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Kurukshetra

A RURAL DEVELOPMENT MONTHLY SINCE 1952



PANCHAYATI RAJ

- Empowering Women's Leadership in PRI's
- Contours of Devolution to Panchayats
- The Decade of Empowering PRI's
- SVAMITVA :Unlocking Economic Growth & Property Rights
- Water Management Through PRI's





Kurukshetra

A Rural Development Monthly since 1952

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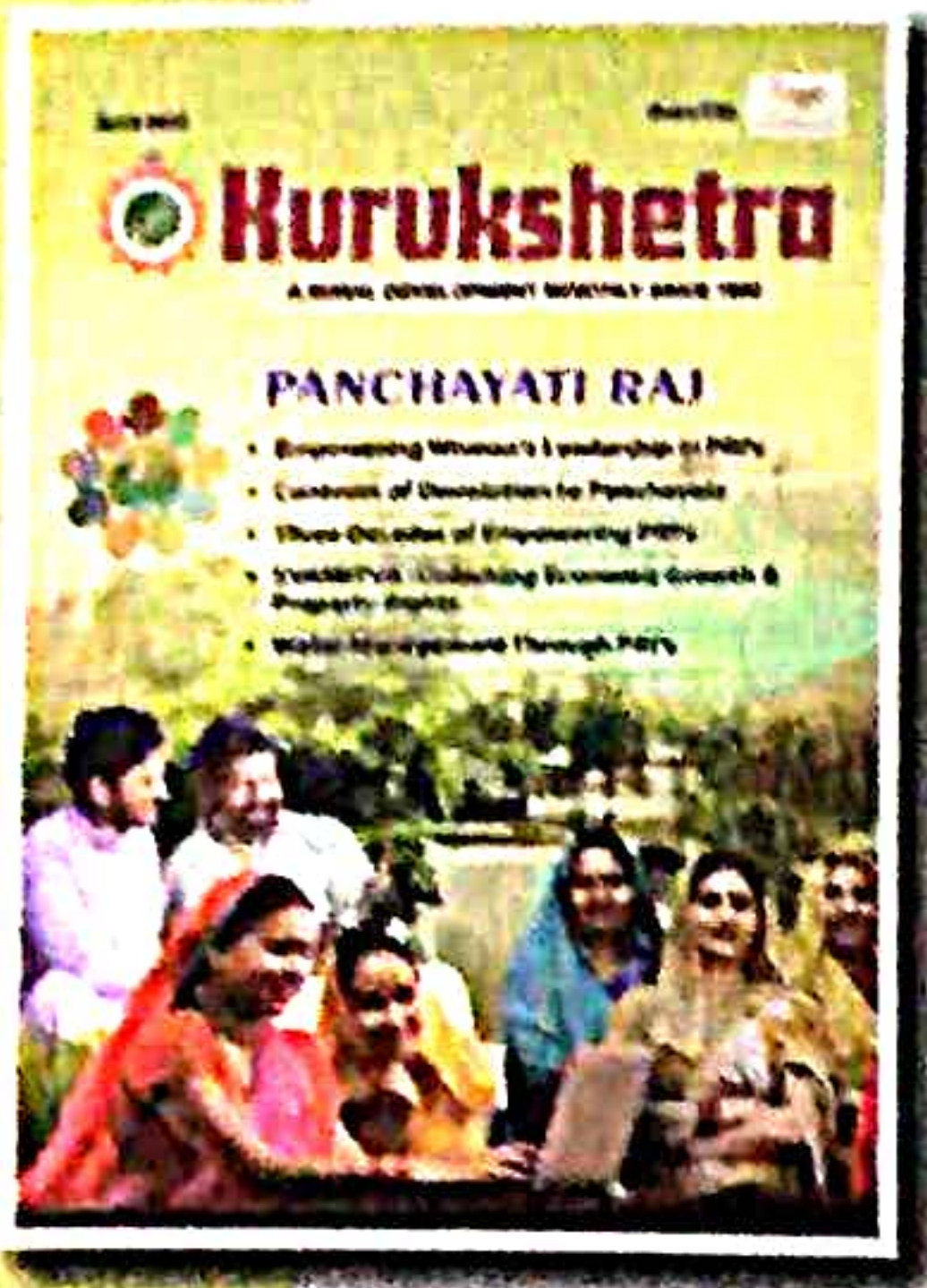
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Editorial

The Panchayati Raj system in India is a unique and indispensable feature of the country's governance structure, designed to ensure decentralization and empower rural communities. Rooted in India's traditional self-governance mechanisms, the system is a critical aspect of India's democratic framework, as it fosters local democracy, promotes participatory governance, and ensures that grassroots voices are heard. The modern structure of Panchayati Raj emerged as part of the constitutional framework after India's independence.

This issue of Kurukshetra is being brought out to commemorate the National Panchayati Raj Day celebrated annually on 24 April by Ministry of Panchayati Raj. The article "The Panchayati Raj System: Empowering Women's Leadership in Rural India" by the Union Minister of State, Ministry of Panchayati Raj & Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Prof. S.P.Singh Baghel stresses upon the need for the increasing role of women in Panchayats and their political participation led to more inclusive development, as policies are now more representative of the needs of diverse sections of society.

Another article by the Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Shri Vivek Bharadwaj on "Contours of Devolution to Panchayats- A Fresh Look: Panchayat Devolution Index-2024" thoroughly discusses about the Devolution to Panchayats making them to function effectively having greater financial autonomy. And how the Devolution Index is promoting evidence-based policy making and fostering healthy competition among States in strengthening local self-governments

The article titled "Three Decades of Empowering Panchayati Raj Institutions" by the Additional Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Shri Sushil Kumar Lohani opines that Panchayati Raj has made remarkable progress in the direction of its goal for empowerment and self-sustainability of the PRIs by converging other Ministries' plans and active public participation under the leadership of the local peoples' representatives in the States.

Other articles contributed by the professionals and experts associated with the Ministry on the subjects of "Revisiting State PRIs Acts", "Svemitva", "Manchitra", "Water management by PRIs" and "Capacity Building of Panchayats" have very succinctly covered all aspects related to the subjects.

The Panchayati Raj system holds immense potential to transform rural governance in India. While it has empowered local communities and brought governance closer to the people, the system is still grappling with challenges like political interference, resource constraints, and inefficiency. Strengthening Panchayati Raj requires not only legislative support but also sustained efforts to build capacity, promote transparency, and ensure financial independence. With the right policies and reforms, Panchayati Raj can be the driving force for rural development, creating an empowered and self-reliant rural India.

Hope that this issue of Kurukshetra will broaden the knowledge of the readers and provide factual information on the present scenario of Panchayati Raj and achievements of the Ministry while making Panchayats more empowered, self-reliant, and good-governed, with the goal of building a Viksit Bharat. □



The Panchayati Raj System Empowering Women's Leadership in Rural India

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has been consistently working to enhance the leadership capabilities of women Panchayat representatives. Over the past decade, these efforts have yielded positive and commendable results. With adequate capacity building and training, elected women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have significantly improved their decision-making abilities and administrative efficiency.

***Prof. S.P. Singh Baghel**

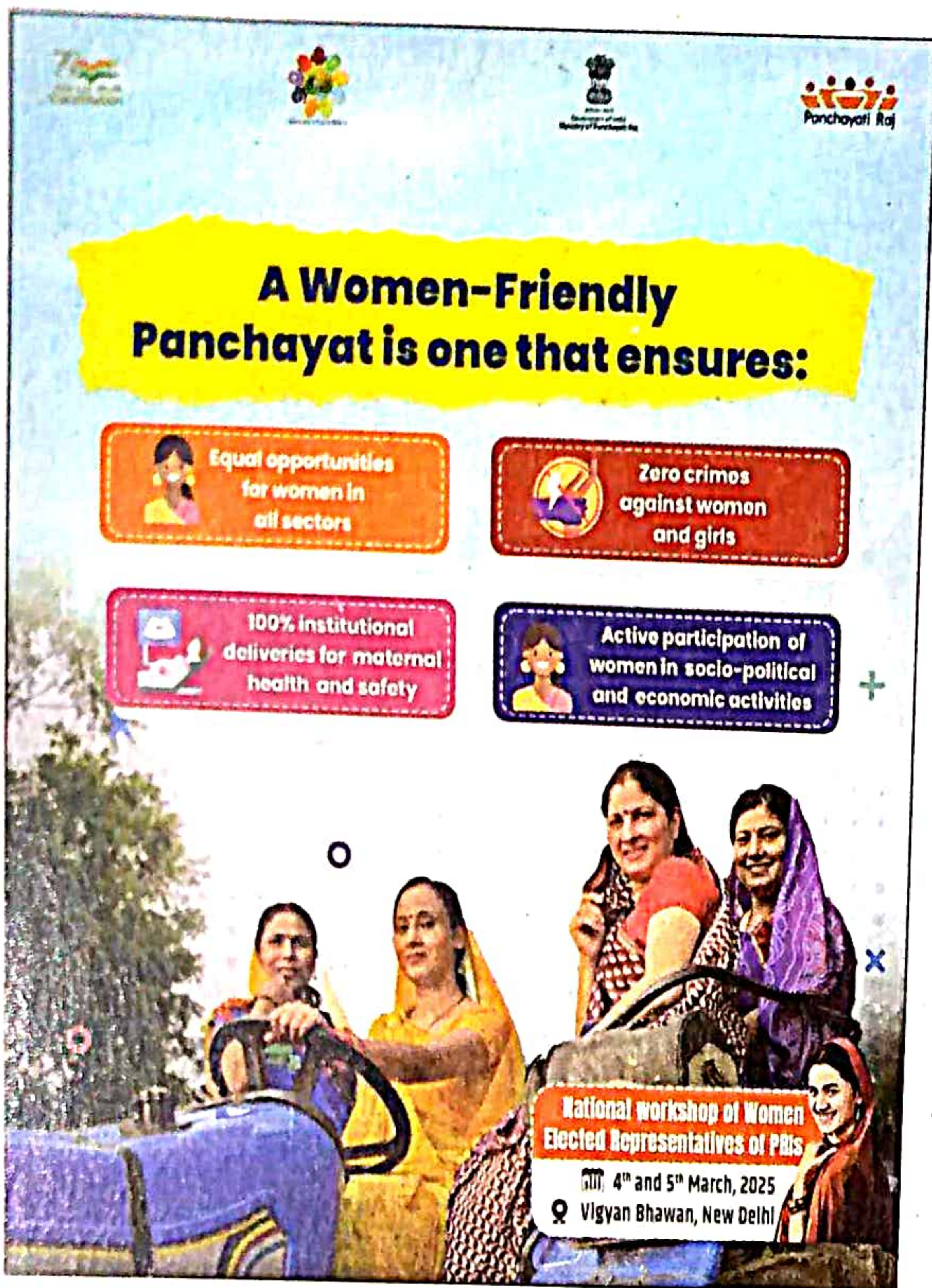
यत् नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत् देवताः ।

(Divinity dwells where women are respected)

In India's Sanatan culture, there has been a rich tradition of respecting and empowering women. During the Vedic era, women actively participated in education, philosophical debates, and governance. Scholars like Gargi and Maitreyi demonstrated their intellectual prowess through profound discussions on philosophy and spiritual knowledge (Brahmavidya). The participation of women in the Sabha (council) and Samiti (assembly) of the Vedic period reflects that they enjoyed both social and political freedom. During the medieval

period, eminent women leaders and warriors such as Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar, Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi, and Rani Avantibai demonstrated exceptional leadership and administrative prowess. Through their remarkable governance and valour, they firmly established women's leadership in the political and administrative sphere from time to time. History reflects that Indian women have always played a pivotal role in shaping society and governance. Even today, they continue to carry forward this glorious tradition, leading in various fields and scripting the golden chapter of women's empowerment with unwavering determination.

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The 73rd Constitutional Amendment of 1993 granted constitutional status to the three-tier Panchayati Raj system, establishing it as a unit of local self-governance in rural India. With around 6.5 lakh villages housing nearly 64% of India's population, the 2.6 lakh Panchayats play a crucial role in implementing the agenda of economic development and social welfare at the grassroots level. Notably, there are approximately 31.5 lakh elected representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) across the country, of which about 46%—nearly half—are women.

To ensure that women actively participate in grassroots decision-making, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act mandates one-third (1/3) reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and

Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) under Article 243D. However, 21 states and 2 Union Territories have prioritized women's empowerment by increasing women's reservation in direct elections to 50%. Additionally, it has been observed that in many cases, women have secured Panchayat positions even on unreserved seats while competing in an open electoral contest.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has been consistently working to enhance the leadership capabilities of women Panchayat representatives. Over the past decade, these efforts have yielded positive and commendable results. With adequate capacity building and training, elected women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have significantly improved their decision-making abilities and administrative efficiency. Under the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA), from 2022–23 to 2024–25, approximately 23.14 lakh elected women Panchayat representatives have been trained to enhance their skills and effectiveness in governance.

Recently, on the occasion of International Women's Day (March 4–5), the Ministry of Panchayati Raj organized a national conference focused on elected women Panchayat representatives and women-friendly Gram Panchayats. During this event, the "Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan" was launched. This initiative aims to strengthen the capacity building of elected women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) by enhancing their leadership skills, decision-making abilities, and governance roles at the grassroots level. During the conference, a training module for elected women representatives was also launched. This module incorporates games and activities to enhance various skills. This initiative is expected to increase the active participation of women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Additionally, the government has launched the "Adarsh Mahila-





Who can participate?

All Women voters from Gram Panchayat can participate in the Mahila Sabha

Ensures Women Participation from :



Marginalized communities



Disabled, Elderly and Economically Weaker



Member of Self-Help Groups



Hitashi Gram Panchayat” initiative, aiming to establish at least one model Gram Panchayat in each district. This initiative is part of a comprehensive strategy to strengthen women’s political participation and their role in local governance. Through these efforts, the government remains committed to ensuring the holistic empowerment of women, particularly in rural areas, and to enhancing their effective participation in local self-governance.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has recently released a primer for elected Panchayat representatives and officials, focusing on legal provisions for the effective prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices. The objective of this initiative is to equip elected Panchayat representatives with the knowledge and tools to effectively address these issues and help prevent them within their communities.

Additionally, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has taken steps to establish a model women-friendly Gram Panchayat in every district across the country. Under this initiative, the ministry has developed a comprehensive training program along with an activity monitoring dashboard. In the coming years, 770 model women-friendly Panchayats will be set up, serving as inspirational examples for other Panchayats nationwide. This initiative will contribute to building a safer, more

inclusive, and prosperous future for women in rural India.

Women-friendly Panchayats ensure the economic and social empowerment of women and adolescent girls in villages while making Panchayats responsible for their health, education, and safety. In recent years, several Panchayats have taken significant steps in this direction by incorporating women-centric provisions into their Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GDPs), thereby strengthening their commitment to gender-inclusive governance.

However, in 2023-24, only 1% of Gram Panchayats incorporated a women-friendly theme in their Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GDPs). Thanks to the continuous efforts of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, this number increased to 4.57% in 2024-25 and is expected to reach around 5% in 2025-26. While this progress is encouraging, there is still a need for more Panchayats to commit to this initiative and actively integrate women-centric policies into their development plans.

A remarkable example of strong women’s leadership in Panchayati Raj Institutions was witnessed during the National Panchayat Awards Ceremony 2024. Out of the 45 Panchayats honored, nearly 40% were led by women. This achievement highlights the significant role that women-led Panchayats are playing in rural development, good governance, and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

It is important to note that, in some places, elected women Panchayat representatives still face interference



NATIONAL Panchayat Awards 2024

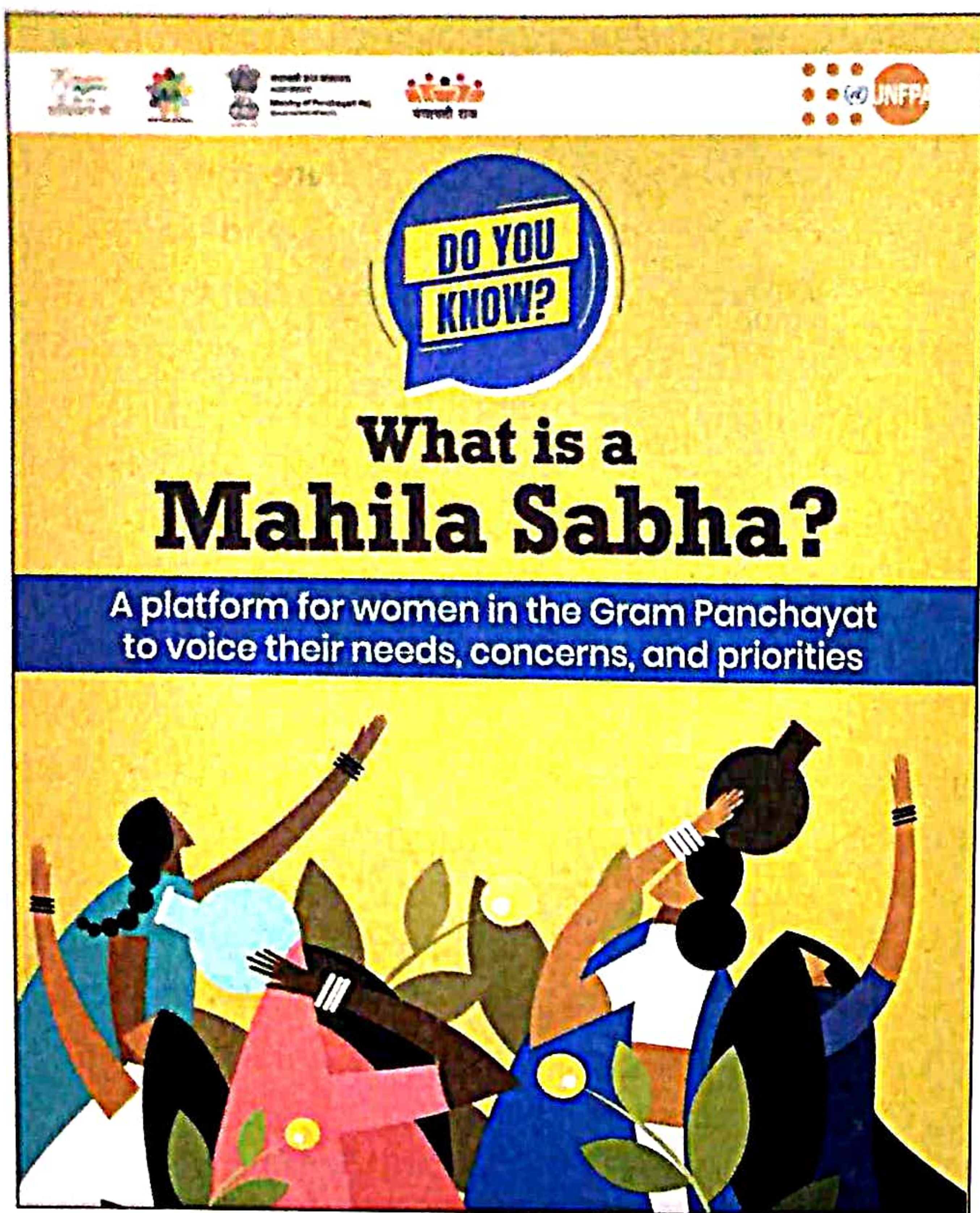
Gram Panchayats have been honoured Based on their performance in 9 LSDG themes

- Poverty-free and enhanced livelihood panchayat
- Healthy panchayat
- Child-friendly panchayat
- Water sufficient panchayat
- Clean and green panchayat
- Self-reliant infrastructure panchayat
- Socially just and secure panchayat
- Good governance panchayat
- Women-friendly panchayat





सशक्त पंचायत सतत विकास



from their husbands or other male family members in Panchayat affairs. The mindset of “Sarpanch Pati” or “Pradhan Pati” reflects a regressive outlook aimed at confining women within the four walls of their homes, restricting their independent leadership and decision-making.

In compliance with the Hon’ble Supreme Court’s directive, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj took a decisive step to curb this malpractice and empower women Panchayat representatives by constituting an Advisory Committee in September 2023. This committee was chaired by Shri Sushil Kumar, former Secretary to the Government of India. The recently released report of this committee “Transforming Women’s Representation and Roles in Panchayati Raj Systems: Efforts to Eliminate Proxy Participation” provides key recommendations that, if implemented effectively, will help eradicate this malpractice. When elected women Panchayat representatives would fully exercise their rights and make independent decisions, rural India will witness a positive shift in its social landscape.

The SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas) scheme of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has also set new milestones in women’s empowerment in rural areas. Several states across the country have introduced

provisions under this scheme to register women as sole or joint owners in the property cards issued, ensuring their property rights and financial security. Having property ownership in their own name has significantly boosted the confidence of rural women. Other states should also adopt this progressive initiative. On January 18, 2025, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi distributed over 65 lakh property cards to property owners in more than 50,000 villages across 10 states and 2 Union Territories under the SVAMITVA scheme.

The Gram Sabha provides every voter in the rural community with a direct opportunity to participate in the economic and social development of the village. A minimum of 10% attendance is required in Gram Sabha meetings, with at least 30% women participants. To ensure focused discussions on women- and girl-related issues, the provision of “Mahila Sabha” has been introduced, requiring a minimum quorum of 10% of the total women voters in the village. Several states have mandated the organization of at least two to three Mahila Sabha meetings per year in every Panchayat, ensuring active participation of women. Other states should also adopt such steps to strengthen women’s engagement in local governance through Mahila Sabhas.

Under the inspirational leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the past decade has seen significant efforts to ensure women in rural areas receive their rightful place. As a result, women’s leadership has taken a prominent role in Panchayats.

With Prime Minister Modi’s visionary leadership, the Indian Parliament has passed the ‘Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam’, ensuring 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. This historic legislation provides a golden opportunity for women who have proven their leadership in Panchayats, paving the way for them to rise to the State Assemblies and the Parliament in the future.

In the 119th episode of ‘Mann Ki Baat’, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi emphasized the role of Nari Shakti in nation-building. Our continuous efforts toward women’s empowerment in rural India and the leadership development of elected women representatives in Panchayats are steps toward building an equitable society, where half of the country’s population receives its rightful place and opportunities. □



Contours of Devolution to Panchayats

A Fresh Look: Panchayat Devolution Index-2024

The Devolution Index can be used to assess the overall health of local governance and identify where reforms are most urgently needed. It highlights areas where states are excelling and where they need additional support, helping to create targeted policies that will strengthen the Panchayat system and promote greater decentralization. The Devolution Index is not just a ranking; it is a beacon that shines light on the path towards a more democratic, inclusive, and accountable system of local governance. For a common person, it provides transparency and insight into the functioning of Panchayats.

***Vivek Bharadwaj**

W

e know that Part IX of the Constitution, titled 'The Panchayats,' was introduced through the 73rd Amendment Act on April 24, 1993.

Panchayats, as rural local self-government institutions, constitute a fundamental component of India's multi-order federal system. Article 243G of the Constitution empowers the Legislature of a State to make provisions, by law, for the devolution of power and responsibilities upon Panchayats with respect to the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice and their implementation including those in relation to matters included in the Eleventh Schedule to the Constitution. The Eleventh Schedule lists 29 subjects like Agriculture, Land improvement

& reforms, School Education, Drinking Water, Rural Housing etc. The State legislatures are to consider the 29 subjects illustratively set out in the Eleventh Schedule for devolution of power and responsibilities upon Panchayats. In this attempt, the Union Government provides necessary assistance to the States to ensure compliance with the legal provisions of the Constitution outlined in Part IX of the Constitution.

