

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF PANCHAYATI RAJ
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 4089
ANSWERED ON 25.03.2025

GRAM SABHA

4089. MS KANGNA RANAUT:

Will the Minister of **PANCHAYATI RAJ** be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that Gram Sabhas play a critical role in participatory democracy, yet their meetings often witness low attendance, limited awareness and lack of public engagement;
- (b) Whether it is also true that Himachal Pradesh and other hilly States face additional challenges in convening Gram Sabhas regularly due to geographical constraints,
- (c) Whether it is also a fact that the Government is working on enhancing digital participation mechanisms, awareness campaigns and capacity-building programmes to strengthen Gram Sabha involvement; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR PANCHAYATI RAJ

(SHRI S.P. SINGH BAGHEL)

(a) "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, subject to the provisions of the Constitution. In terms of provisions of Article 243A of the Constitution of India, a Gram Sabha may exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide. Therefore, powers and functions of a Gram Sabha, including to organise Gram Sabha meetings and to create awareness about Gram Sabha meetings etc comes under the jurisdiction of the State concerned.

Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) issues advisories to States/UTs for efficient and effective function of Gram Panchayats for strengthening participatory democracy at grassroot level. The Ministry has issued advisories to States to facilitate the holding of separate Ward Sabha and Mahila Sabha meetings before Gram Sabha meetings. The Ministry has been rolling out People's Plan Campaign as 'Sabki Yojana Sabka Vikas' since 2018 for preparation of evidence based, holistic and inclusive Development Plans at the grassroots level in structured manner including Gram/Village Panchayats, Block/Intermediate Panchayats and District Panchayats. The main objective is active participation of Sarpanches, Panchayat members and residents facilitate the

identification of local development issues, needs and priorities, and the based on the same thematic Sankalp is taken for preparation of comprehensive Gram Panchayat Development Plan aiming at the saturation of services and infrastructure in all the sectors contained in a particular theme.

State of Himachal Pradesh reported that Gram Sabhas do play a crucial role in participatory democracy in the State of Himachal Pradesh. The Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 mandates holding of 4 Gram Sabhas i.e. quarterly in a year. Wide publicity is given to the agendas to be discussed in these Gram Sabhas. Hence active participation of general public is witnessed in these Gram Sabhas.

(b) Yes, it is true that additional challenge is being faced in convening Gram Sabhas regularly due to geographical constraints Himachal Pradesh and other hilly States.

(c) & (d) The Ministry has been implementing the Revamped Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) since the financial year 2022-23 in States and Union Territories, including Himachal Pradesh. The primary objective is to strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) by providing training to Elected Representatives (ERs), functionaries, and other stakeholders, enhancing their governance skills for effective leadership and efficient functioning of Panchayats.

As part of this scheme, the Ministry facilitates capacity building and training for elected representatives, Panchayat functionaries, and other stakeholders in various categories, such as basic orientation, refresher training, thematic training, specialized training, and Panchayat Development Plan training. Additionally, the Ministry supports exposure visits, as well as the development of training modules and materials. A new initiative under the Leadership/Management Development Program (MDP) focuses on capacity building and training through institutes of excellence.

Training programs cover areas such as thematic development planning, financial management, the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in rural governance and service delivery, and specialized topics, leading to enhanced governance at the grassroots level.

To promote digital governance, elected representatives and functionaries utilize the GramSwaraj application, developed under the e-Panchayat Mission Model Project (MMP), which supports digital planning, accounting, monitoring, and online payments. To ensure transparency, the Ministry has introduced the Panchayat Nirnay mobile application for managing Panchayat meetings, including Gram Sabha meetings. This app notifies citizens about scheduled meetings, agendas, or minutes of meetings uploaded by Panchayats configured by the user. The app is accessible on both iOS and Android platforms.

Furthermore, the Ministry actively promotes independent functioning of Sarpanches through an extensive Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) strategy that leverages print, digital, and social media platforms. To inspire grassroots leadership, audio-visual films showcasing best practices are widely shared on social media.
