to deduct the proportion due to the non-constituted RLBs in the Hill Districts of Darjeeling and Kalimpong from Fourteenth and Fifteenth Finance Commission Grants to West Bengal since Ministry of Finance (MoF) guidelines prescribed devolution of funds only to duly constituted RLBs.

MoPR has written to the State Government of West Bengal to take necessary steps for conducting Gram Panchayat elections so that they become eligible for Finance Commission Grants and take up developmental activities towards delivering basic services to the citizens.

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