This central legislation required each state to enact conformity acts, integrating the central provisions into their existing Panchayat Acts. While mandatory constitutional provisions—such as regular Panchayat elections by State Election Commissions, reservations for SCs/STs and women, and the constitution of State Finance Commissions—have been implemented, the

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Key Milestones of 2024 to Strengthen Panchayat Infrastructure

4600+

Gram Panchayat offices sanctioned

Name of State	Number of sanctioned GP Bhawan
Arunachal Pradesh	661
Andhra Pradesh	617
Uttarakhand	612
Maharashtra	568
Haryana	500
Punjab	500
Gujarat	412
Karnataka	258
Assam	178
Tamil Nadu	146
Uttar Pradesh	100

devolution of functions, finances, and functionaries to Panchayats has been inconsistent across States. We know that effective local governance cannot be achieved through these transfer mechanisms alone. It necessitates 'capacity enhancement' measures and 'accountability' to ensure fairness and transparency in Panchayat operations.

It is on this backdrop that the Panchayat Devolution Index (PDI), which is a measure in understanding the extent to which States in India have transferred authority and responsibility to Panchayats, is compiled by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj through reputed research Institutes in the country intermittently. PDI thus is creating a framework for evaluating the degree of devolution in various States and Union Territories (UTs) of India. The Devolution Index has evolved through various studies, feedback mechanisms, and methodological advancements, highlighting the growth and challenges of decentralization in India. The latest such work was entrusted to Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) that has compiled the report indicating the devolution status as in the year 2021-22.

The Genesis and Past Exercises

In October, 2004, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj organized a roundtable of State Ministers in-charge of Panchayati Raj in Srinagar on the theme of Status of Panchayats and Devolution Index. In the roundtable, the IIPA presented a concept paper of the Devolution Index. The concept paper outlined the critical dimensions of devolution, specifically focusing on the

transfer of functions, finances, and functionaries (the 3F framework). This concept paper became the foundation for subsequent studies by other Institutes with further refinements in tune with the times.

The Devolution Index presents the overall scores and ranks for States/UTs on six identified dimensions (namely, Framework, Function, Finances, Functionaries, Capacity Enhancement and Accountability) covered through twenty-six indicators. The index permits both a spatial and temporal assessment of the devolution of power. The sub-indices for each of the component dimensions add useful insights into the regional diversity in the devolution structure.

Initially, the Devolution Index was based on the "3F" framework that assessed the extent to which States transferred the three key elements—functions, finances, and functionaries—to Panchayats. In 2008, the 'framework' dimension was added to evaluate States' compliance with mandatory constitutional provisions like establishing a State Election Commission, holding regular Panchayat elections, and creating State Finance Commissions (SFCs).

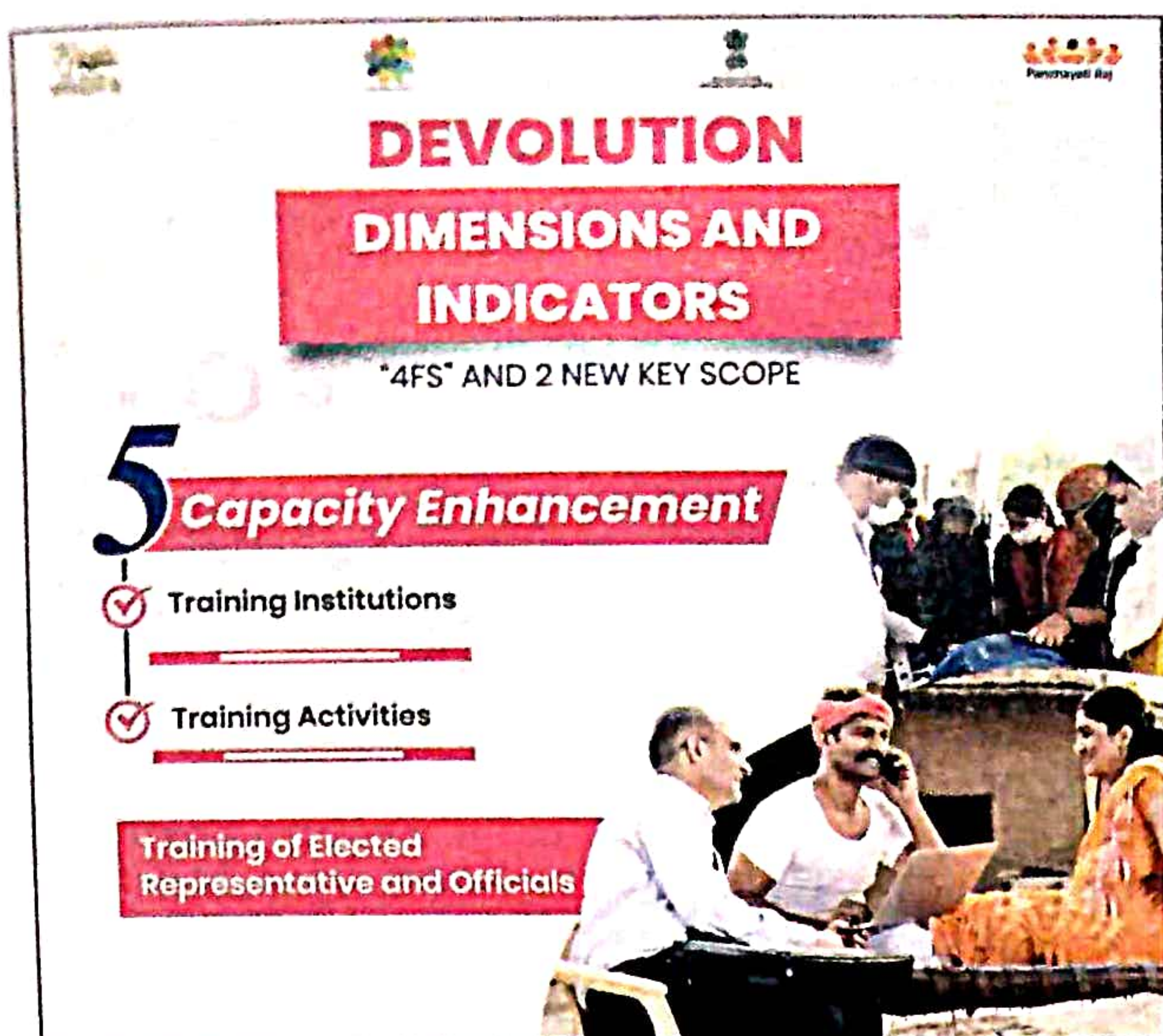
However, over time, additional dimensions were incorporated to improve the comprehensiveness of the index. The early years of the Devolution Index focused on refining its methodology and expanding its scope. In 2009, IIPA took over the study, expanding the methodology by adopting a more complex two-stage approach. The first stage involved identifying States that met all four criteria under the mandatory "framework" dimension, and the second stage calculated scores for

Key Milestones of 2024 to Strengthen Panchayat Infrastructure

31,000+

Computers provided to Gram Panchayats

Name of State	Number of sanctioned Computers
Punjab	8034
Chhattisgarh	5896
Uttarakhand	3760
Jharkhand	2066
Bihar	2000
Telangana	1640
Tamil Nadu	1594
Andhra Pradesh	1422
Haryana	1363
Maharashtra	945
Assam	687
Arunachal Pradesh	400



these States. This approach provided a clearer picture of devolution, reflecting both the breadth and depth of decentralization.

Over the years between 2009 to 2013, additional dimensions were incorporated to capture more nuanced aspects of devolution. The framework was expanded to include indicators related to 'capacity enhancement' and 'accountability', along with 26 indicators, making the Devolution Index a robust tool to track the progress of Panchayat Raj. Field surveys were also conducted annually to validate the collected data, ensuring the accuracy of the assessments.

Through these continuous engagements and iterative refinements, the Devolution Index has become a powerful tool for assessing and improving local governance in India. Over the years, the Panchayat Devolution Index has been prepared by the following organisations: National Council of Applied Economic Research for the year 2006-07, 2007-08 & 2008-09, Indian Institute Public Administration for the year 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 & 2013-14 and Tata Institute of Social Science Research for the year 2014-15 & 2015-16.

The Latest Panchayats Devolution Index-2024 Report

The latest report, 'Status of Devolution to Panchayats in States-2024-An Indicative Evidence Based Ranking' has been submitted by the IIPA. The broad findings are as follow:

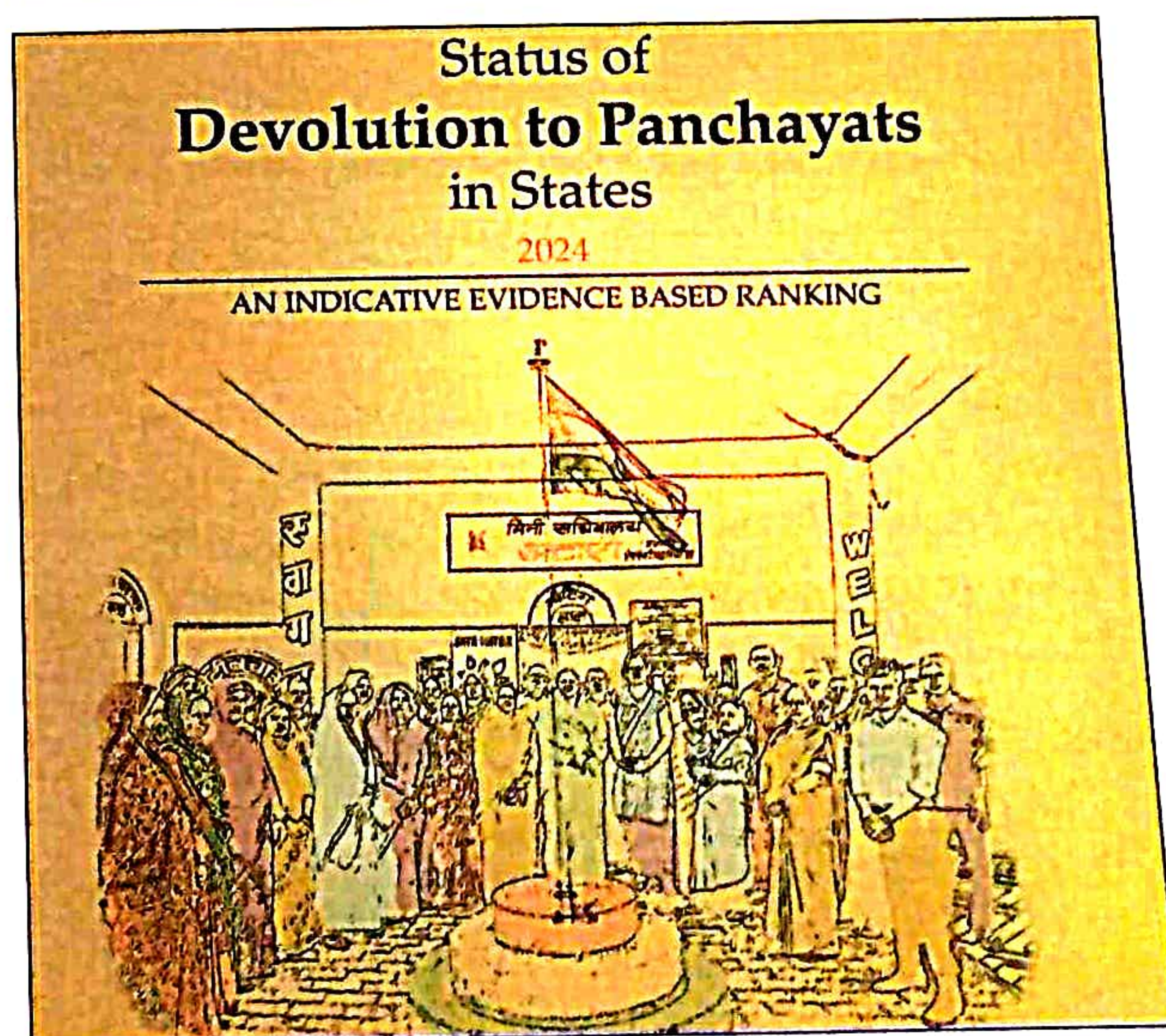
- The overall devolution has increased from 39.9% to 43.9% between the period 2013-14 to 2022-23.
- The 'capacity enhancement' dimension of the

Index during this period has increased substantially from 44% to 54.6% i.e. an increase of more than 10 points. This increase can be associated with the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) which was launched on 21.4.2018.

- During this period, the 'functionaries' dimension of the Devolution Index is showing a significant growth of more than 10 points from 39.6% to 50.9%. This could be the result of the efforts made by the Government of India and the States in (d) providing physical infrastructure to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), and (ii) recruitment drives of officials to strengthen Panchayats.
- The financial devolution has improved from a national average of 32.05 to 37.04 between the period 2013-14 to 2022-23.

The top ten States in PDI as of 2015-16 and 2022-23 are as follows:

2015-16	2022-23
Kerala	Karnataka
Maharashtra	Kerala
Karnataka	Tamil Nadu
Tamil Nadu	Maharashtra
Gujarat	Uttar Pradesh
Sikkim	Gujarat
West Bengal	Tripura
Telangana, Haryana	Rajasthan
Madhya Pradesh	West Bengal
Rajasthan	Chhattisgarh



The top ranked states on different dimensions are:

Framework-	Kerala
Functions -	Tamil Nadu
Finances -	Karnataka
Functionaries -	Gujarat
Capacity enhancement -	Telangana
Accountability -	Karnataka

Since the last evaluation, Uttar Pradesh has jumped from 15th place to the 5th place and Tripura has jumped from 13th place to the 7th place. Uttar Pradesh has seen a remarkable improvement in 'accountability' dimension of the Index, bringing about accountability of the Panchayats through transparency and anti-corruption measures and ensuring regular publication of accounts and audit thereof. During this period Tripura has performed well in the empowerment of Panchayats to impose and collect revenue and ensuring Finance Commission grants to PRIs.

The detailed report in 3 volumes has been uploaded on the official website of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj www.panchayat.gov.in.

Implications

The Devolution Index can be used to assess the overall health of local governance and identify where reforms are most urgently needed. It highlights areas where states are excelling and where they need additional support, helping to create targeted policies that will strengthen the Panchayat system and promote greater decentralization. The Index

PANCHAYAT DEVOLUTION INDEX 2024

Top performers on different Dimensions



Panchayat Devolution Index 2024

With the launch of
Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan
(Launched on 21.4.2018)

Capacity Enhancement Component Growth

Saw Increase of **+10.6%**

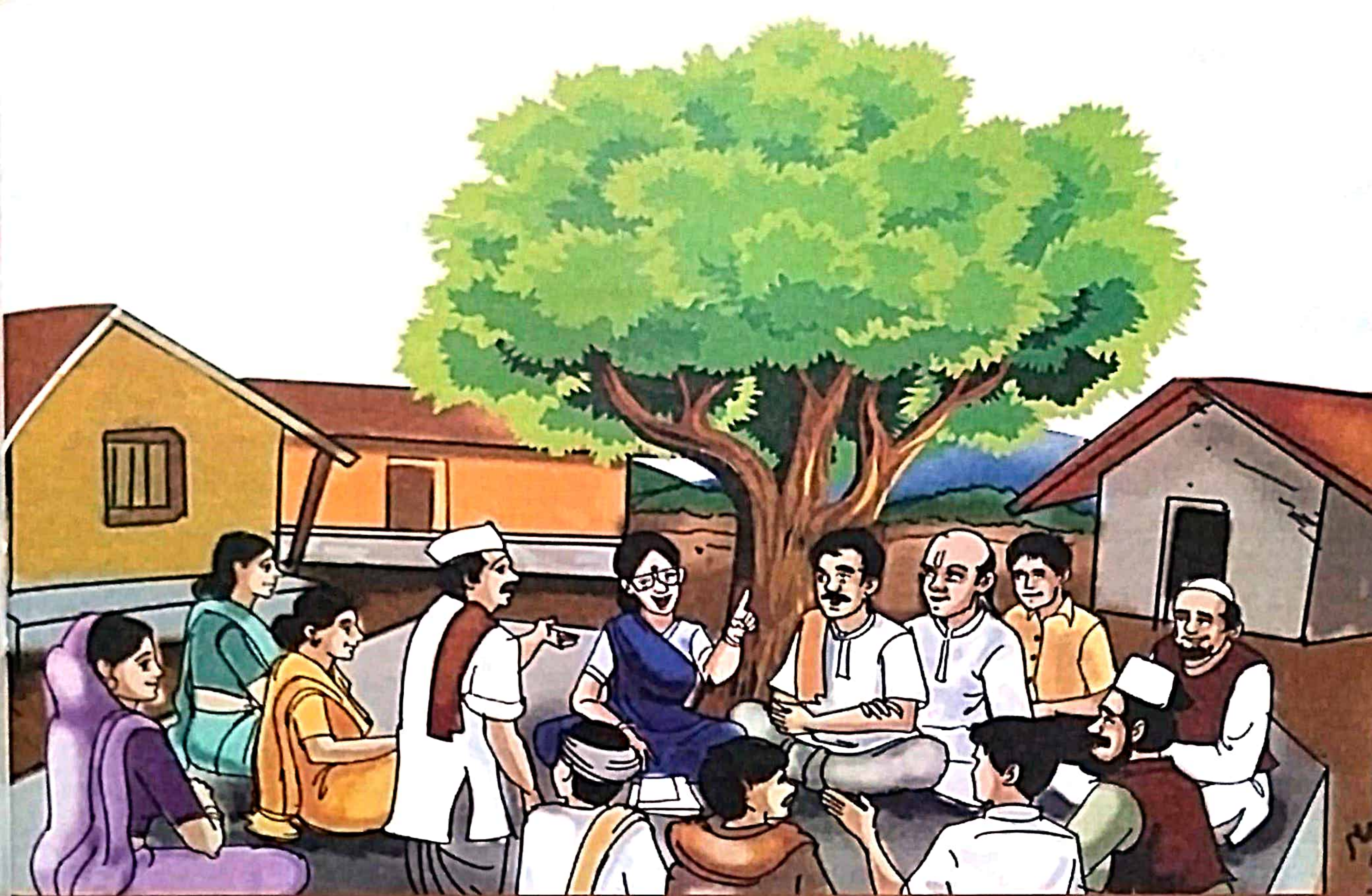
IMPACT OF RGSA:

- Strengthened local governance capacity
- Improved Panchayat performance through better training, resources, and support



serves as a basis for more informed discussions about the future of local self-governments in India. By providing data on the status of devolution, it allows policy makers to evaluate the effectiveness of existing laws, allocation of resources, and policy design that empower local governments to fulfill their constitutional obligations.

The Devolution Index is not just a ranking; it is a beacon that shines light on the path towards a more democratic, inclusive, and accountable system of local governance. For a common person, it provides transparency and insight into the functioning of Panchayats. For elected representatives, it offers a data-driven approach to advocacy and reform. And for government officers, it provides a roadmap for strengthening decentralization and ensuring that local governments have the capacity to deliver local public services effectively. The release of this Devolution Index demonstrates the Ministry's unwavering commitment to promoting evidence-based policy making and fostering healthy competition among States in strengthening local self-governments as envisaged in the Constitution. □



The Decade of Empowering Panchayati Raj Institutions

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are the pillars of democracy. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the Central Government has made numerous efforts over the past 11 years to strengthen these institutions. In this Amrit Kaal of independence, we are committed to making Panchayats more empowered, self-reliant, and good-governed, with the goal of building a Viksit Bharat.

***Sushil Kumar Lohani**

April 24, 1993, was a historic moment in the history of India's local self-government system. On this day, the President of India gave assent to the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, granting constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) across the country. This amendment introduced Part IX (Article 243) to the Constitution, establishing a three-tier system of Panchayats and

devolving powers and responsibilities to them. It also ensured broader representation for Scheduled Tribes (STs), Scheduled Castes (SCs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), thereby empowering weaker sections of society. Article 243G of the Constitution mandates that Panchayats should plan and implement schemes for local economic development and social justice.

With more than 6.5 lakh villages falling under the jurisdiction of 2.7 lakh Gram Panchayats,

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In democratic system the last unit of the local governance in villages is known as the Gram Panchayat. This is a local government elected by the voters of their respective jurisdiction.

governing nearly 64% of the country's population, Gram Panchayats have become central to rural development. Although, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment has been in effect for over three decades, the Panchayati Raj system has witnessed significant progress in the last decade, driving socio-economic transformation through these institutions. The three-tier Panchayati Raj system, comprising 31.5 lakh elected representatives—of whom about 46% are women—has emerged as a beacon of hope for rural communities. Panchayati Raj Institutions have proven to be one of the most effective mechanisms for achieving rapid socio-economic development and fostering political empowerment among marginalized and deprived sections, including SCs, STs, OBCs, and women in rural India.

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are the pillars of democracy. Under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the Government of India has undertaken numerous initiatives over the past 11 years to strengthen these institutions. The Government remains committed to making Panchayats more empowered, self-reliant, and well-governed, with the ultimate goal of building a Viksit Bharat (Developed India) through Viksit Panchayats (Developed Panchayats). Since 2014, the Central Government has intensified its efforts to support Panchayati Raj Institutions in the best possible manner, ensuring that the core objectives of Panchayati Raj are achieved in both letter and spirit. Over the last decade, the Government of India has

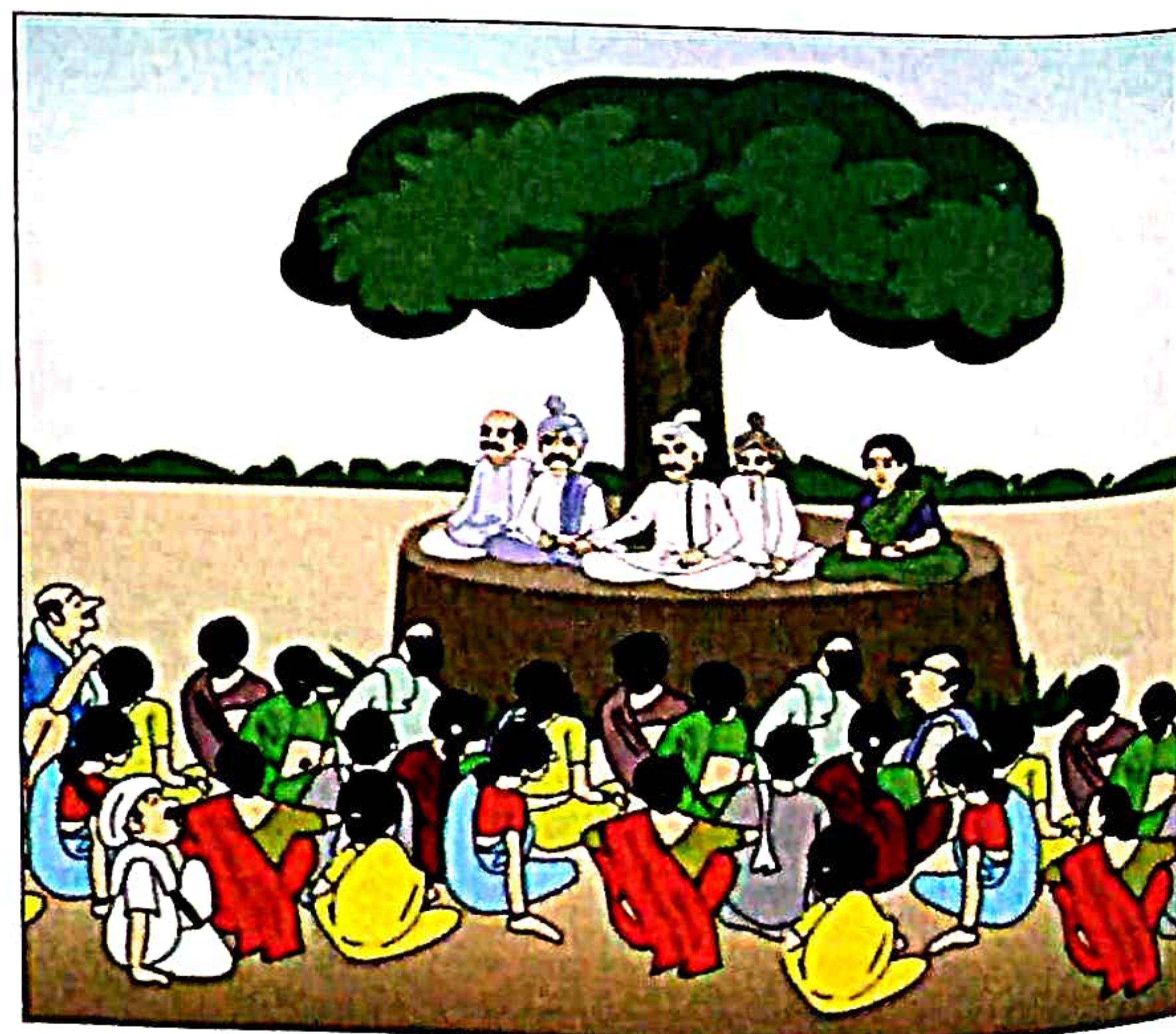
significantly increased financial allocations to PRIs, enabling the development of rural infrastructure and the implementation of key developmental initiatives.

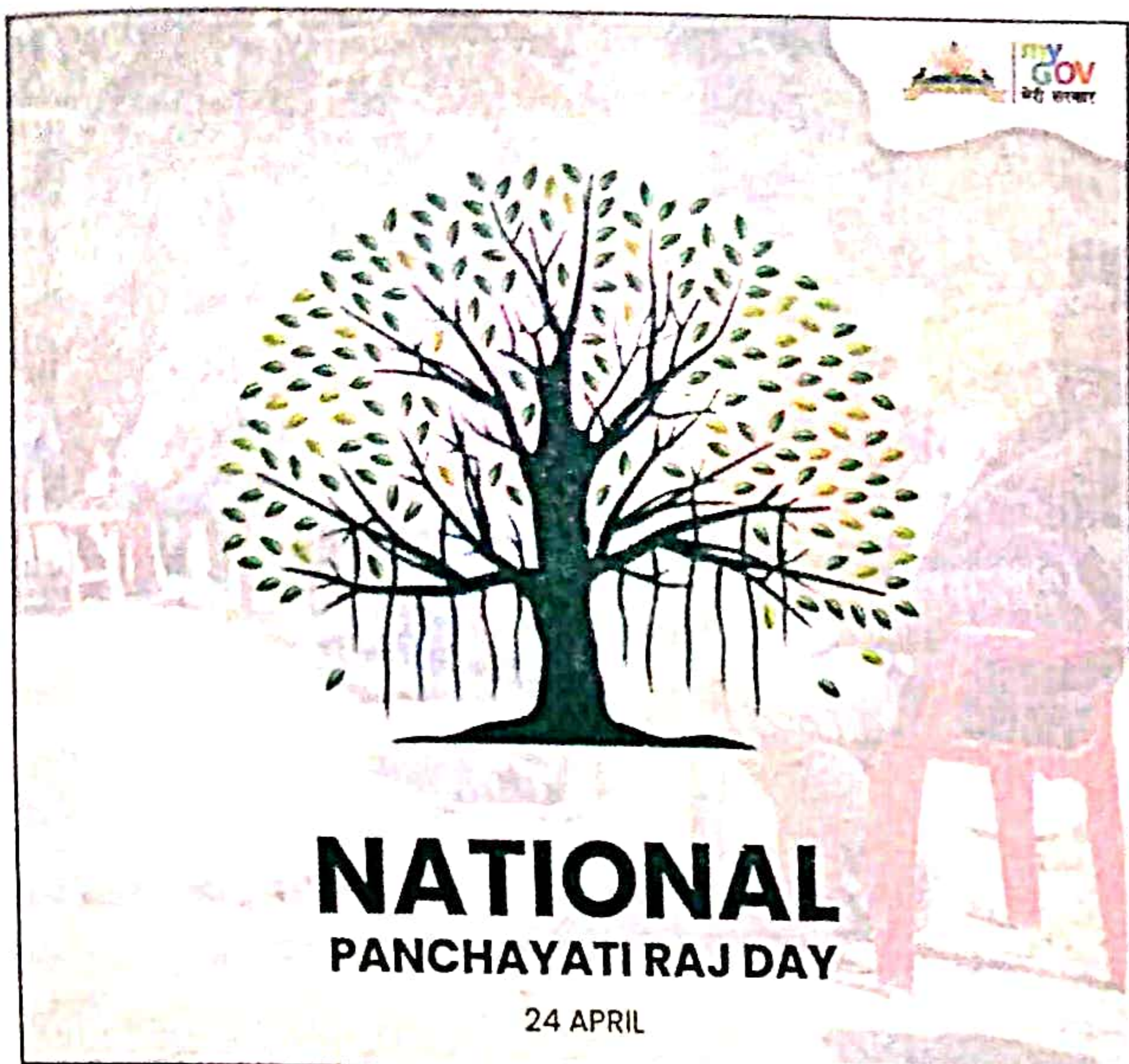
The Government of India has undertaken several initiatives to strengthen and empower Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). These efforts aim to enhance the capacity of PRI representatives in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities while improving the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of PRIs. Ultimately, these initiatives contribute to inclusive development, economic growth, and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Gram Sabha's role in strengthening PRIs

The Gram Sabha plays a central and integral role in local self-governance. It is crucial for ensuring the transparent and accountable functioning of Gram Panchayats. Public participation is key to empowering Gram Panchayats, and the most important aspect of this process is strengthening Gram Sabhas by encouraging active and effective citizen involvement.

To enhance community participation, at least six Gram Sabha meetings should be held annually. These meetings should focus on the overall well-being of various stakeholders, including youth, women, children, and farmers. The discussions should cover various government schemes, project approvals, beneficiary selection, and development planning. Regular reviews of implemented schemes should also be conducted to ensure accountability. Strengthening the Gram Sabha through active deliberation and decision-making is the most effective way to promote transparency and efficiency.





Roles & responsibilities of Panchayats

Panchayats primarily fall under the jurisdiction of State Governments, as “Local Government” is a State subject. Each state operates Panchayats through its respective Panchayati Raj Act. The Eleventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution outlines 29 subjects that state legislatures can consider for devolution to Panchayats. These subjects encompass various aspects of rural development, including:

- Agriculture
- Land improvement and reforms
- Minor irrigation and water management
- Fisheries
- Social forestry and minor forest produce
- Small-scale and cottage industries
- Rural housing
- Rural roads, bridges, and waterways
- Rural electrification and non-conventional energy sources
- Poverty alleviation programs
- Education
- Markets & fairs
- Health & Sanitation, family

welfare

- Women & Child Development & Social Welfare
- Public Distribution System
- Maintenance of community assets

By effectively devolving these responsibilities to Panchayats, the Government aims to strengthen rural governance and promote sustainable development.

Ministry of Panchayati Raj: Strengthening Local Governance:

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) was established on May 27, 2004, with the objective of making Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) effective, efficient, and transparent in local governance. The ministry focuses on strengthening administrative infrastructure, capacity building of Rural Local Bodies (RLBs), and enabling them to deliver essential services through technology and advocacy.

Capacity Building of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)

Given the significant public funds allocated to Panchayats, it is essential to build the capacity of elected representatives (ERs) and various functionaries. To achieve this, MoPR has been implementing the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) since 2022-23. Under this initiative:

- 1.11 crore participants, including elected representatives and Panchayat functionaries, have been trained.
- Rs. 2,116.97 crore has been allocated from 2022-23 to 2024-25.





- Rs. 660 crore has already been spent in 2024-25 on training and capacity building.

To enhance leadership training, MoPR has partnered with premier institutes like IIM Ahmedabad, IIM Bodh Gaya, IIM Jammu, IIM Amritsar, IIM Rohtak, IRMA Anand, and IIT Dhanbad. These collaborations aim to hone the skills of community leaders and empower them to translate their development goals into reality.

Sashakt Panchayat Netri Abhiyan

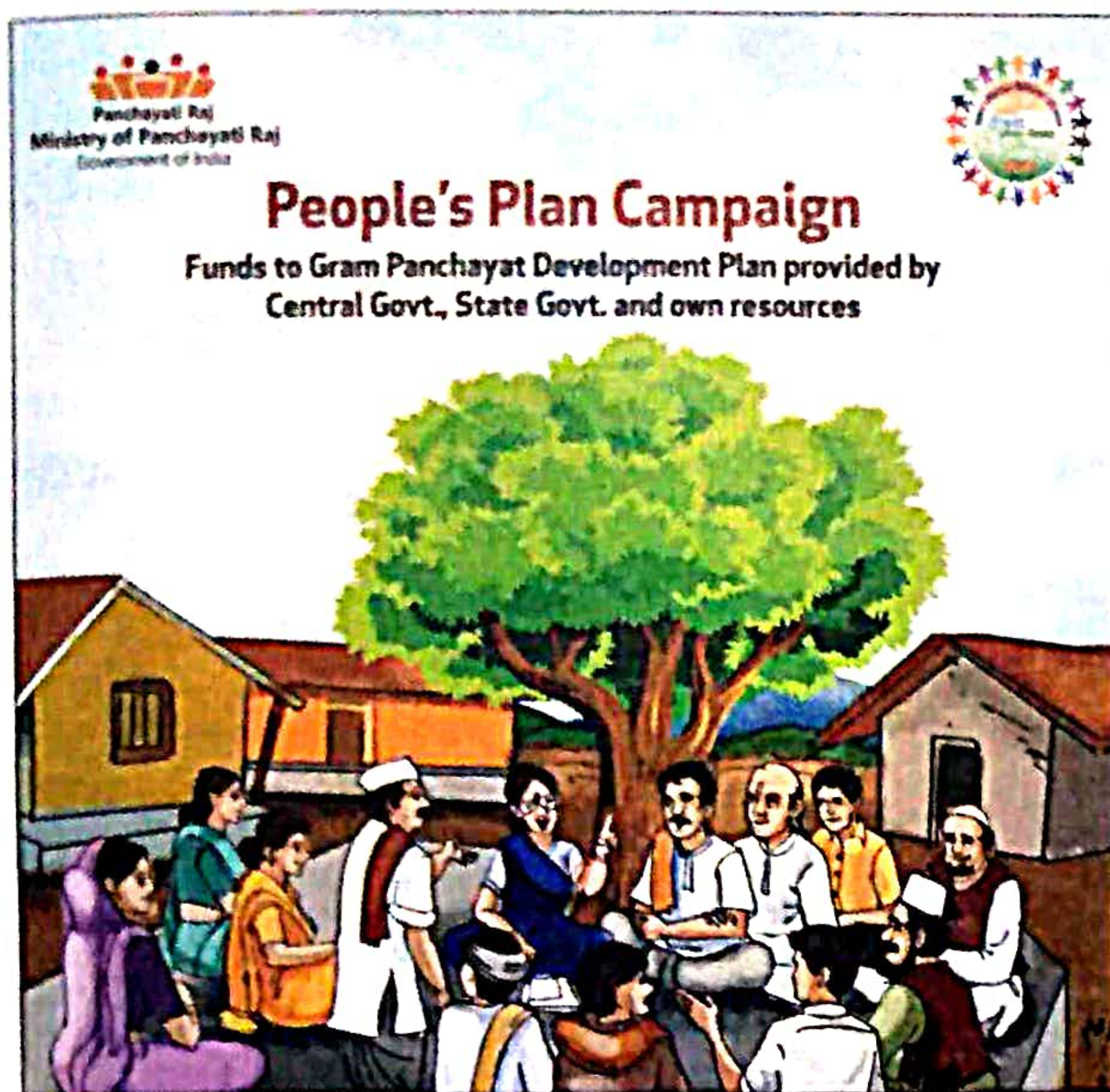
The Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan is a nationwide capacity-building initiative launched on 4th March '2025 on the eve of International Women's Day by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj to empower Women Elected Representatives (WERs) in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). This unique initiative aims to strengthen women's leadership in rural governance by enhancing their decision-making skills and increasing their active participation in policy and governance at the grassroots level.

Effective Implementation of PESA

The PESA (The Provisions of the Panchayats [Extension to the Scheduled Areas] Act, 1996) Act is one of the major steps for empowerment of tribal communities in Scheduled Areas through self-governance. However, its effective implementation

has faced challenges in the past due to delays in State-specific PESA Rules, lack of comprehensive training materials, and supportive State laws. In order to address these challenges and strengthen the implementation of the PESA Act, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has called upon all PESA States to organize befitting activities, events, and run an intensive awareness campaign. This first-of-its-kind initiative aims to consolidate collective and concerted efforts to extend the benefits of the PESA Act to people living in Scheduled Areas. The focus is on making all-out efforts to enhance their ease of living and create an enabling environment for their growth and prosperity, aligning with the vision of the present Government -Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikash. This initiative aims to raise awareness about the PESA Act, build the capacity of stakeholders, and empower Gram Sabhas for better governance and improved functioning of Gram Panchayats in Scheduled Areas. At Present, Eight PESA States namely; Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Telangana have framed their PESA Rules and two states namely Orissa and Jharkhand have framed their draft PESA Rules.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has developed the PESA-GPDP Portal to facilitate the preparation of a well-structured Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) through PESA Gram Sabhas. Additionally, to train elected representatives and other officials of PESA Panchayats and Gram Sabhas on the PESA Act, the ministry has developed seven training modules and initiated the training process.



Thematic Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP)

Gram Panchayats are constitutionally mandated to prepare development plans. For 2023-24 and 2024-25, around 2.54 lakh Gram Panchayats have prepared their GPDPs. As of March 13, 2025, 1.89 lakh GPs have prepared their plans for 2025-26, with completion expected by the end of March.

The present focus of the MoPR is to enable the PRIs to attain Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at Panchayat level to enable further the country to attain the SDGs at National level. To this end, the MoPR has taken a novel initiative of adopting thematic approach for localization of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs) where 17 SDGs have been mapped into 9 themes for preparation of targeted developmental plan by pulling resources and converging activities of various schemes and programmes of Central and State Governments with the 'whole of Government' and 'whole of society' approach. The nine thematic areas are as below :

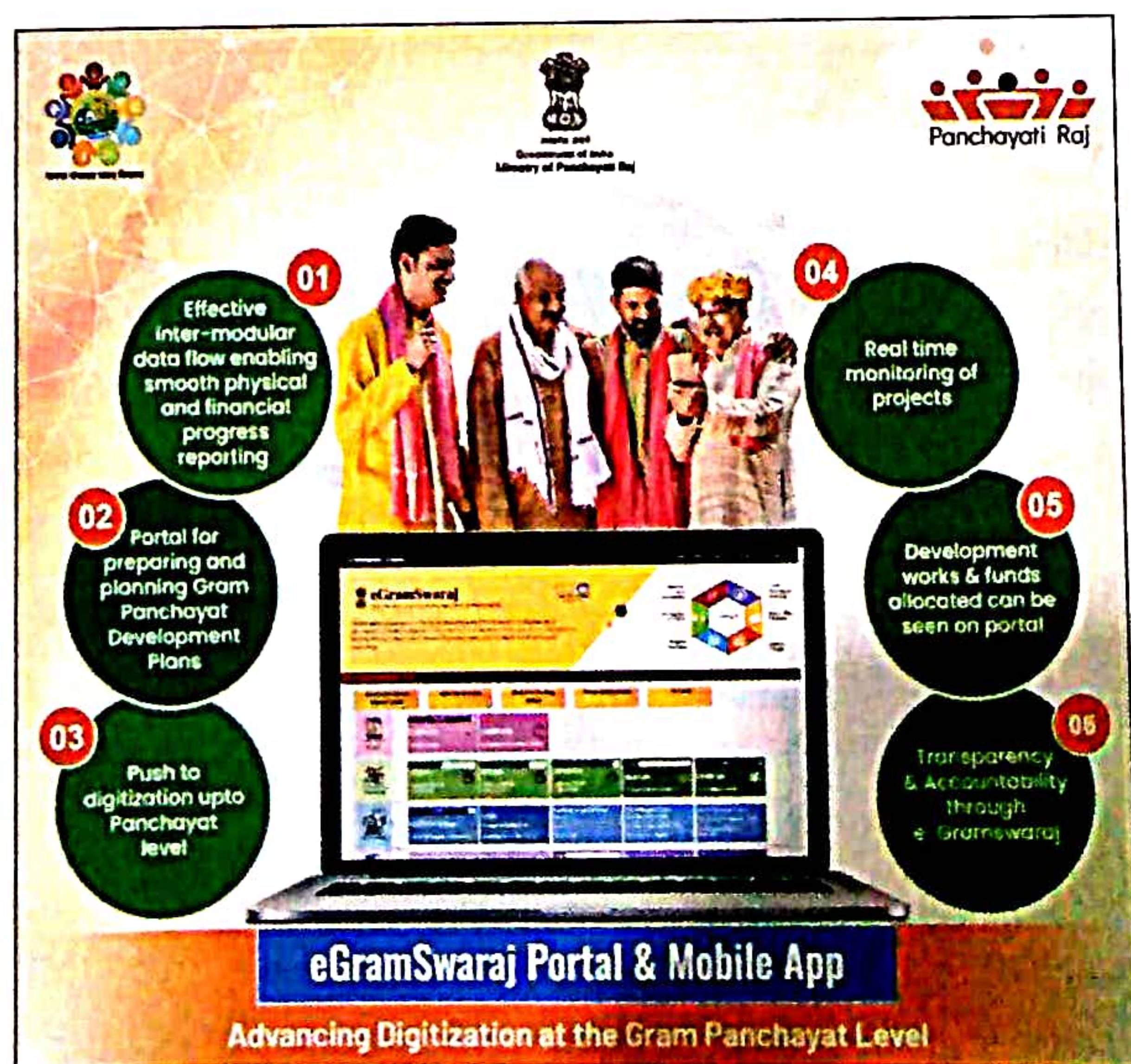
1. **Poverty-Free and Livelihood-Enhanced Village** – Enhancing income levels and ensuring social protection schemes.
2. **Healthy Village** – Ensuring 100% immunization, institutional deliveries, and improved healthcare access.
3. **Child-Friendly Village** – Promoting education, reducing dropouts, and eliminating child labor.
4. **Water-Sufficient Village** – Ensuring potable water

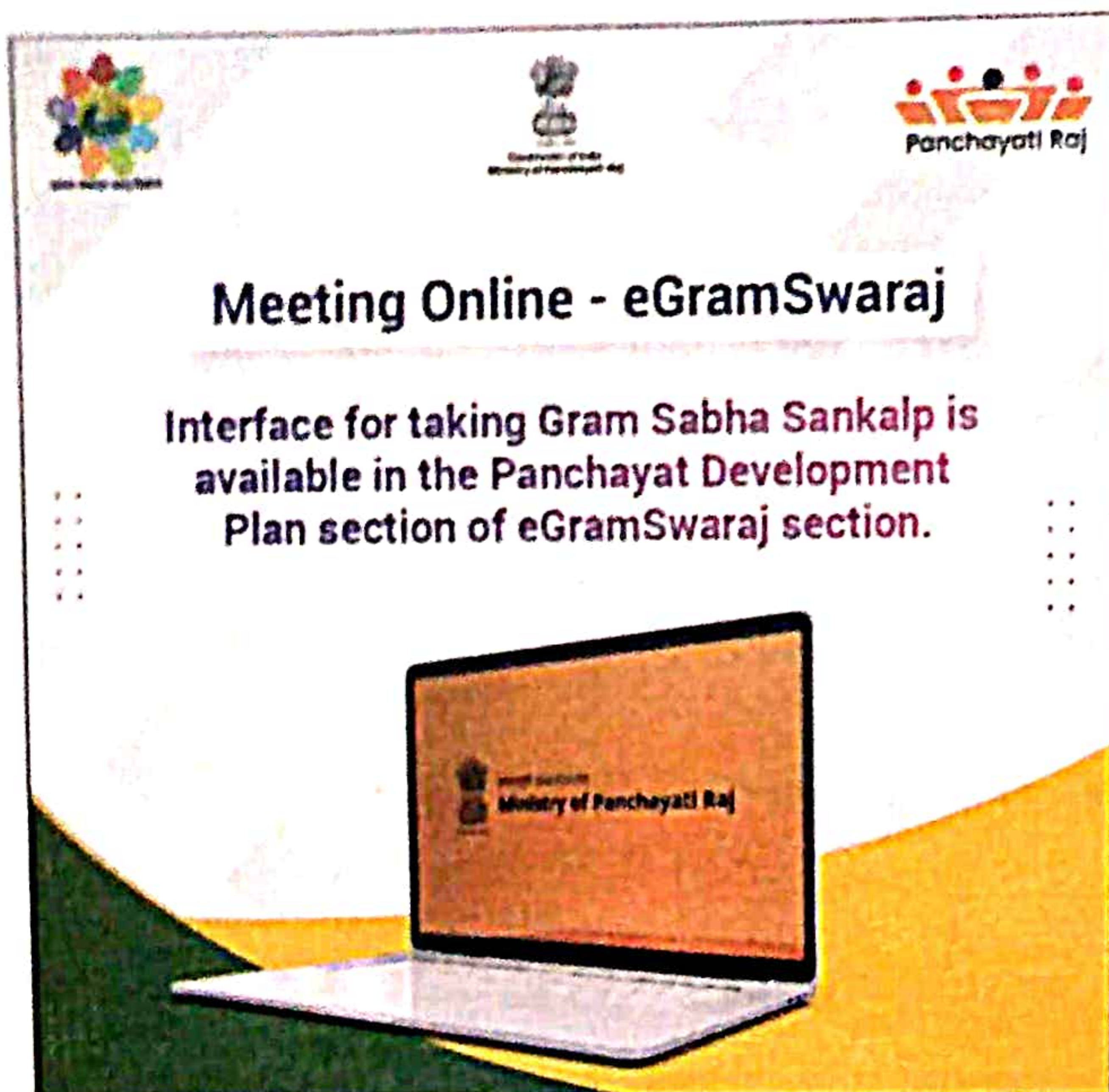
access and promoting rainwater harvesting.

5. **Clean and Green Village** – Achieving 100% Open Defecation-Free (ODF) status and managing waste effectively.
6. **Village with Self-Sufficient Infrastructure** – Improving roads, health centers, and sanitation facilities.
7. **Socially Just and Secure Village** – Supporting disadvantaged groups and providing social protection.
8. **Village with Good Governance** – Strengthening local governance through regular Gram Sabhas and committees.
9. **Women-Friendly Village** – Ensuring maternal healthcare, crime prevention, and women's participation in governance

Provision of basic services

Panchayats provide basic services to the rural population such as supply of drinking water, maintenance of sanitation etc. They also maintain water sources, village wells, tanks and pumps, street lighting and drainage system. Gram Panchayats also provide a number of other services for the benefit of its people. In order to carry out such activities Panchayats receive funds through the Central Finance Commission, State Finance Commission and support from various Central and State Governments' schemes and programmes. The current Fifteenth Finance Commission has recommended more than Rs.2.36 lakh crore for the award period 2021-2026.





e-Governance and ICT Initiatives

In order to strengthen e-Governance in the PRIs and to eventually ease the complexities involved in e-Governance Applications, a Simplified Work Based Accounting Application, e-Gram SWARAJ, was launched on April 24, 2020. To ensure better financial management of Panchayats for enhancing transparency and accountability in maintenance of accounts, Ministry has integrated e-GramSwaraj with PFMS. e-GramSwaraj PFMS Interface (eGSPI) is one of its kind for Gram Panchayats to make real time payments to vendors/service providers. All transactions are secured, and payment vouchers are created using 2 factor authentications.

Over 2.55 Lakh Gram Panchayats or equivalent bodies have prepared their Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDP) for 2024-25 with more than 2.63 Lakh Panchayats (at all tiers) on boarded eGSPI with 90% of the Gram Panchayats successfully making online transactions using eGSPI. Transactions to the tune of Rs. 2.4 Lakh Crores have been made through eGSPI, a commendable achievement in the direction of transparency and efficient financial transactions.

Earlier, the availability of e-Gram Swaraj only in English posed a significant challenge for local panchayat representatives. To address this issue, the Ministry has integrated e-Gram Swaraj with Bhashini, enabling the portal to function not only in Hindi and English but also in 20 regional languages since last year.

Panchayat level weather forecasting

Farmers in India often face adverse weather conditions, and the lack of timely information on sudden weather changes negatively impacts agricultural production. To address this challenge, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, in collaboration with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, has initiated an effort to provide accurate weather forecasts at the Gram Panchayat level. Under this initiative, weather forecast information at the Gram Panchayat level is now available on digital platforms such as the Meri Panchayat mobile app, Gram Manchitra and e-Gram Swaraj portal,. This significant initiative is part of the this Government's 100-day agenda and reflects its whole-of-government approach.

Transparency through use of technology

The e-GramSWARAJ is also integrated with Government eMarket place (GeM) to enable seamless procurement and accounting experience to the Panchayats. Ministry is also providing an online system to show the list of the beneficiary of various Central Government Schemes on e-GramSWARAJ. As on date, data from 7 Ministries and 18 schemes with details of around 17 crore beneficiaries have been ported.

Audit Online

Application has been developed to allow online audit of Panchayat accounts and to enhance transparency & accountability in audit. more than 2.1





lakh Audit Reports have been generated for the Audit Period 2023-24.

Citizen Charter campaign

The Ministry carried out the Citizen Charter campaign under the aegis of Meri Panchayat, Mera Adhikaar- Jan Sevaayein Hamare Dwaar from 1st July – 30th September, 2021 with an intent to making the Panchayats and their elected representatives directly accountable to the people. As on date, about 2.15 Lakh Gram Panchayats across 34 States/ UTs have finalised their Citizen Charter, offering 954 Services spanning various sectors viz. Health & Family Welfare, Drinking Water & Sanitation, Public Welfare, Employment etc.

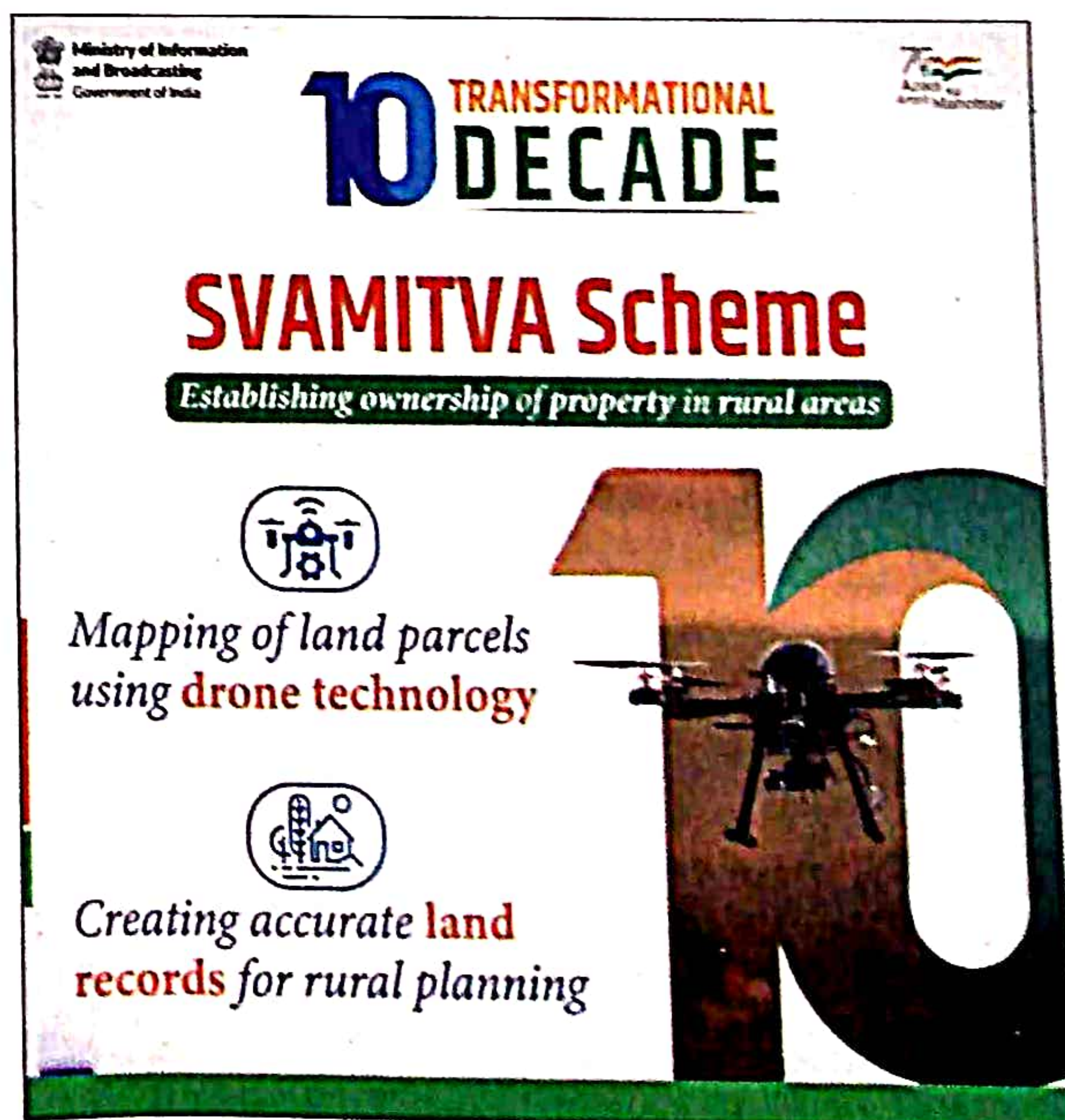
National Panchayat Awards

To encourage competitive spirit among PRIs and States/UTs, awards including financial incentives are given under the Incentivization of Panchayats scheme to best performing Panchayats and States/ UTs in recognition of their good work for improving delivery of services and public goods. The National Panchayat Awards have been revamped with effect from year 2022 aligning with nine LSDG themes. The revamped National Panchayat Awards enable theme-wise ranking of all Gram Panchayats and also Block Panchayats and District Panchayats on the basis of performance of their Gram Panchayats. This would create a baseline for the PRIs to assess their status under each of the LSDG theme and enable them to achieve SDGs in a phased manner through graduated planning by the year 2030.

The Awards are conferred under the categories of Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar (for the performance under individual LSDG theme and Nanaji Deshmukh Sarvottam Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar for the aggregate performance under all 9 LSDG themes. Besides, other special categories of awards have been instituted to encourage the Panchayats to work in the field of energy self-sufficiency, zero net carbon emission in the Panchayats. Besides, special categories of awards for the works on self-sufficiency in energy consumption, particularly green energy and carbon neutral have been instituted. This year, the President of India has conferred 42 National Panchayat Awards to various Panchayats and 3 Awards to Institutions in the Country.

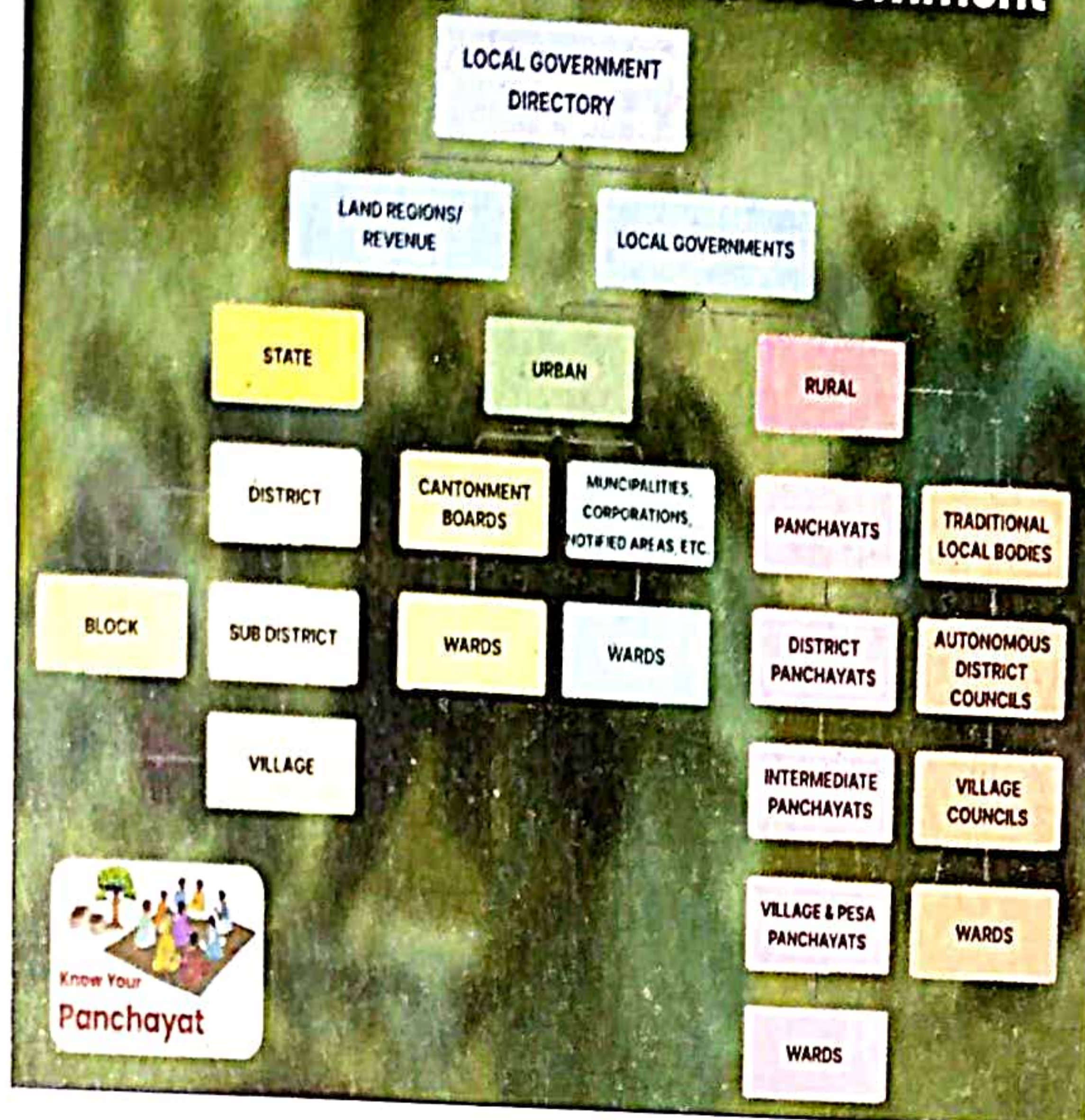
SVAMITVA Scheme

The scheme SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improvised Technology in Village Areas) is implemented by MoPR to provide the 'Record of Rights' to village household owners possessing houses in inhabited rural areas in villages and issuance of property cards to the property owners after survey through drone flying. Drone survey has been completed in 3.20 lakh villages and saturated/completed in the states of UT of Lakshadweep, Delhi, and state of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh. So far, 2.41 crore property Cards have been prepared for nearly 1.61 lakh villages. Property Cards





Hierarchy Diagram of Local Government



asset monetization in the rural areas besides enabling the Panchayats in assessing and collecting property tax in the near future in their endeavor to enhance their own sources of revenue.

Conclusion

For Panchayati Raj Institutions to thrive, all the stakeholders must trust and invest in their potential, support and nurture them. While Government of India will continue to play its pro-active role in making these institutions empowered to function as institutions of local self Governments in its true sense, being a state subject, State Governments must strengthen and equip these institutions with 3Fs adequately, i.e. with required resources, proper delegation of powers and responsibility as well as with sufficient manpower to deliver their responsibilities. There are innumerable examples to show how well-endowed Panchayats have been engines of growth and contributing significantly in socio-economic growth and development, poverty alleviation, disaster management, implementing welfare schemes etc. A well-functioning Gram Panchayat brings governance to people's doorsteps, strengthening democracy and realizing Mahatma Gandhi's vision of Gram Swaraj. □

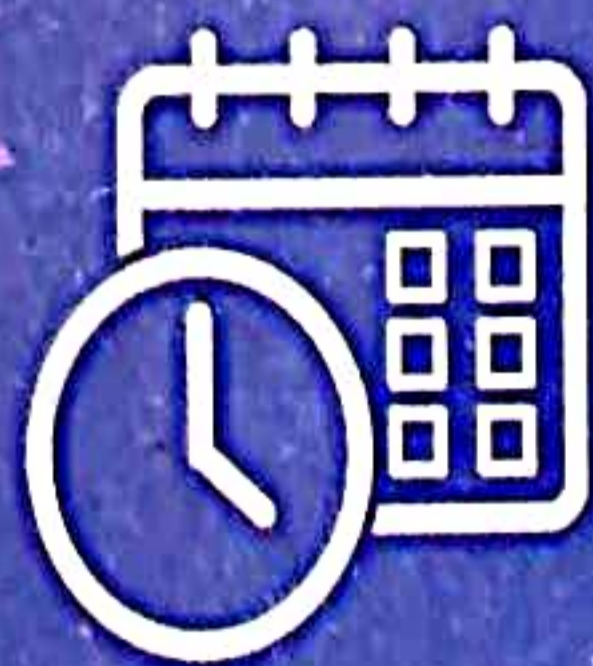
of all the inhabited villages of Haryana, Uttarakhand, Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Goa, Tripura and Dadra & Nagar Haveli, and Daman & Diu, have been prepared. The record of right through property cards is going to prove a big game changer in

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2012 AIR 6	2019 AIR 6
2013 AIR 7	2020 AIR 7
2014 AIR 5	2021 AIR 4
2015 AIR 20	2022 AIR 41
2016 AIR 4	2023 AIR 98



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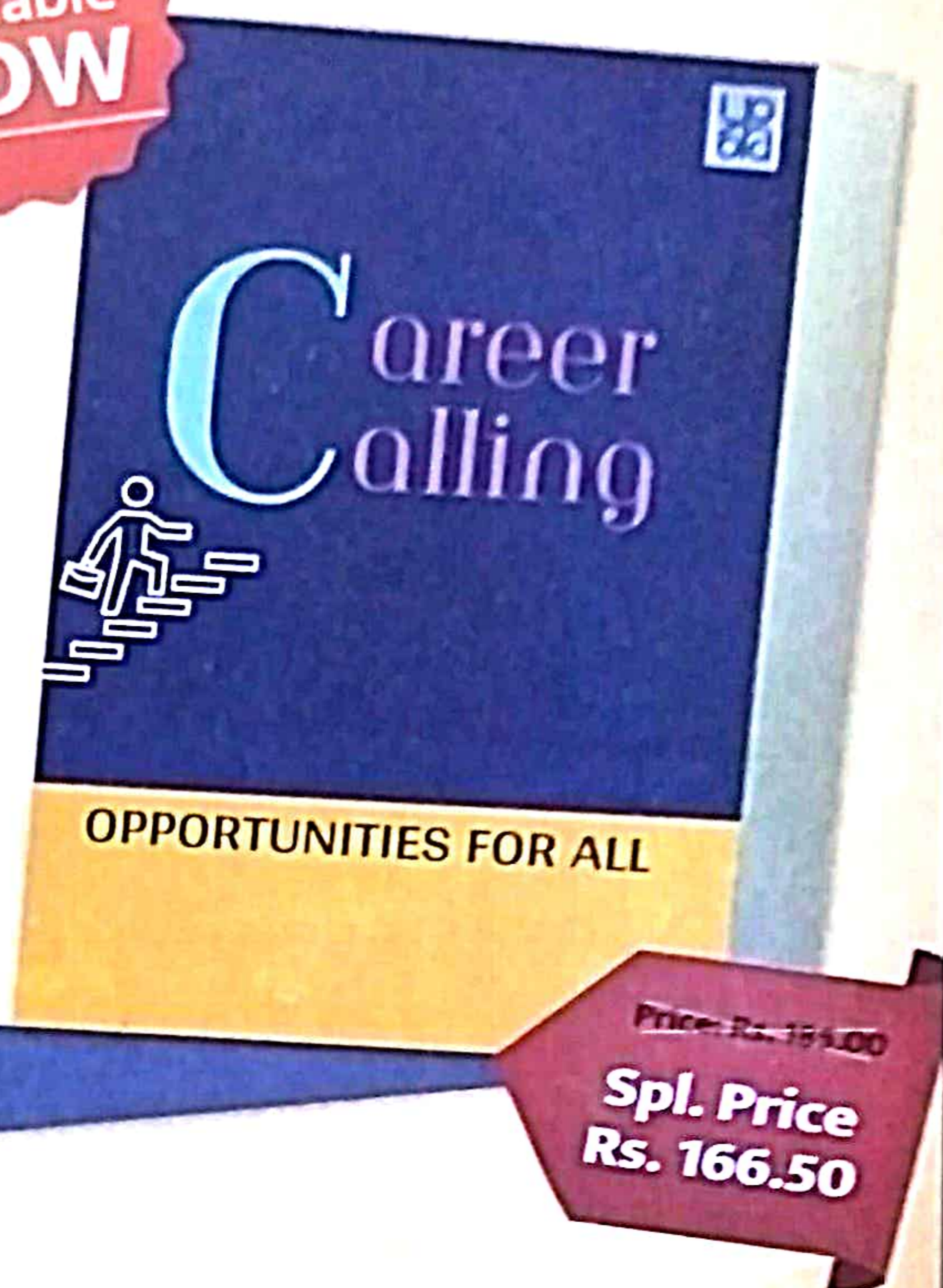


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Revisiting State PRI Acts

A Necessity for Making PRIs More Effective



Majorly, Gram Panchayats (GPs) have been empowered to levy taxes and user charges for the provision of public services according to the State Panchayat Raj Acts. In the recent Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) Report (2024), the fiscal health of the PRIs, especially GPs, is a cause of immediate concern. In view of the alarming fiscal health of the most localised level of governance, i.e., GPs, it is imperative to first understand the reasons responsible for this worrisome situation in their OSR collection as the district-level and block-level Panchayats have no or at most limited powers to raise revenues.

* Amar Nath H K

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he 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (1992) intended the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) as 'local self-governing institutions' that were not only responsible for successful implementation of development programmes but also entrusted with adequate financial resources and financial autonomy to levy and raise their own




revenues in order to successfully perform these duties. Majorly, Gram Panchayats (GPs) have been empowered to levy taxes and user charges for the provision of public services according to the State Panchayat Raj Acts. However, as highlighted in the recent Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) Report (2024), the fiscal health of the PRIs, especially GPs, is a cause of immediate concern. The average share of

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the own source revenue (OSR) in the total receipts of GPs across 30 States/UTs was a meagre 6% in the year 2021-22. As per the Report, on average, for the period 2017-18 to 2021-22, the per capita OSR was reported at just INR 59. A recent RBI report also confirms the same with the share of OSR a minuscule 6.31% in the total receipts of the GPs in 2022-23. Nearly 95% of their total receipts constitute grants from the Central and the state governments, with the Central grants constituting a bulk of the GPs' revenues. In the recent study "Preparation of a Viable Financial Model for Generation of Own Source Revenue (OSR)" conducted by National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) at the behest of MoPR, it has been found that there are several reasons for low revenue mobilisation in PRIs other than lack of political willingness to levy or low tax-paying capacity of the rural population. In view of the alarming fiscal health of the most localised level of governance, i.e., GPs, it is imperative to first

Empowerment of taxes and levying in PRIs in different States


Taxes	ZP		BP		GP	
	Empowered	Levied	Empowered	Levied	Empowered	Levied
Andhra Pradesh	-	-	-	-	6	3
Gujarat	8	-	8	-	8	2
Karnataka	-	-	-	-	8	3
Madhya Pradesh	-	-	2	-	7	1
Maharashtra	4	-	-	-	7	4
Odisha	-	-	-	-	3	1
West Bengal	1	1	1	1	2	2
Uttar Pradesh	2	1	1	-	6	-
Uttarakhand	-	-	2	-	6	-
Punjab	-	-	1	-	2	-
Rajasthan	-	-	3	-	6	-
Haryana	-	-	-	-	3	-
Jharkhand	2	-	2	-	4	-
Bihar	1	-	1	-	2	-
Telengana	-	-	-	-	4	-
Tamil Nadu	-	-	1	-	5	-
Kerala	-	-	-	-	8	-



Own Source of Revenue (OSR) for Panchayats

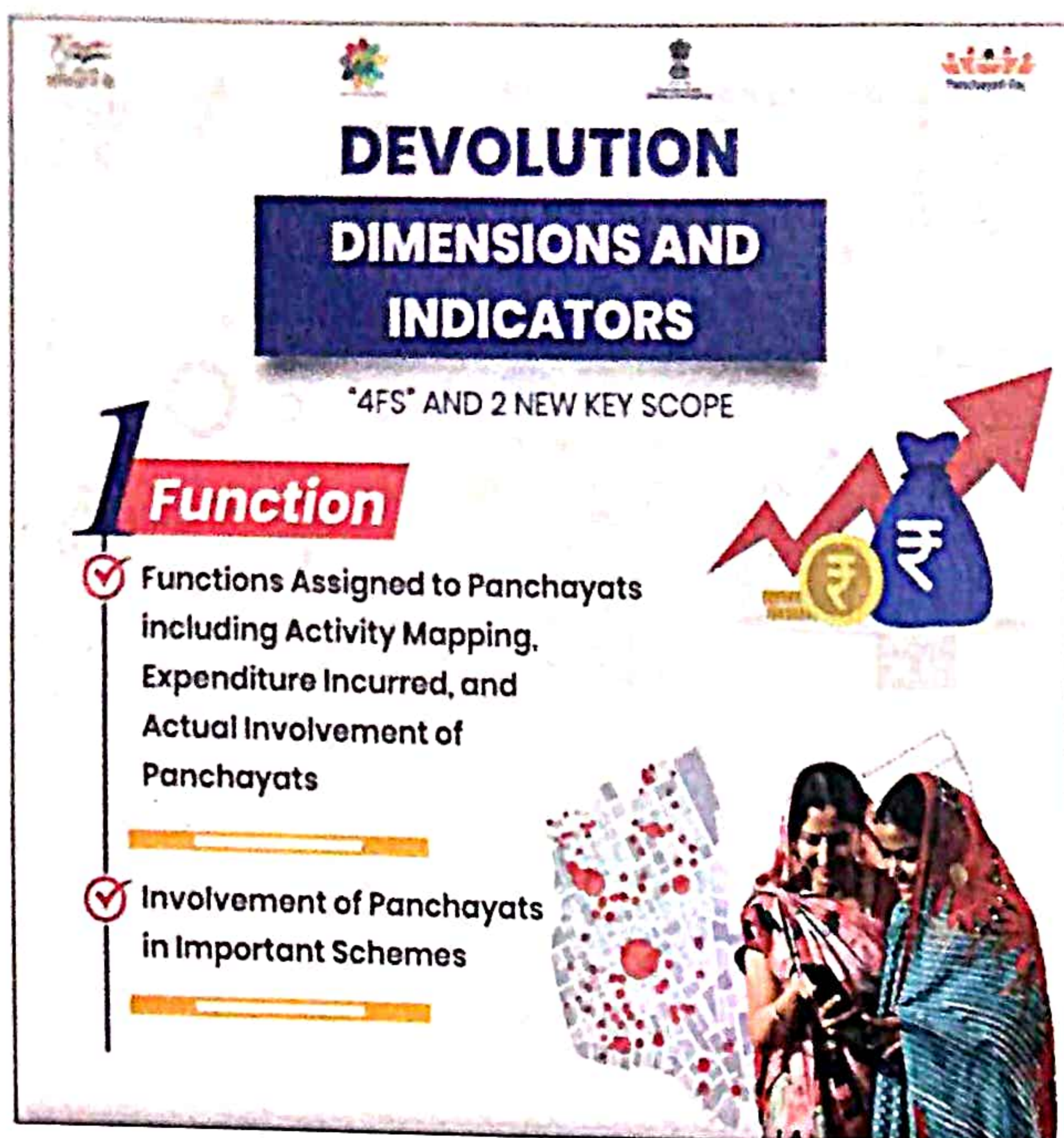
Panchayats generating their own revenue by:

Leveraging Government schemes such as SVAMITVA, for development & collection of OSR in Panchayati Raj Institutions



Empowerment of User Charges and levying in PRIs in different States

User Charges	ZP		BP		GP	
	Empowered	Levied	Empowered	Levied	Empowered	Levied
Andhra Pradesh	3	3	-	-	11	9
Gujarat	7	-	7	-	13	7
Karnataka	2	-	2	-	24	2-
Madhya Pradesh	1	-	3	2	14	7
Maharashtra	5	1	-	-	28	25
Odisha	-	-	1	1	13	8
West Bengal	5	-	9	5	24	13
Uttar Pradesh	12	5	9	-	6	2
Uttarakhand	3	-	-	-	12	-
Punjab	-	-	5	-	6	-
Rajasthan	4	-	1	-	2	-
Haryana	1	-	3	-	9	-
Jharkhand	4	-	4	-	3	-
Bihar	4	-	5	-	5	-
Telengana	1	-	1	-	3	-
Tamil Nadu	3	-	9	-	9	-
Kerala	2	-	2	-	12	-



to levy only 6). The levy, assessment and collection depends on land holding by the State government through guidelines and Executive Orders. Many times, GPs do not have either the technical capability or manpower to assess, levy and collect these user charges in addition to political willingness. It was observed during the field visits to eight states, that only Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh have issued enough guidelines in helping the GPs to assess and levy the taxes and user charges.

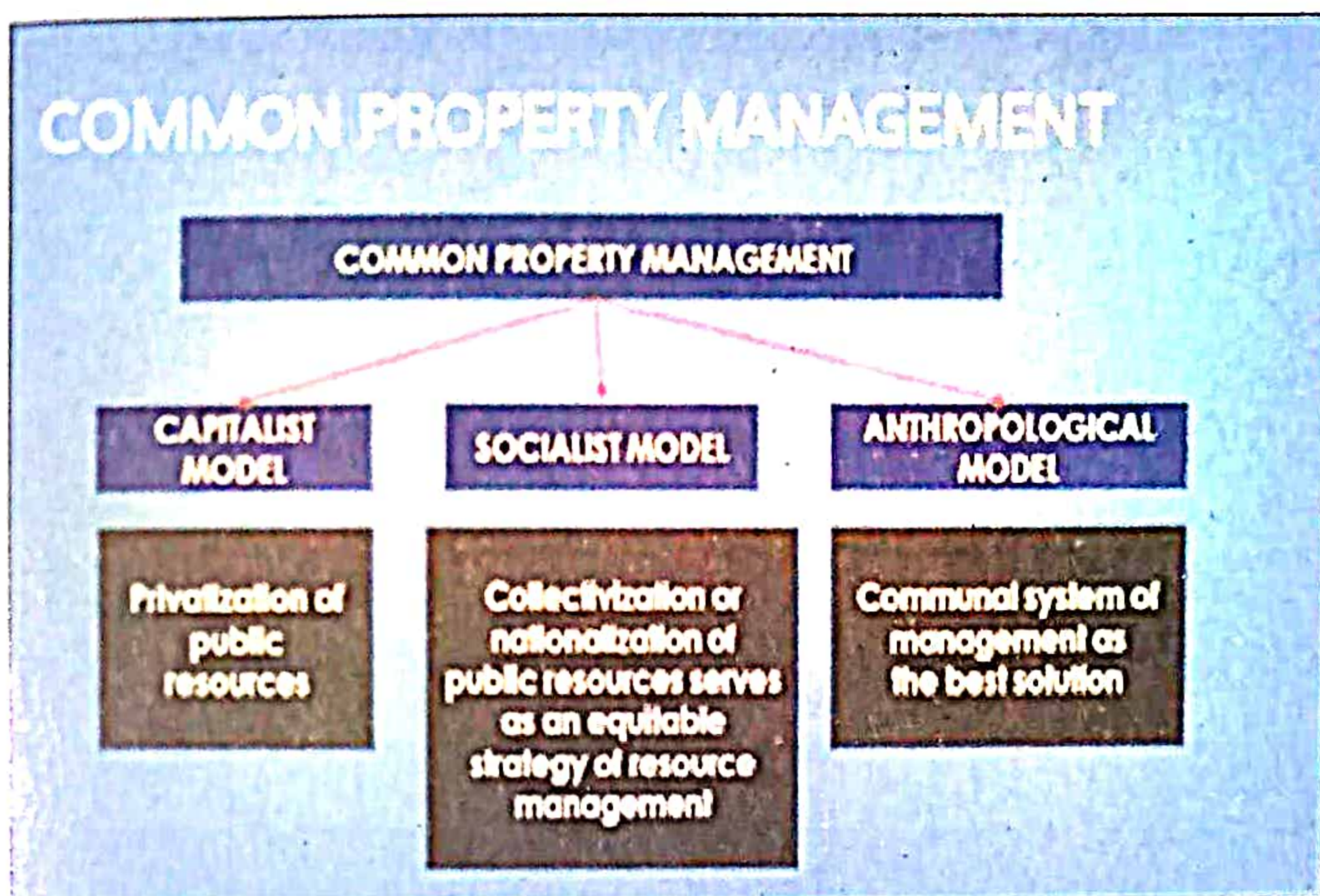
Second, even in instances where the GPs choose to levy taxes/user charges in their respective geographies, the tax base, method of assessment and levy are not at their optimum levels. This is mainly because of lack of understanding of the issues related to defining the base, method of assessment and other legal disputes. The assessment of property taxes, for instance, in several states is done on an ad-hoc basis with no fixed criterion to determine the amount of collection. Even within the state, the levy and assessment are not uniform across the districts. Karnataka serves as an ideal case study as the state government conducts a comprehensive survey of all the buildings and vacant lands and levies the property tax based on usage -like residential, commercial and manufacturing and features of the property - like type and quality of construction. Though there is a web-based application with minimal information, some districts are still collecting below their potential due to lack of manpower at GP level. Though Karnataka model is an ideal one but it cannot be followed in other states due to a lack of manpower and capabilities. In addition to property tax, the collection of water charges, sanitation charges etc., is also done on an ad-hoc basis without any pre-determined criterion in most GPs.

understand the reasons responsible for this worrisome situation in their OSR collection as the district-level and block-level Panchayats have no or at most limited powers to raise revenues.

First, the state governments, through the State Panchayati Raj Acts have empowered the GPs to levy a range of taxes and user charges ranging from property tax, vehicle tax, pilgrim tax, water tax/user charges, sanitation tax/user charges etc. However, this empowerment varies starkly across states. The number of empowered taxes across 17 major states varies from two in Bihar, Punjab and West Bengal to eight in Gujarat, Karnataka and Kerala. However, our visit to eight of these states revealed that GPs levy very few taxes compared to the number that they are empowered with. OSR collection is also negligible and varies depending on the method of assessment. Madhya Pradesh and Odisha levy only one tax (out of seven and three, respectively) and Uttar Pradesh does not levy any tax (out of six empowered). Maharashtra collects four (out of seven), Andhra Pradesh levies three (of six) and Karnataka levies three (of eight) taxes they are empowered to collect. Though many states empower Districts and Block Panchayats with some user charges, very few levy.

The Panchayati Raj Acts also empower the GPs to levy several user charges. In the sample states, the number of empowered user charges is more than 10 (except Uttar Pradesh where the GP is empowered

Third, the collection of user charges can be tremendously increased if the ownership of community/common property resources (CPRs) and public service provision is transferred to PRIs, particularly in states like West Bengal and Maharashtra where drinking water supply is still with line departments. Similarly CPRs like minor forest, water bodies including minor irrigation are still with either the forest, irrigation, fisheries or revenue departments. Making the GPs as custodian of these assets will enable them to maintain these assets and services efficiently, in addition to raising revenues.



managing multiple GPs, which keeps him busy with scheme-based development work rather than augmentation of OSR.

If the Union and the state governments intend to build an ecosystem of effective decentralisation, where the GPs can handle the maintenance of basic services on their own with sufficient revenue generation, it is imperative to address some of the bottlenecks identified in the report such as:

Fourth, the legal rigmarole associated with disputed lands, boundary demarcation and encroachments also leads to significant litigation costs and loss of potential OSR. There are still no clear guidelines in several states regarding the collection of property tax from houses constructed on disputed and illegally occupied lands. It is believed at ground-level that payment of property tax or licence fee on such buildings will entitle them with ownership. Therefore, PRIs are hesitant to levy and collect the revenues from such entities. This also applies to levy of any taxes on buildings constructed on agricultural lands or on lands out of habitation area.

Fifth, the prompt constitution of the State Finance Commissions (SFC) and implementation of their recommendations can also strengthen the revenue of PRIs. But many states are often uninterested in both. Based on their recommendations, some states devolve surcharges on stamp and registration fees, entertainment tax and profession tax to local bodies. While states such as Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh pass on the proceeds of these assigned revenues (stamps and registration fees, for instance) to not only their Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) but also the Rural Local Bodies (RLBs), states such as Uttar Pradesh devolve the proceeds to the ULBs only. Similarly, profession tax is devolved to ULBs and not RLBs in Karnataka.

Finally, GPs in most states are grappling with the long-standing shortage of adequate manpower. There is, in most instances, one or two State-funded staff present in the GP which is responsible for the development work as well as OSR generation. In certain cases, one GP Secretary is responsible for

- Take stock of the State Panchayati Raj Acts, along with the associated rules, guidelines and amendments which have not been revised for a long time,
- A clear-cut Activity Mapping and transfer of public service provision and CPRs to RLBs .
- Clarificatory orders in defining the base and assessment of various taxes and user charges,
- Supplementing the necessary manpower, particularly at GP-level,
- A dedicated unit at district-level to undertake capacity building at GP-level in both understanding the PRI Acts, technical knowledge in empowering the GPs to raise revenues and finally to make the assessment of property tax, water rates and fee on commercial establishment simpler with lesser discretion at local-level.

Tapping the revenues from public service provision and CPRs can make the GPs more self-reliant in addition to simplifying property tax assessment. For example, transferring water supply systems from PHED department and rural water supply departments in West Bengal and Maharashtra, levying property tax by GPs in Uttar Pradesh and Odisha (where there is no provision for the same), transferring levy of licence fee on commercial activity from District Panchayats to GPs in Uttar Pradesh etc.. The report suggests a clear viable finance model to define the capacity of PRIs to raise revenues, which is critical in raising their revenues rather than dependence on conditional transfers. The Report details all such measures to improve the revenues of PRIs and make them more self-reliant. □



PM Modi's Diplomatic Upgrade in France

10-12 February 2025

1

Co-chaired AI Action Summit

- Co-chaired with President Macron
- Launched India-France AI Roadmap for safe, secure, and trustworthy AI

2

Dynamic Bilateral Cooperation

- PM Modi's sixth visit to France
- Inaugurated India's Consulate General in Marseille
- India-France Year of Innovation 2025 to be launched in New Delhi
- France joins India-UAE's Mangrove Alliance for Climate
- PM Modi paid tribute to Indian soldiers at Mazarques War Cemetery

3

Encrypting Defence & Security

- India joins Eurodrone MALE Programme as an observer
- Launched FRIND-X for defense innovation
- Strengthened DRDO-ONERA R&D partnership
- Enhanced NSO-ONION counter-terrorism cooperation
- Focus on nuclear energy collaboration



PM Narendra Modi attends AI Action Summit in Paris, France, 11 February, 2025



INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY ALGORITHM



PM MODI AUGMENTING TIES WITH FRANCE AND THE U.S.A.



PM Narendra Modi with the President of USA, Mr. Donald Trump at the White House in Washington DC



PM Modi's Adaptive Strategy with The USA

12-13 February 2025

1

Initialising New U.S.-India COMPACT Initiative for defense, trade, and technology

Defence & Security

- 10-year Framework for U.S.-India Major Defense Partnership
- ASIA alliance launched for AI-enabled defense tech
- Expanded Tiger Triumph Exercise
- Strengthened Indo-Pacific logistics & intelligence sharing

Trade & Investment – 'Mission 500'

- Target to double trade to \$500B by 2030
- Bilateral Trade Affairs negotiations set for fall 2025
- \$7.35B in new Indian investments in the U.S.A.

Technology & Innovation – U.S.-India TRUST Initiative

- AI Infrastructure Roadmap
- INDUS-X for space, energy, and tech partnerships
- NASA-ISRO: First Indian astronaut to ISS & NISAR Earth-mapping mission

2

Optimising Energy & Clean Tech

- U.S. support for India's full Int. Energy Agency membership
- Advancing U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement

3

Evolving Multilateral & Indo-Pacific Security

- Strengthening Quad for regional security & trade
- Indian Ocean Strategic Venture for Infrastructure & commerce
- U.S. approves extradition of Tahawwur Rana
- Call for Pakistan to act on 26/11 & Pathankot attackers
- India Joins Combined Maritime Forces to secure sea lanes

4

Reinforcing People-to-People Ties

- 3,00,000 Indian students contribute \$8Bn to the U.S. economy
- Streamlined higher education ties through dual-degree programs
- Streamlined legal mobility for professionals & tourists
- Enhanced cooperation against trafficking, organised crime, & cyber threats





Untapping Economic Potential of Rural India Through SVAMITVA Property Cards

The SVAMITVA Scheme was conceptualized to issue property cards for documentation of ownership of the land, paving the path for financial inclusion and sustainable rural development. The Scheme strengthens the role of Panchayati Raj institutions in rural development. Accurate land records serve as a foundation for better governance, enabling datadriven decision-making and efficient implementation of government schemes.

***Dr. Bijaya Kumar Behera**

Land is one of the critical and primary factors for most of the economic activities. However, the inhabited areas (Abadi land) of rural India have long remained untouched by significant land reforms in terms of scientific survey and maintenance of records. With limited surveys and non-availability of accurate maps, these areas faced issues like presumptive property ownership, unresolved disputes, and lack of access to institutional credit which are often contingent upon submission of collateral. Since land is one such widely acceptable instrument of

collateral, an undisputed and well recorded land piece facilitates bank assistance. Recognizing these challenges, the SVAMITVA Scheme was conceptualized to issue property cards backed by state revenue or Panchayati Raj Acts. These cards provide formal documentation of ownership, paving the way for financial and inclusion and sustainable rural development.

In a landmark initiative to empower rural India, the SVAMITVA Scheme was launched by the Prime Minister, Sh. Narendra Modi on National Panchayati Raj Day on 24th April, 2020. Aimed at providing "Record of Rights" to every rural household owner in inhabited areas,

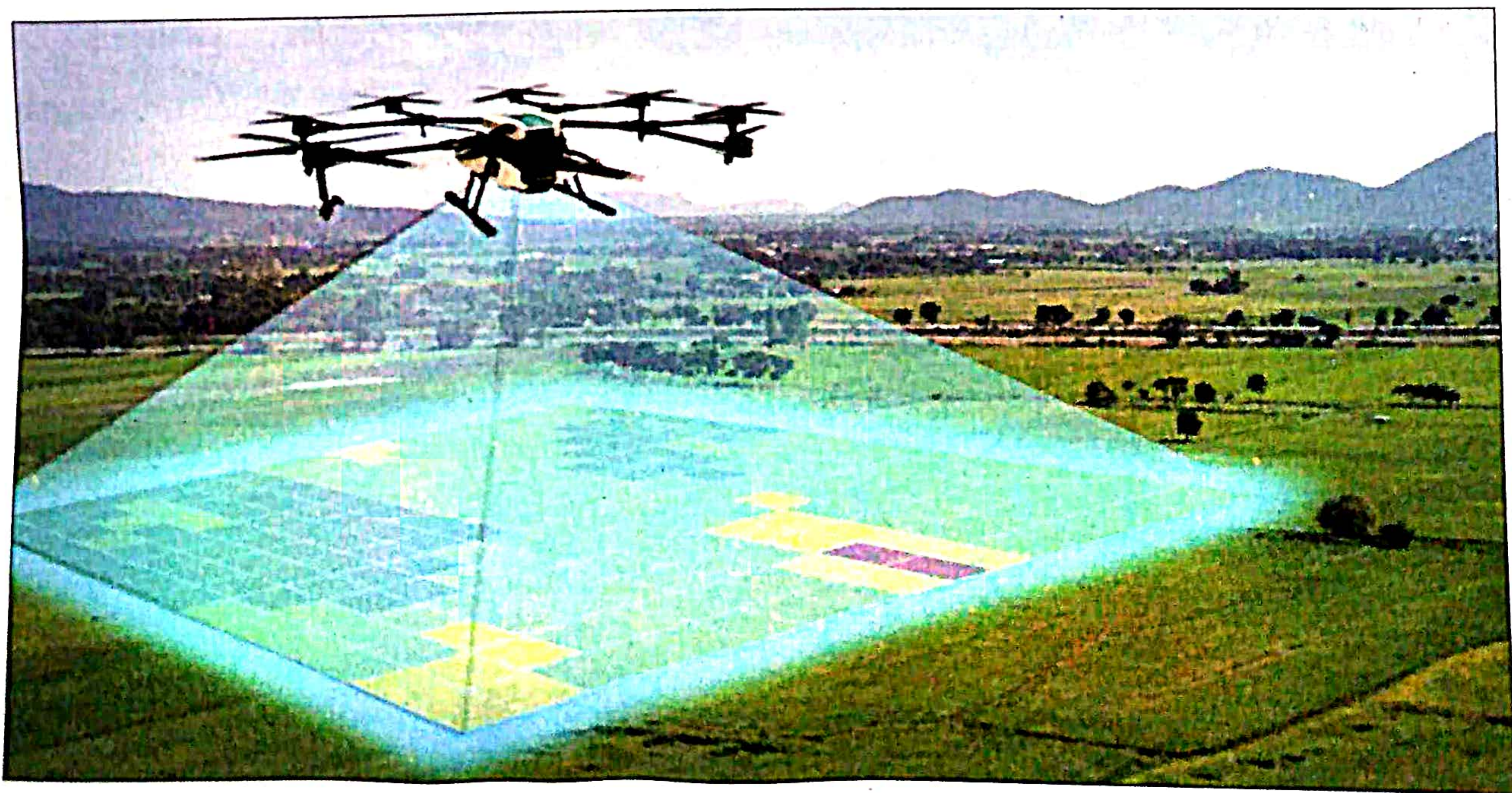


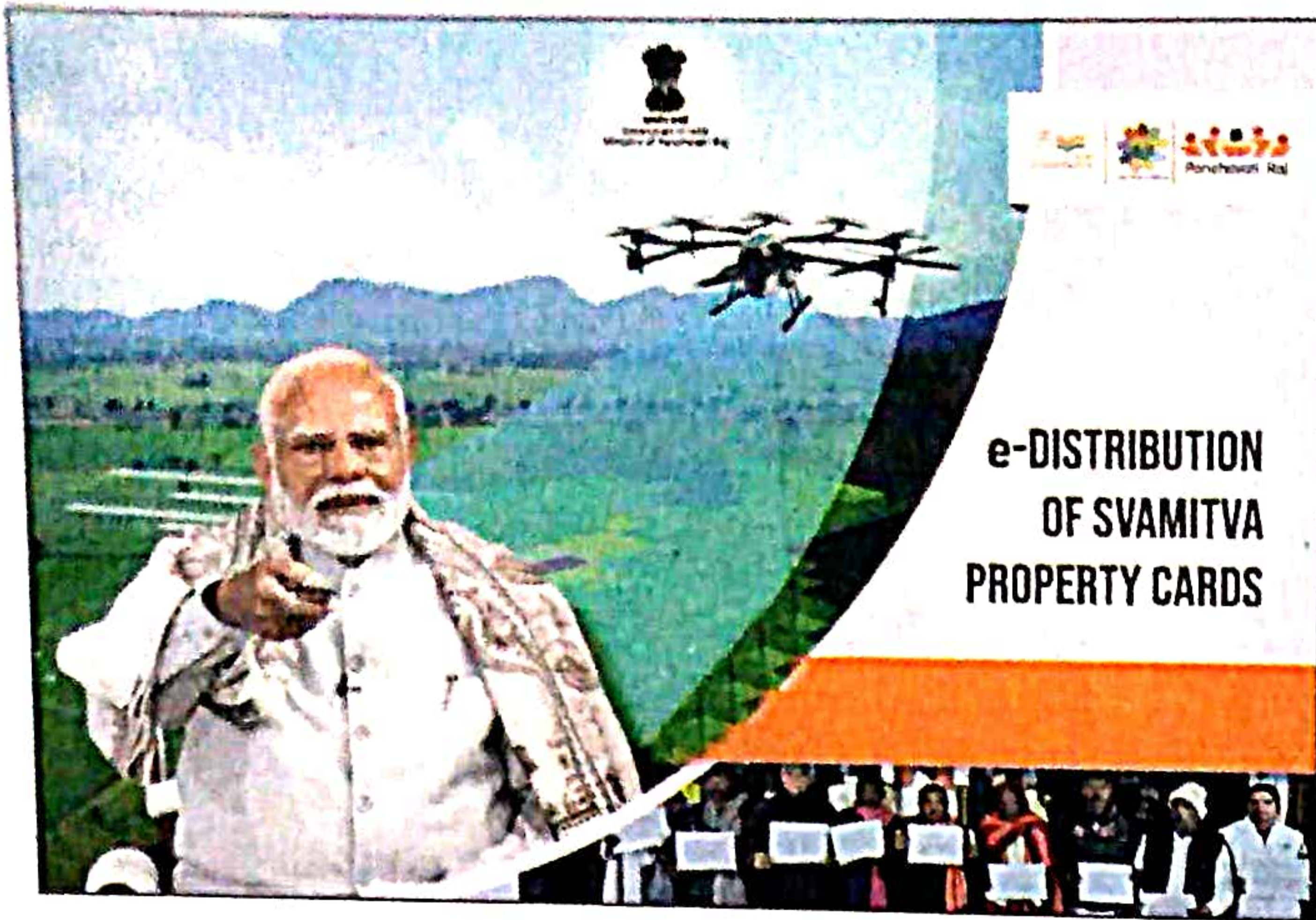
this transformative scheme is unlocking the economic potential of rural assets and driving comprehensive village-level planning. The scheme, in its phased implementation, is revolutionizing land governance and fostering economic self-reliance in rural communities. The SVAMITVA Scheme was first rolled out in a pilot phase across six states-Maharashtra, Karnataka, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Madhya Pradesh. On 11th October 2020, approximately one lakh property cards in 763 villages were distributed. Following the successful pilot, the scheme was expanded nationwide on 24th April 2021. To date, 31 States and Union Territories

have signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with the Survey of India, ensuring a coordinated effort in surveying rural inhabited areas.

Millions of property cards have been generated and distributed across the country. So far more than 2.41 crore property cards have been prepared covering more than 1.61 lakh villages. The adoption of advanced drone technology underpins the scheme's success. High-resolution maps of Abadi areas are generated, enabling precise property delineation. This technological intervention ensures accuracy, transparency, and efficiency in documenting rural properties.

The availability of accurate land records is mitigating property disputes, which have historically burdened rural communities and clogged judicial systems. By reducing conflict, the SVAMITVA Scheme is fostering social harmony and enabling smoother community interactions. In addition, the issuance of property cards is unlocking untapped economic potential in rural areas at both its micro and macro aspects. Property owners are now monetising their assets by accessing bank loans to expand businesses, invest in better housing, or improve agricultural productivity. This shift is reducing dependency on informal lenders and fostering a culture of financial independence. This fulfils the vision of the Government in significant push towards revitalizing the rural economy and showcasing India's commitment to financial inclusion, self-reliance, and





the creation of opportunities for entrepreneurship, employment, and business establishment in Grameen Bharat. The monetization of rural assets through the SVAMITVA Scheme stands as a testimony to the transformative power of technological interventions, empowering rural households and reinforcing their pivotal role in Viksit Bharat (Developed India).

Beyond financial empowerment and inclusion including gender inclusion by issuing property cards in the name of female owners or jointly with male partners, the SVAMITVA Scheme is driving structured village development. The creation of detailed maps supports spatial planning and the introduction of Development Control Regulations (DCR) in Panchayats. These measures formalize unorganized development and ensure optimal land use. The establishment of Building Permission Systems further enhances safety standards and promotes aesthetically and structurally sound construction. The scheme's contributions align with Sustainable Development Goal 11, which emphasizes "Sustainable Cities and



SVAMITVA Scheme

Establishing ownership of property in rural areas

Reducing **property-related disputes**

Enabling people to use their **property as a financial asset** for taking loans

Communities." By encouraging planned growth and sustainable practices, SVAMITVA is nurturing rural areas as hubs of economic activity and improved quality of life.

The Scheme strengthens the role of Panchayati Raj institutions in rural development. Accurate land records serve as a foundation for better governance, enabling data-driven decision-making and efficient implementation of government schemes. Additionally, the revenue generated through the Building Permission System, calculation and collection of property tax and other initiatives contributes to the Own Source Revenue (OSR) of Panchayats, bolstering their financial autonomy.

As the scheme continues to unfold, it stands as a testament to the transformative power of innovative policymaking and technological intervention. Through SVAMITVA, the vision of a prosperous, self-reliant rural India is steadily becoming a reality. The success of the SVAMITVA Scheme calls for its continual evolution. Collaboration with financial institutions can further simplify access to credit, while integrating new technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) can enhance data analysis for rural planning. Furthermore, the scheme's framework can be a model for other nations grappling with similar land governance challenges. India's leadership in this domain positions it as a global pioneer in leveraging technology for rural development. □

Meri Panchayat Application A Watchdog of Rural Democracy



The Meri Panchayat mobile app aims to provide residents of rural areas, village heads (Sarpanch), other elected representatives, government officials working in Panchayats, and all stakeholders of the Panchayati Raj system with easy, accessible, and user-friendly information, updates, and services related to their Panchayats in their preferred language.

***Ms. Sunita Jain**

T

he Ministry of Panchayati Raj, in collaboration with various ministries, state bodies, and agencies, is working towards empowering Panchayats and aligning their efforts with the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.


The Government of India and various state ministries, departments, and institutions are implementing numerous programs and schemes for the holistic development of Panchayat residents and rural areas. These initiatives encompass the provision of basic amenities, infrastructure development, construction activities, development projects, citizen services, and other activities. The planning, progress monitoring of implementation, social audits, and dissemination of information to the public were facilitated through different software and websites.

However, due to the absence of a common portal and mobile app, information and services related to



Panchayats were not available on a single platform. Residents, public representatives, government officials, and other stakeholders had to visit multiple websites to access information and services related to their Panchayats, making it a challenging task.



In recent years, the easy availability of smartphones and the internet has significantly increased the digital awareness and aspirations of elected representatives, officials, and residents of Panchayats. They now seek to actively participate in the functioning of Panchayats by accessing all relevant information and services through their smartphones. In response to these aspirations and emerging needs, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj launched the *Meri Panchayat* mobile app to provide a platform that empowers citizens to actively participate in the functioning of their Panchayats.

The *Meri Panchayat* mobile app aims to provide residents of rural areas, village heads (Sarpanch), other elected representatives, government officials working



- Transparency
- Public Participation
- Accountability
- Social Audit

in Panchayats, and all stakeholders of the Panchayati Raj system with easy, accessible, and user-friendly information, updates, and services related to their Panchayats in their preferred language.

The information available on the app, including decisions made by Panchayats, details of construction and development projects, and the utilization of Panchayat funds, is expected to generate public interest and awareness about Panchayat activities. This will encourage citizens to actively participate in Panchayat proceedings and contribute to their governance.

At the core of *Meri Panchayat's* mission lies a commitment to participatory governance, empowering residents to play an active role in shaping their Panchayat's development plan. Through this platform, residents have the opportunity to suggest projects and activities for inclusion in the plan, along with the added feature of uploading geo-tagged photographs of proposed work sites.

Additionally, residents can participate in reviewing and rating ongoing development projects, fostering greater transparency and accountability. They can further contribute by providing geo-tagged images to effectively track the progress of these projects.

How to Download the Meri Panchayat App

Citizens can easily download Meri Panchayat from Android or iOS platforms.

Registering on Meri Panchayat is extremely simple—one only needs to enter their mobile number and verify it with an OTP.

This process needs to be completed just once. After that, residents of the Panchayat can access all information and avail of services in their local language.

Unified Access to Panchayat Information

The 'Meri Panchayat' app consolidates various functions and information previously scattered across multiple portals into a single, user-friendly platform. Residents, elected representatives, and Panchayat functionaries can now access comprehensive details about their Gram Panchayats, including:

- **Panchayat Profile:** Information on population, area, and local governance structures.
- **Elected Representatives and Officials:** Contact details and roles of Sarpanchs, Gram Pradhans, and government officials associated with the Panchayat.
- **Development Projects and Financials:** Real-time data on ongoing and completed projects, fund allocations, expenditures, and bank account transactions.

By providing easy access to this information, in an intuitive manner, the app promotes transparency and encourages residents to engage more actively in local governance.



"Meri Panchayat" App

- Downloading and using of "Meri Panchayat" app is very simple.
- Easy access to Gram Panchayat-related activities and information.
- Dissemination of digitized information on Panchayat decisions and actions.
- Providing transparency in reports, facts, and grassroots operations.
- Providing information on income and expenditure, development resolutions, weather forecasts, social audits, etc.
- Inviting suggestions and registering complaints.

To download the "Meri Panchayat" app, scan the QR code.






Citizen Participation and Social Audits

A core feature of the app is its emphasis on participatory governance. Residents can suggest projects and activities for inclusion in the Panchayat's development plans, uploading geo-tagged photos of proposed sites to support their suggestions. This participatory approach ensures that development initiatives align with the actual needs of the community.

Additionally, the app facilitates social audits by allowing citizens to monitor the physical and financial progress of development works. This feature fosters community oversight, enhances transparency, and holds local authorities accountable for development work implementation.

Enhanced Accessibility and User Experience

Recognizing the widespread adoption of smartphones and internet connectivity in rural areas, the 'Meri Panchayat' app is designed to be accessible and user-friendly:

- **Multilingual Support:** The app is available in multiple languages, catering to the diverse linguistic preferences of users across India.
- **Simple Registration:** Citizens can register using their mobile numbers, with a straightforward OTP verification process.
- **Location-Based Services:** The app provides accurate weather forecasts and other location-specific information, aiding residents in their daily planning and decision-making.

These features ensure that users can effortlessly navigate the app and access pertinent information about their Panchayats.



Gram Panchayat Akola LGD Code 42778				Gram Panchayat Akola LGD Code 42778			
State Bank of India Bank Branch state bank of india akola Bank Account No. *****6904 IFSC Code of branch SBIN0012469				Bank Accounts View List of Panchayat Bank Account Select Year 2024-2025			
Date				Description			
11-Mar-2025				E - RIKSHAW MARAMAT BHUSTAN [STHSPC/2024-25/P/1] MATERIAL PAYMENT			
11-Mar-2025				BABAT MAH KHARANJA BE SHIV MATERIAL PAYMENT			
11-Mar-2025				BABAT MAH SADAK BE MANOHAR NETAJI KZ MATERIAL PAYMENT			
11-Mar-2025				BABAT MAH KHARANJA BE MITTHU MATERIAL PAYMENT			
11-Mar-2025				RECEIVED [STHSPC/2024-25/R/14] GP MEMBER			
11-Mar-2025				ALLOWANCE PAYMENT [STHSPC/2024-25/P/1] CONSULTING ENGINEER PAYMENT [STHSPC/2024-25/P/70]			
11-Mar-2025				RONG [STHSPC/2024-25/R/13]			
Balance				Balance			
₹ 5,57,168				₹ 18,55,890			
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Balance				Balance			
₹ 2,48,349				₹ 1,49,318			

Promoting Good Governance

The 'Meri Panchayat' app serves as a pivotal tool in promoting good governance at the grassroots level by:

- **Enforcing Accountability:** By making information about fund utilization and project progress publicly available, the app holds Panchayat officials accountable for their actions.
- **Facilitating Public Participation:** The platform encourages citizens to actively participate in governance processes, from planning to execution and monitoring of development projects.
- **Ensuring Transparency:** Comprehensive access to Panchayat activities and financials ensures that residents are well-informed about local governance.

Through these mechanisms, the app strengthens the principles of transparency, accountability, and responsiveness within Panchayats, contributing to the broader goal of sustainable and inclusive rural development.

Conclusion

The 'Meri Panchayat' mobile application represents a significant advancement in leveraging technology to empower rural communities. By providing a unified platform for accessing information, facilitating citizen engagement, and promoting transparency, the app plays a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions and ensuring that development initiatives are attuned to the needs and aspirations of rural residents. □

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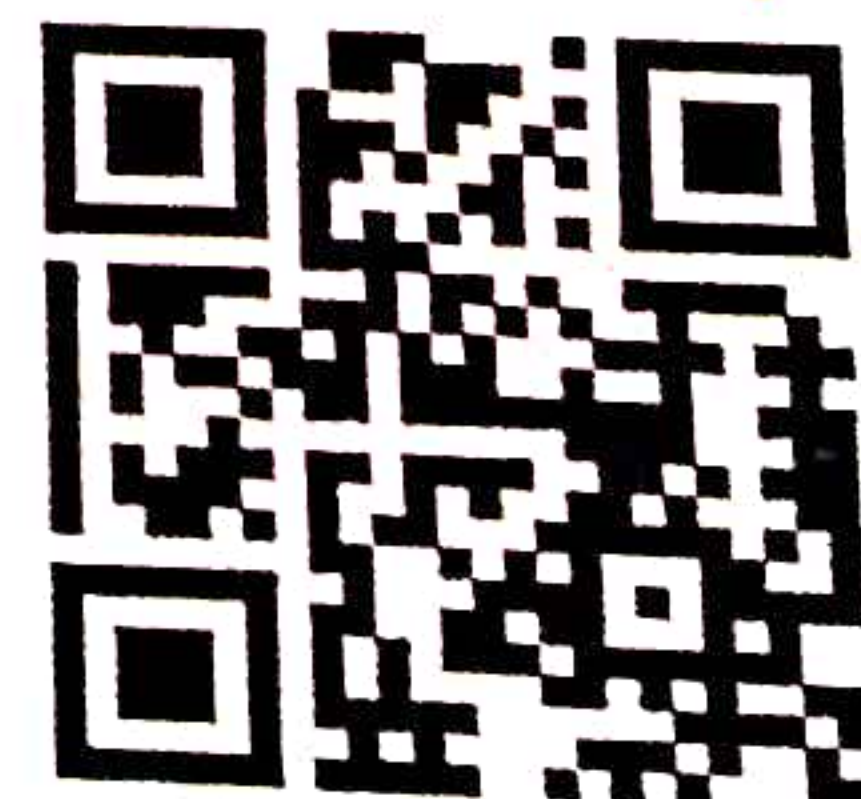
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सत्यमेव जयते



Ministry of Panchayati Raj
Government of India

Gram Manchitra Aiding in Village Planning

The soul of India is Gram. Viksit Bharat aims to empower local governance at Gram Panchayat level through effective Gram Panchayats. Gram Manchitra (Geo-spatial Visualization and Planning Tool) plays a pivotal role in this vision. The geospatial technologies provide a substantial value addition to rural planning and development, addressing the differences between rural and urban planning to enhance it. Using spatial planning in local self-governance can ensure openness and accountability in the functioning of GPs.

***Ms. Meenu Arora**

Panchayats have been mandated for the preparation of Panchayat Development Plan (PDP) for economic development and social justice utilizing the resources available to them. The PDP planning process must be comprehensive and based on participatory process which involves the full convergence with Schemes of all related Central Ministries / Line Departments related to 29 subjects enlisted in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution.

Panchayats have been the fulcrum of local self-government since ancient times, exercising both

executive and judicial powers over village-level issues ranging from land distribution and tax collection to disputes. However, they were not part of the formal government structure.

Article 243G of the Constitution of India acknowledges Panchayats as institutions of local self-government and mandates them to prepare plans for economic development and social justice. As local government, GPs are responsible for delivery of basic services to local citizens and address vulnerabilities of poor and marginalised ones. GP development plan should ideally match peoples' needs and priorities with available





Gram Manchitra Application

A Geographic Information System Application to Encourage the Spatial Planning by the Gram Panchayat



Functionalities

-  Unified Geo-Spatial Platform
-  Decision Support System for Asset Tracking, Cost Estimation, Impact Assessment & Identification of Potential Sites

<https://grammanchitra.gov.in>

resources availability in the region and their optimal utilization. It brings objectivity to the entire planning process. Use of advanced GIS techniques and processes will allow faster and higher accurate assessment needs of the people and optimum location of amenities for the wellbeing of the local population. GIS technologies and geospatial surveys can be beneficial in determining the requirements and giving out information about an ideal location for health centres, colleges, schools, veterinary hospitals, vocation/training centres, etc. in the area for the upliftment and progress of the people.

GramManchitra for Viksit Bharat

Viksit Bharat is a comprehensive vision plan by the Government of India, aiming to transform India into a developed nation by the year 2047, and encompasses various aspects of development including development at village level.

resources. The focus should be on local development issues, local perception of need and priority, local analysis of problems and solutions, local resources management all within a collective local vision.

Over the last two decades several initiatives have been taken by the State and the Central Government to encourage participatory planning process at the grass roots level. However, various challenges like resource constraints, inadequate facilitation and capacity gaps have hindered the pace of decentralization. 15th Finance Commission has awarded a huge share of resources to Gram Panchayats for Planning.

The geospatial technologies provide a substantial value addition to rural planning and development, addressing the differences between rural and urban planning to enhance it. Using spatial planning in local self-governance can ensure openness and accountability in the functioning of GPs. It helps in assessing the natural

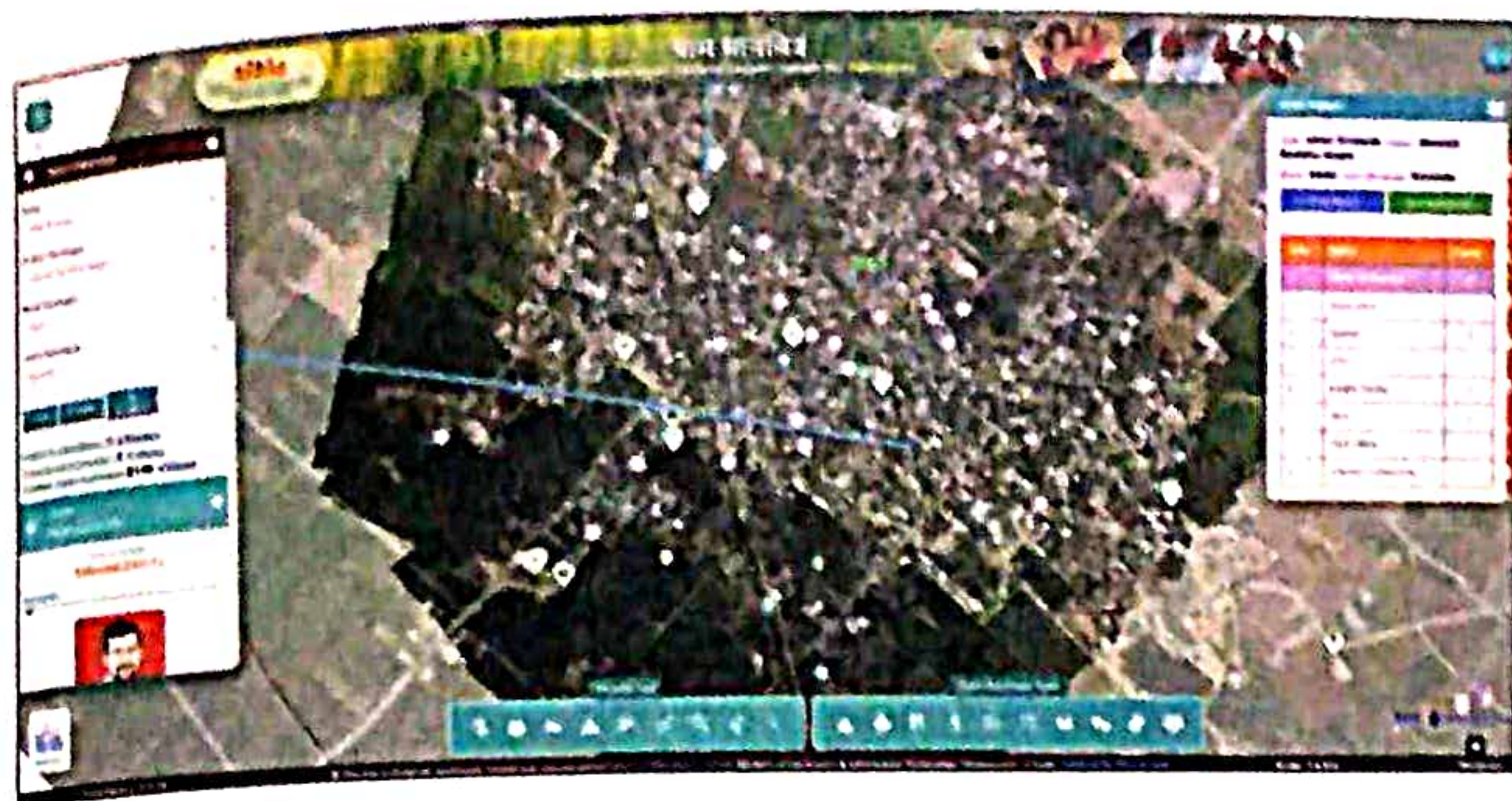
The soul of India is Gram. Viksit Bharat aims to empower local governance at Gram Panchayat level through effective Gram Panchayats. Gram Manchitra (Geo-spatial Visualization and Planning Tool) plays a pivotal role in this vision by:

- Empowering local bodies to develop and implement initiatives which improve socioeconomic results through decentralisation of authority.
- Integrating digital tools like Gram Manchitra accords with the Digital India initiative's aims of improving openness and efficiency in public service delivery.

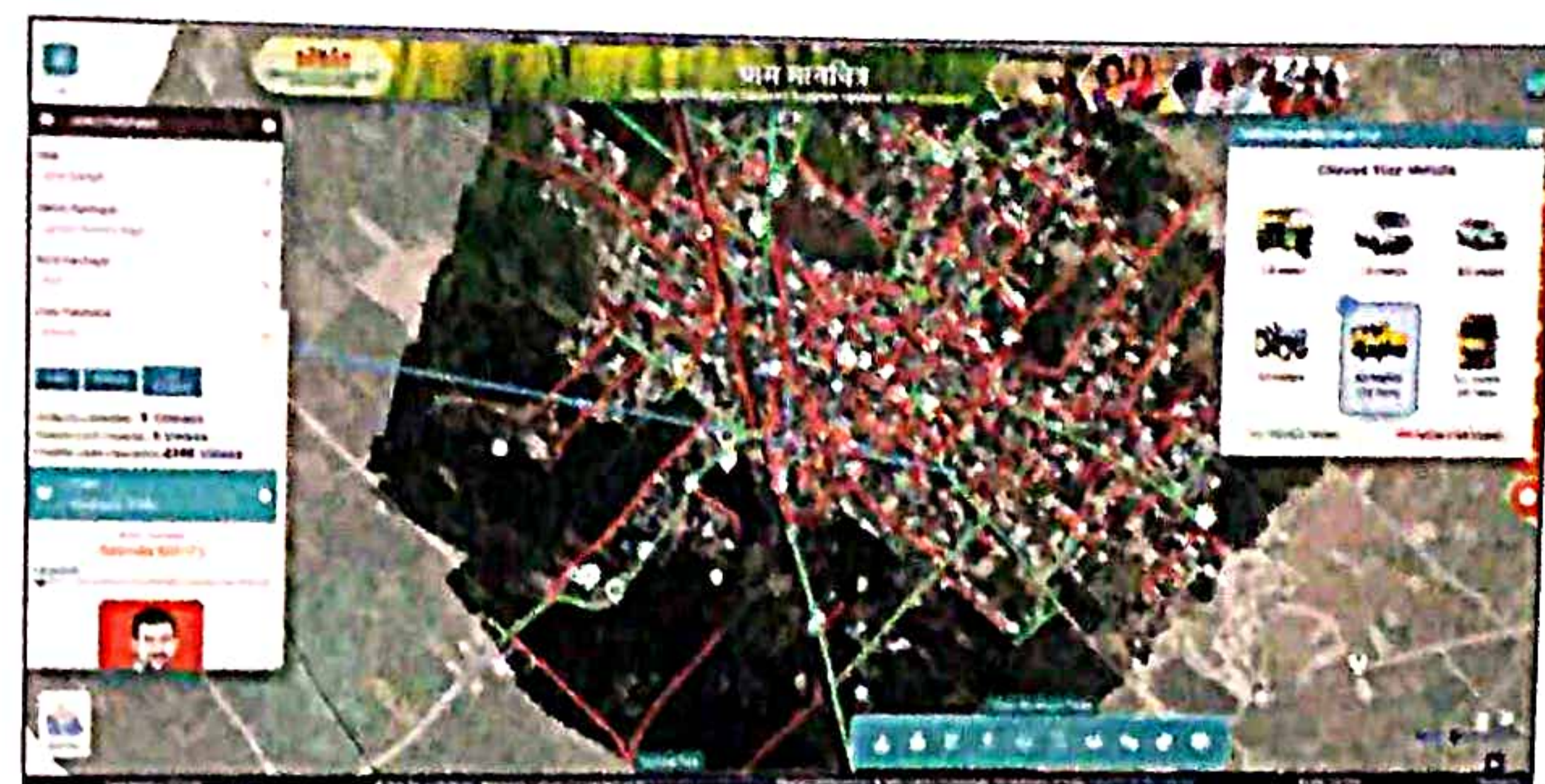
Gram Manchitra application has been conceptualized & developed as a visualization and planning tool with enhanced feature of planning a self-sustainable village. In view of making the gram panchayat / village self-sustainable, various planning tools have been developed. These tools have been in action in preparation of panchayat development plans along with block / district statistical information.

During the last few years, NIC has developed a multi-layer framework for planning called Bharatmaps with administrative boundaries up to GP and Village level and base infrastructure layers at 1:10k along with 3.5 million assets over various sectors like education, healthcare, public distribution, Banking and Postal.





Asset Report



Connectivity Analysis

The Gram Manchitra application - a web-based GIS application has been designed on top of this framework. It has been tightly integrated with the flagship scheme of the Ministry, e-gram swaraj. Various spatial planning and analysis tools have been incorporated to make it useful to the Gram Panchayat functionaries.

Survey of India has been a pivotal organization in providing the abadi area data (Drone survey) under the SVAMITVA Scheme during the inception of the project. The data received needs to be curated and made analysis ready to act as the input for the gram manchitra analysis tool. Survey of India provide the drone images/vector data for around 3.5 lakhs of abadi areas and these are being integrated with Gram Manchitra Application for analysis and planning purposes.

Vision

Use of Digital Technology for effective planning / governance of gram panchayat to make step towards self-sustenance.

Combining digital technology with community participation and local governance structures can significantly improve the quality of life in villages, fostering self-sufficiency and sustainable development.

Tailoring these solutions to the specific needs and capacities of each community is crucial for their successful implementation and long-term impact.

Tools and Village Planning

Planning tools that have been developed and used can be summarized as follows which support in day-to-day planning activities for villages / village development officers:

Asset Report Tool – Summary of all the assets at selected District/Block/Gram Panchayat is available for planning and download for any report preparation at District / Block panchayat level. This helps in giving the

holistic view of providing the current assets available within the selected block / gram panchayat. The gaps in these assets can be used during the planning activity and report can be generated for effective village planning.

Asset Report

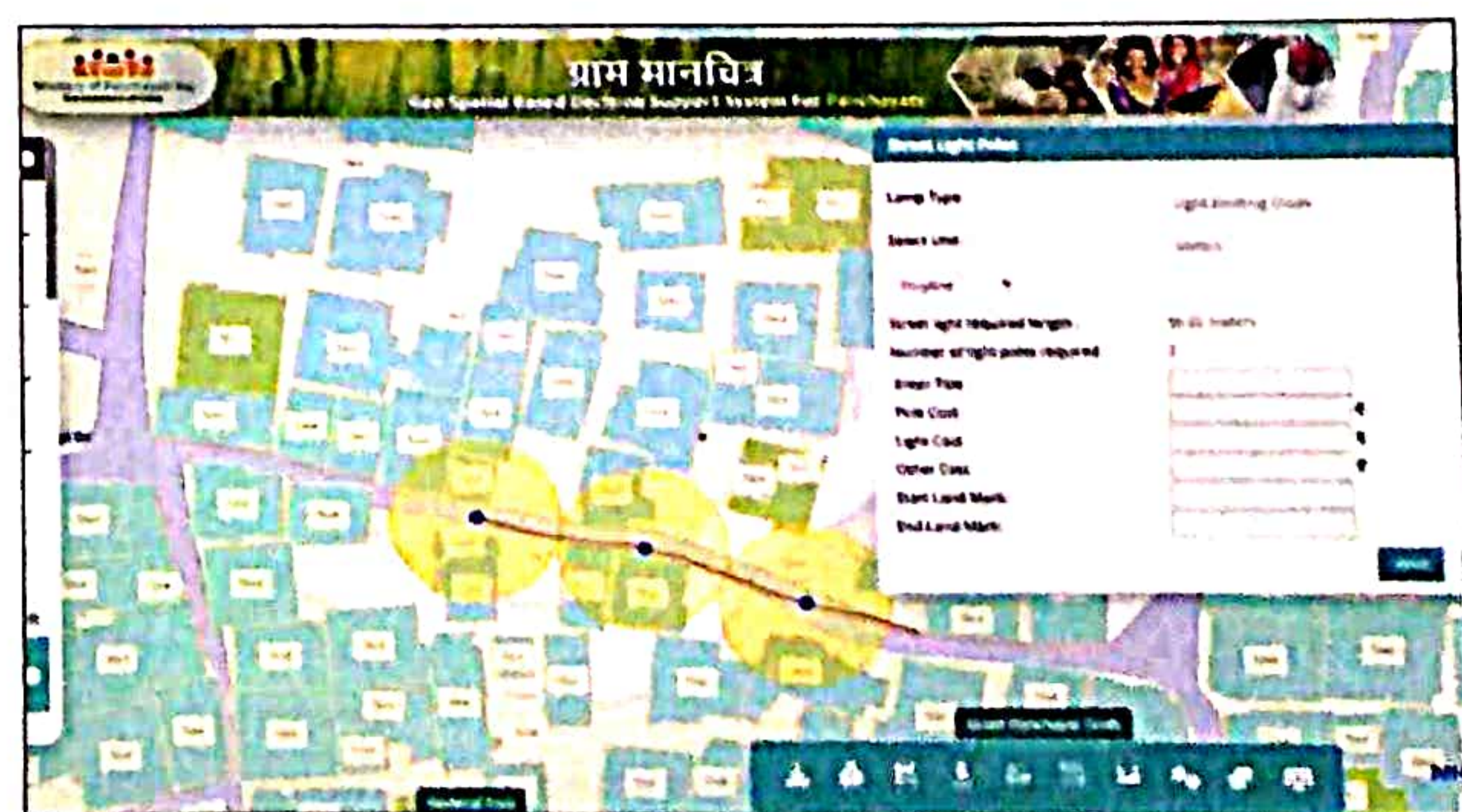
Connectivity Analysis - Based on type of roads (width) found at gram panchayat / village level vehicle navigation feasibility tool has been integrated. This helps in transportation (and also of important commodities, firetrucks etc. in any gram panchayat / village by making apt choice of vehicle.

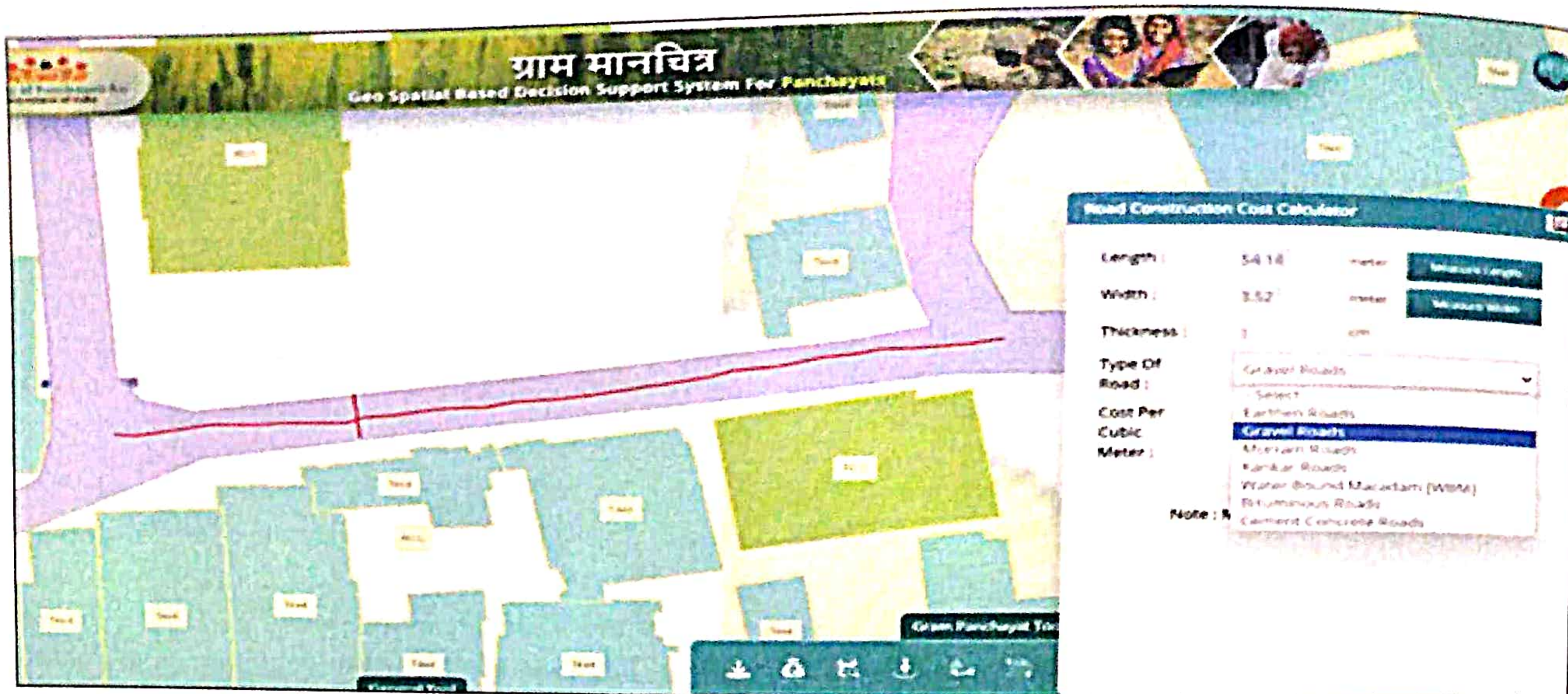
Showing connectivity

Street Light Analysis- Based on type of light used and illumination of light, providing an estimate of light poles required for selected street in a gram panchayat. This tool provides the gap areas of the village / gram panchayat where streetlights need to be installed. This tool provides the tentative count of the light poles that would illuminate the area based on the type of light source used for lighting.

Street Light Tool

Road Analysis - Based on the road length, width and road height, an estimate could be provided for its construction along with spatial attributes. This is useful for the village / block planners to assess the road requirement and provide tentative cost estimates.





Road Estimation Tool

Profile for Abadi areas - Generation of surface profile at finer level using the digital elevation modes generated under SVAMITVA Survey using Drone technology.

Solar energy estimation Tool - Estimation of renewable energy in terms of solar power that could be generated by the villages of the gram panchayat. Assessment of sustainable energy generation capacity of gram panchayat leads to reducing the electric power consumed from the electric power stations. The tool developed helps the planners to assess the roof types based on the RCC / Tiled Roofs, Tin Sheets and other types. This provides information of number of houses

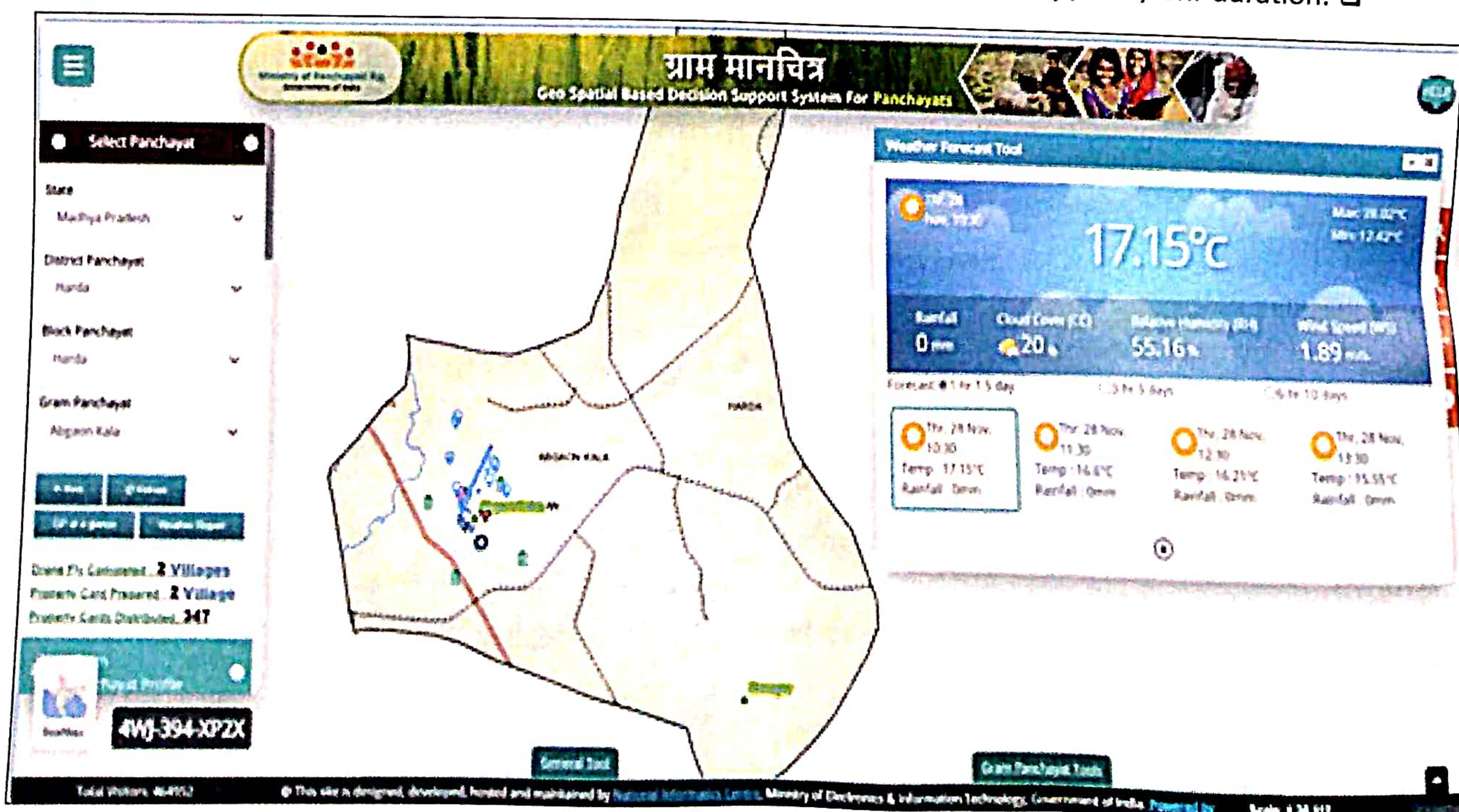
that can be used for solar energy estimation.

Solar energy estimation Tool

Vehicle Navigation – The tool helps the planners to plan for the respective vehicle's entry inside the gram panchayat / block. This can help to stop the roadblocks within the block / gram panchayat after vehicle reaching the destination.

Vehicle Navigation from source to destination

Climate Data Integration – The climate tool provides the current temperature along with rainfall, cloud cover, relative humidity and wind speed. It also provides forecast hourly / 3hr / 6hr duration. □





Water Management through Panchayati Raj Institutions

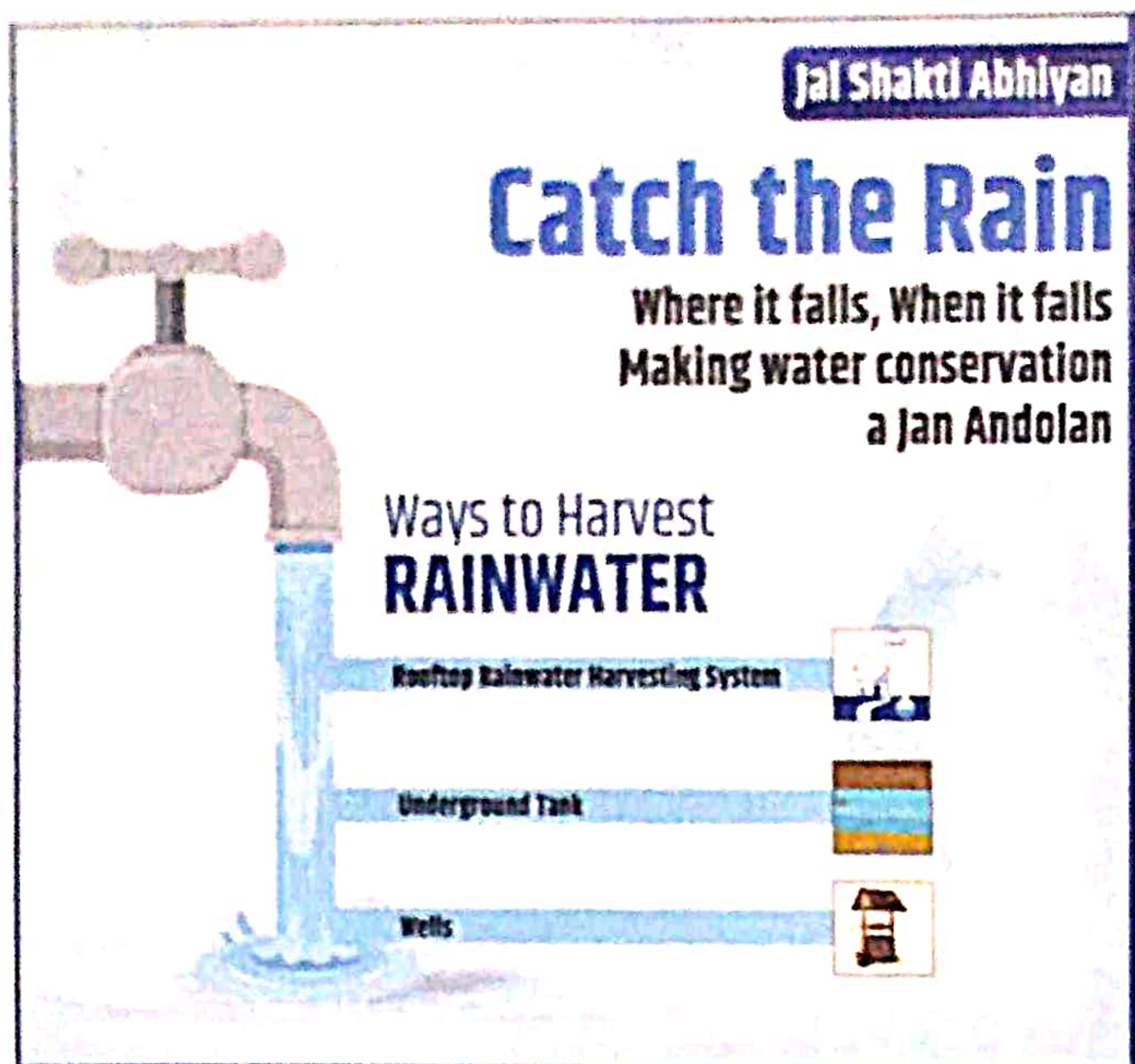
Water, the inevitable component of any development activity, is best managed at local level. The visionary leadership of India had clearly recognized the vital role of villages and panchayat system in the development journey long back. The 73rd amendment of constitution helped in institutionalizing this concept, and empowered the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in water management activities. The article discusses the role of PRIs in improving India's water management, and the way forward in addressing future challenges.

***Arunlal K.**

The word "Panchayat", meaning "seat of five" (पञ्च -pañca, "five" + आयतन - āyatana, "abode, seat"), has Sanskrit origin. The concept of panchayat system has been in existence for quite long, and finds its roots in ancient India. In 1992, the 73rd constitution amendment act, has provided a new and broader dimension to the system and empowered the panchayats to deal with the subjects listed under the schedule XI of the constitution, which inter-alia includes drinking water, minor irrigation, water management and

watershed development. This amendment was the first stern step in converging the concepts of decentralization of power, participatory approach, and local level water management. As of now, there are about 2.69 lakh panchayats across the country, covering a population of about 95.66 crore. As per the first water body census conducted by the Ministry of Jal Shakti published in 2023, out of the 24.25 lakh water bodies enumerated in the country, 97.1% are in rural areas. This implies how important is the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in water management, and how crucial it is in ensuring

The author is an experienced water resource professional and working as an Engineer in Irrigation Department, Government of Kerala. Email: arunlal.tkm@gmail.com



water security of the country.

The XIth Schedule of the Constitution enumerates 29 functions that can be delegated to the PRIs, out of which several are very closely associated to availability of water such as agriculture, irrigation, fisheries, animal husbandry, etc. Watershed development projects flagged under the PRIs have become one of the most important initiatives of such conservation. Catch the water where it falls is an important principle in sustainable water management. Though it directly refers to rain water harvesting, the scope expands to augmentation and conservation of local water sources, and meeting the water demand with minimum haul (haul means to transport or carry something often over a long distance or with a significant amount of effort).

The PRIs are expected to actively intervene by:

- Establishing, fostering, and fortifying organizations (standing committees, subcommittees, and


department committees) to address various water-related concerns and challenges.

- Ensuring participation in Gram Sabhas to broaden the basis for decisions pertaining to water.
- Including all Gram Panchayat residents in decision-making to establish and preserve the water resources.
- Promoting water body conservation, and protection against encroachment.
- Encouraging women participation in decision making and thereby paving the way for gender mainstreaming.

Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM)

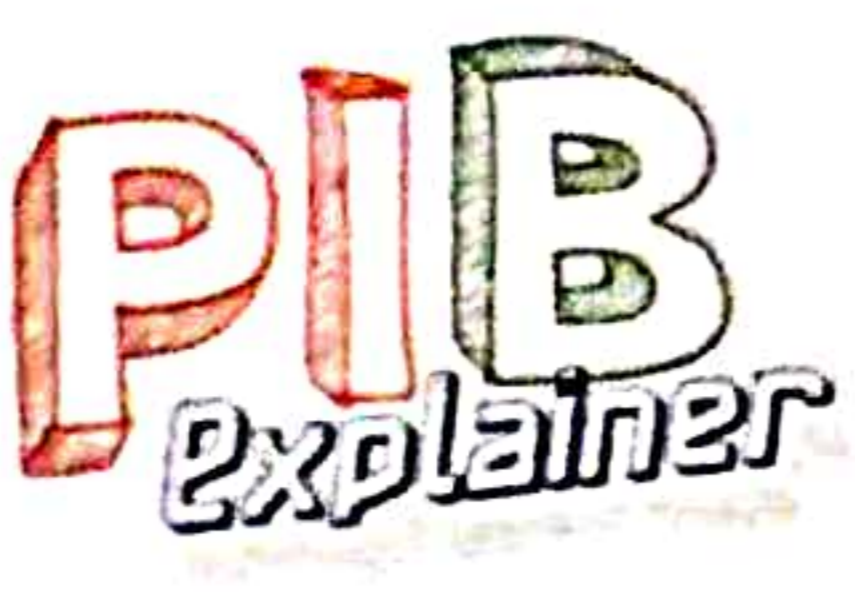
Irrigation sector is the largest consumer of water resources by using about 90% of available water. The participatory irrigation management (PIM) aims to emphasize farmer involvement in all stages of irrigation system management, aiming for improved efficiency, sustainability, and performance of irrigated agriculture. Under the PIM principles, the Government agencies focus on constructing and maintaining irrigation network till farm outlets, and the farmers or beneficiaries manage water distribution and infrastructure maintenance at farm level. It involves formation of Water User Associations (WUAs), and recognizes that farmers are the primary users and managers of irrigation water and should be actively involved in decision-making processes. Experience shows that if farmers actively engage in irrigation management there is significant improvement in water use efficiency. It also helps to increase the area under irrigation and the number of farmers who get access to irrigation water. This concept is practicable only when the PRIs are actively involved in helping the beneficiaries voicing their opinions.






JAL JEEVAN MISSION

Transforming Rural Water Access





SUSTAINABILITY & MONITORING

- 2,162 laboratories tested 66.32 lakh water samples
- 24.80 lakh women trained for water testing using Field Testing Kits (FTK)
- 85.39 lakh FTK tests conducted to ensure safe drinking water
- Catch the Rain Campaign promotes water conservation through people's participation with a focus on source sustainability (in 2023) and women's role (in 2024)

Rural Drinking Water Schemes




Access to clean and safe drinking water is vital for a healthy community. Management of the rural water supply system cannot be seen as an option or choice between the state government and the Gram Panchayat. It is a fundamental approach towards a management system wherein a full collaboration between the government and Gram Panchayat is achieved. The state government as well as the Gram Panchayat have clearly defined and established roles that are separate from one another. It is essential that each of them understands and accepts the same. The Governments, both national and sub-national, have started to focus on rural drinking water sector since 1970s. Still, the penetration of household piped water supply coverage was far below, to the tune of 17% in 2019. The Government of India has rolled out Jal Jeevan Mission scheme in 2019 to ensure 100% Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) in all rural households. The PRIs play a major role in effective implementation of the scheme. PRIs, through Gram Panchayats, are responsible for preparing and approving the Village Action Plan (VAP), which is the primary document for all water supply and related works in the village. Further, there are Village Water and Sanitation Committees (VWSC) involved in planning, monitoring the implementation, operating and maintaining the schemes. The VWSCs are also responsible in mobilizing communities, educating them, and ensuring that they receive the necessary training and technical support to achieve drinking water security. The Gram Sabhas are

encouraged to discuss (i) How much drinking water is needed? (ii) What are its sources? (iii) What kind of water supply scheme is ideal for the village? (iv) What is the user charge? (v) What subsidies could be given to the marginalized sections?

Water bodies in Rural areas

Waterbodies are integral part of fresh water resources. Technically, all natural or man-made units bounded on all sides with some or no masonry work used for storing water for irrigation or other purposes (e.g. industrial, pisciculture, domestic/drinking, recreation, religious, ground water recharge etc.) will be treated as water bodies. Ministry of Jal Shakti conducted the first water body census along with the 6th Minor Irrigation census and published the data in 2023. As per the census, out of the enumerated 24,24,540 water bodies, 97.1% (23,55,055) are in rural areas while 2.9% (69,485) are in urban areas. Further, out of all public owned water bodies (10,85,805), 62.4% (6,77,003) water bodies are owned by Panchayats.

This clearly indicates how important it is for the PRIs to take a lead role in waterbody conservation. Government of India and state governments have schemes focused on the improvement and sustainability of water bodies. Centrally sponsored scheme "Repair, Renovation & Restoration (RRR) of Water Bodies (WBs)" is a component of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) – Har Khet Ko Pani (HKKP) being implemented by Ministry of Jal Shakti. Under the scheme, financial assistance is being provided to the

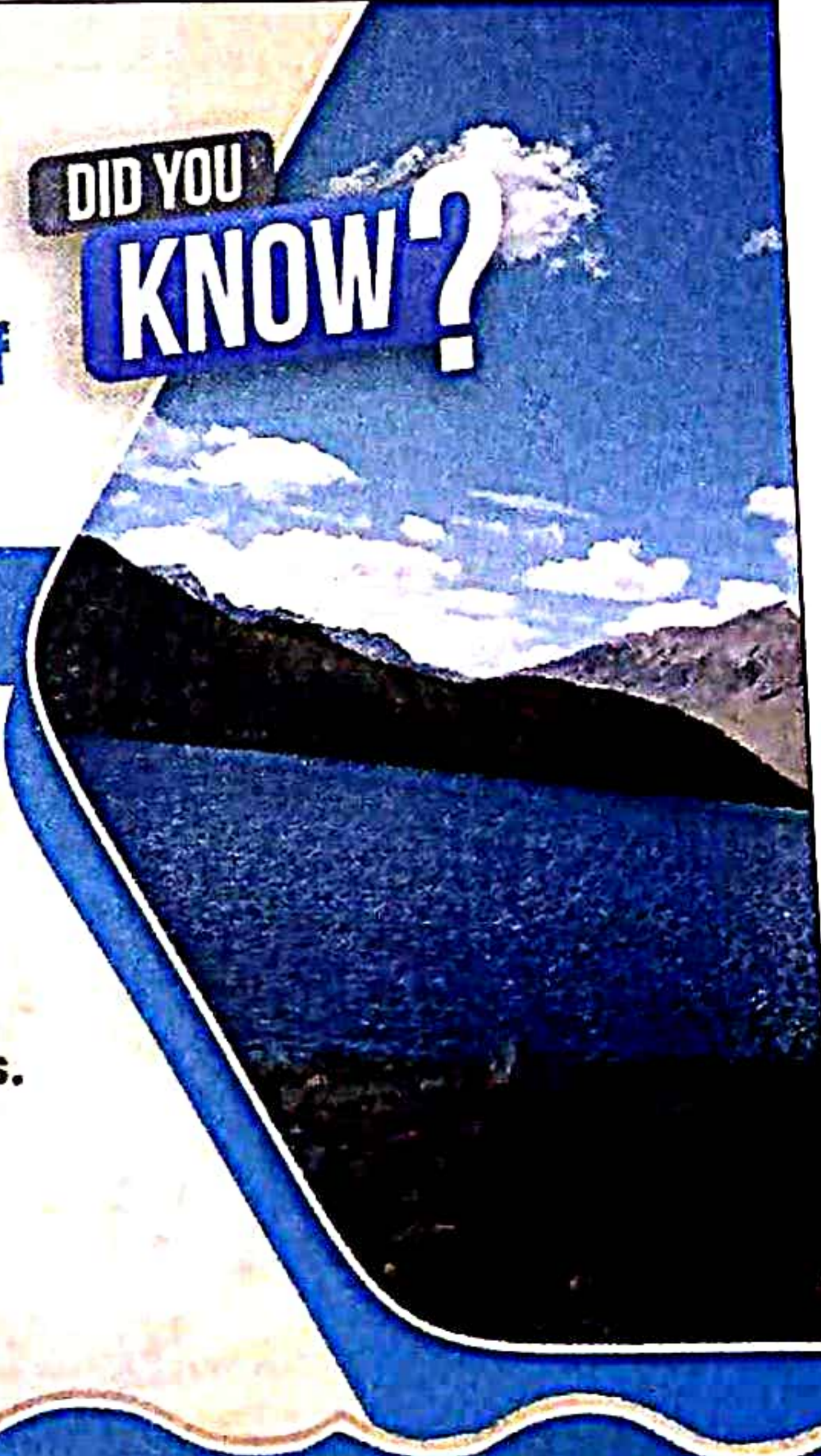




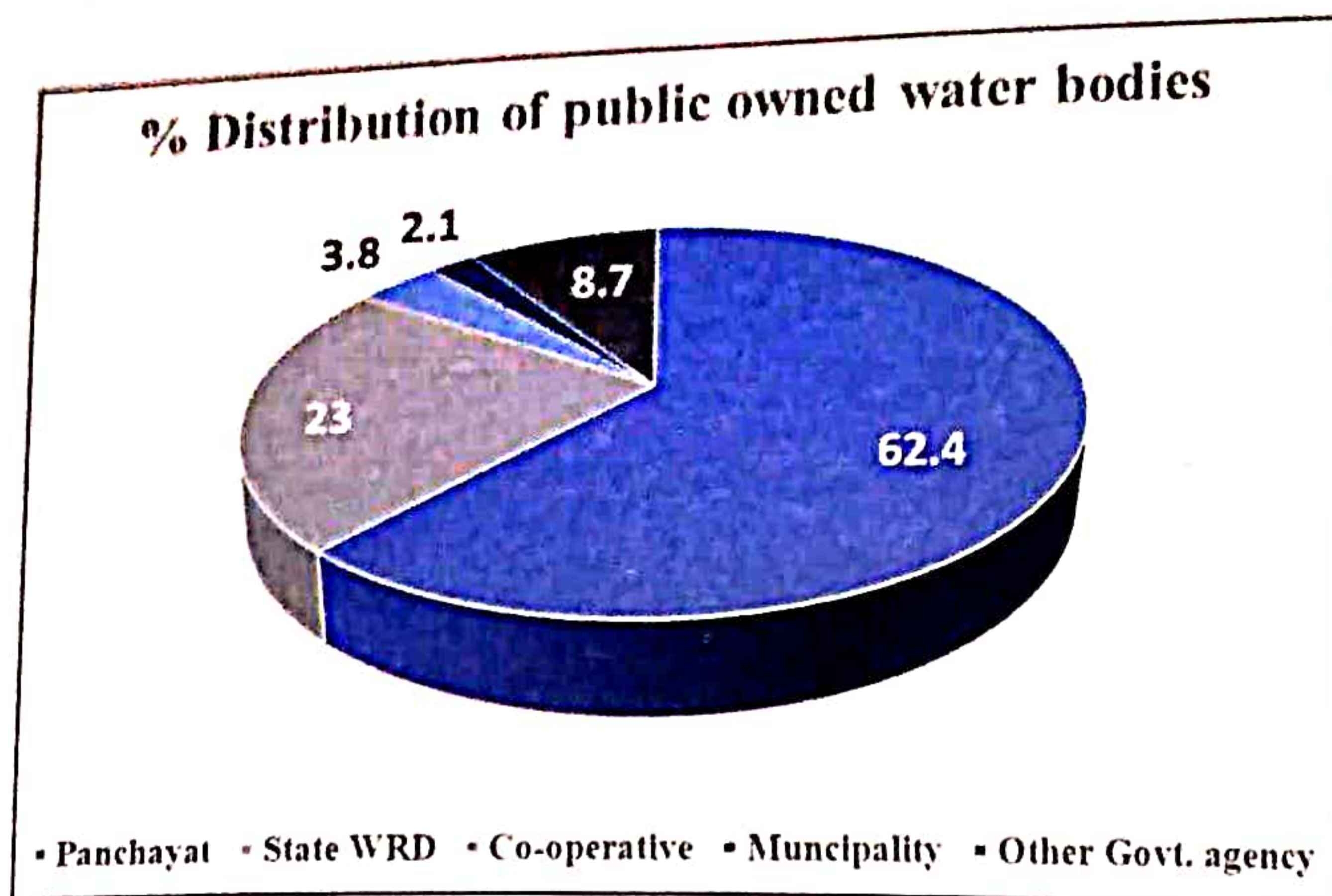
DID YOU KNOW?

First Census of Water Bodies:

Unveiling India's Water Wealth!

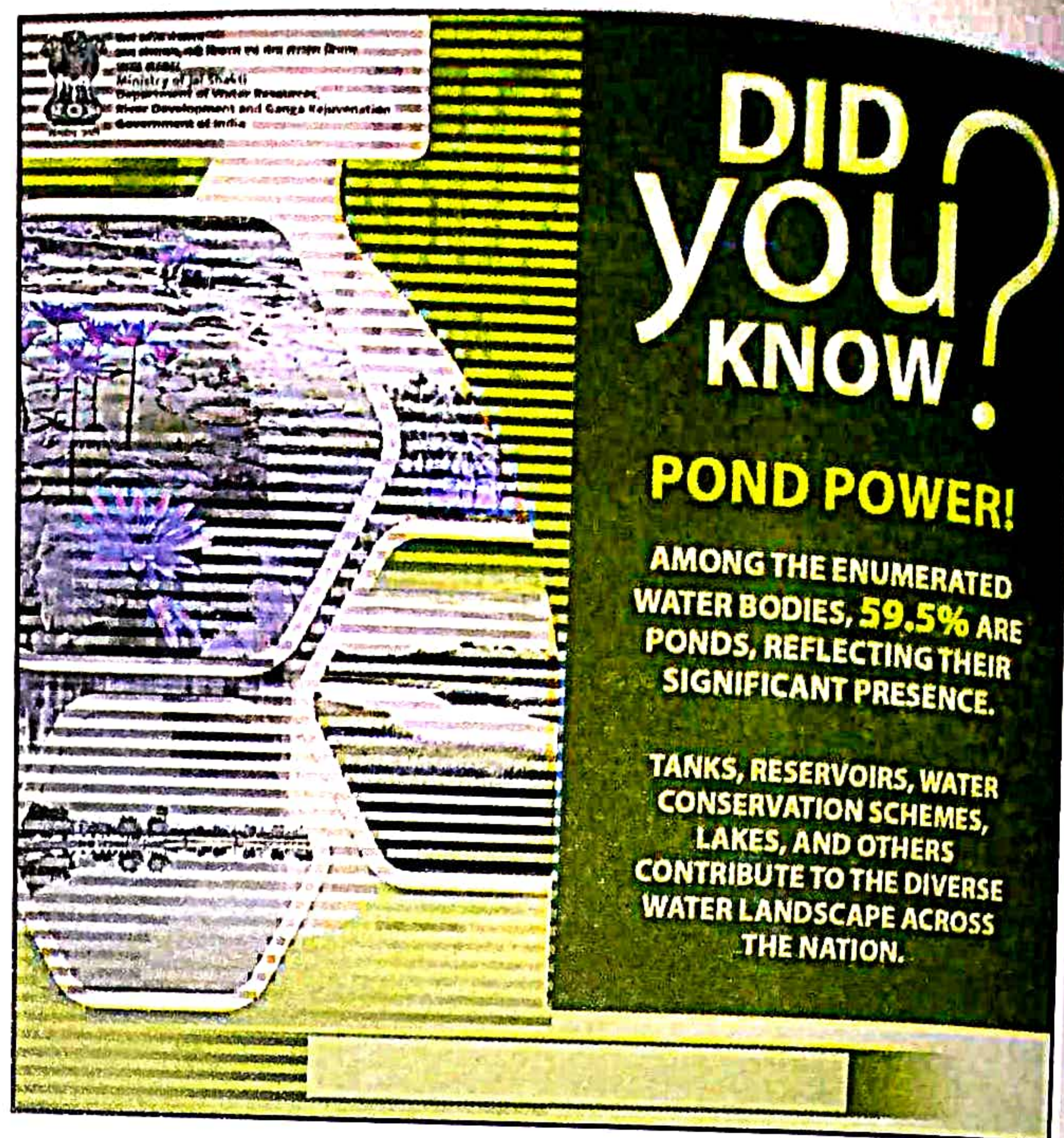
- 24.24 lakh water bodies documented across India.
- 97.1% of these water bodies are in rural areas.
- A detailed dive into our water landscape for better insights





State Governments for renovation, repair and restoration of identified water bodies. The scheme objectives could be achieved only through the active involvement of PRIs during identification of water bodies, plan preparation, monitoring of implementation and future maintenance.

To ensure the sustainability of water bodies it is important to treat and manage the watershed. Watershed is the basic unit requiring attention in local level water management. Government of India and governments at sub-national levels have formulated various schemes for water shed management. Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) with its Watershed Development Component (WDC-PMKSY), the Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP), and the Neeranchal National Watershed Project (NNWP) are a few examples. The RRR scheme in rural areas is proposed to be implemented in convergence with the Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) so that the catchment areas of the water body selected are located either in treated micro/mini watershed or those selected for treatment during the next year or two.



MGNREGS and water conservation

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS), implemented through PRIs, has provisions for public works relating to water conservation and water harvesting structures to augment and improve ground water like underground dykes, earthen dams, check dams and roof top rain water harvesting structures in public buildings. In 2014, the amendment to MGNREGS Schedule-I was done which mandates that at least 60% expenditure will be on agriculture and allied activities. Consequently, a list of permissible works under the Act now has nearly 75% activities that directly improve the water security and water conservation efforts. The water conservation works under MGNREGS is included in its Natural Resource Management (NRM) works. The share of expenditure under NRM component is presented in the table.

Table 1: Share of expenditure under NRM component of MGNREGS

Sl. No.	Year	% of NRM Exp.(Public+ Individual)
1	2023 - 24	33.49 %
2	2022 - 23	65.40 %
3	2021 - 22	65.34 %
4	2020-21	64.52 %
5	2019 - 20	61.88 %
6	2018 - 19	58.80 %

Table 2: Detailed year-wise 15th FC grant for rural local bodies

Year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Total
Grant (in INR Cr.)	44901	46513	47018	49800	48573	236805

Village Level Water Budgeting

A 'water budget' is estimation of the requirement and availability of water in a region or in a Grama Panchayath (GP). After obtaining information about various sources and water supply schemes available, the village water security planning team (team formed for developing water security including VWSCs, functionaries, volunteers, etc.) along with the GP prepares a water budget which is required for the preparation of a source sustainability plan. A water budget facilitates three things: (i) Estimates how much water is available to the GP from various sources and compares it with how much water is required for various types of uses. (ii) Bridges the gap between availability and demand, after which the GP must take an overall view from the point of view of the good of the community as a whole and discuss and decide the appropriate priorities for supplying water for different purposes. After giving first priority to drinking water for human and animal consumption, the GP can decide on need-based allotment for other sectors such as agriculture, industries, etc. (iii) Identifies and quantifies the gap between available water from various sources and the water needed, and thus enables the preparation of a 'water source sustainability plan' by the planning team which is expected to identify various options to increase water availability.

XV Finance Commission (FC) grants

The fifteenth Finance Commission (FC) rightly identified the panchayats as the fulcrum of local self-government, and observed that the framers of the Constitution recognised the need to empower panchayats for the development of rural areas. Grant of INR 2.36 lakh crore has been earmarked for rural local bodies. Out of the total grants earmarked for panchayati raj institutions, 60% is earmarked for national priorities like drinking water supply and rainwater harvesting and sanitation, while 40% is untied and is to be utilised at the discretion of the panchayati raj institutions for improving basic services. This visionary approach of the commission shall create positive impacts in rural water and sanitation sector since the local governments

play a crucial role in the implementation of schemes such as Jal Jeevan Mission and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan which are intended to ensure piped water supply and eradicate open-defecation respectively. The year-wise distribution of the grant is presented in the table-2.

Groundwater sector

Groundwater is a major source to agriculture, drinking water and industrial needs, and often suffers over exploitation in many areas. It is important to deal with this issue with people participation. Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABY), a central sector scheme for sustainable groundwater management, emphasizes community participation and demand-side interventions, with a focus on involving PRIs (Gram Panchayats) in the preparation and implementation of water security plans. The scheme is implemented through a combination of government agencies, District Implementation Partners (DIPs), and Support Organizations (SOs) to facilitate community participation and ensure the successful implementation of Water Security Plans. The fund disbursement of the scheme is directly tied with five DLIs (Disbursement Linked Indicators) which includes Preparation of Community-led Water Security Plans (15% of incentive fund) and Adoption of practices for efficient water use (40% of incentive fund), which could be realised only when PRIs take an active lead role.

Localisation of SDGs

Localisation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is the process of translating the global SDGs into local development plans and strategies that





Panchayati Raj Institutions across the States in a comprehensive manner. Capacity development of Elected Representatives and functionaries of Panchayats encompass various aspects of planning and managing wide range of programmes for economic development and social justice to improve the quality of public service delivery.

One of the major aspects to be considered with the localisation is the convergence of schemes with similar

fit the specific needs, contexts, and priorities of a particular region or locality. Localizing the Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) – ensuring water and sanitation for all – involves tailoring national strategies to local contexts, focusing on specific needs and priorities, and empowering local governments and communities to implement solutions. This will enhance access to clean and safe water for rural population in general, and for the under-privileged in specific. As part of the capacity building programme, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR), has been working for capacity building and training of elected representatives and functionaries of

objectives, and coordination among the departments and agencies. According to the expert group report on SDG localisation, the actions on convergence range from identifying partners, mapping of existing resources, and preparing the broad lines of understanding of roles and responsibilities to area plans and micro plans for Gram Panchayats. Moreover, the convergence is to be brought to shape at all the 3 levels of PRIs. A whole of government and whole of society approach is advised so that the outcomes of various schemes and interventions nurture each other.

Way Forward

Challenges in water management is expected to exacerbate in the backdrop of climate change impacts, and growing demands. Preservation of local water resources – both surface and ground water – is key to achieving water security which could be accomplished only through Jan Bhagidari (people participation). Further, there should be a paradigm shift to embrace the idea “water is everyone’s business”, not just that of Government agencies. PRIs should encourage communities and water user groups to take up the responsibility of operation and maintenance of the infrastructure for drinking water supply and irrigation. Only through collective effort (sabka saath), we can achieve inclusive growth (sabka vikas). □





बिहार सरकार

अनुसूचित जाति एवं अनुसूचित जनजाति कल्याण विभाग

मुख्यमंत्री अनुसूचित जाति एवं अनुसूचित जनजाति सिविल सेवा प्रोत्साहन योजना

सिविल सेवा एवं अन्य प्रतियोगी परीक्षाओं के अभ्यर्थियों हेतु सुनहरा अवसर।

विभिन्न प्रतियोगी परीक्षाएँ
यथा-यूपीएससी, अन्य राज्यों के
सिविल सेवा परीक्षाओं, बिहार न्यायिक
सेवा, एनडीओ, सीडीओएसओ,
बैंकिंग, रेलवे, एसएससी आदि की
प्रारंभिक परीक्षा में उत्तीर्ण होने पर
मुख्य परीक्षा/ साक्षात्कार की अग्रेष्ठ
तैयारी हेतु बिहार सरकार द्वारा
प्रोत्साहन राशि प्रदान की जाती है।

इन प्रतियोगी परीक्षाओं के प्रारंभिक
परीक्षा में उत्तीर्ण होने पर निर्धारित
प्रोत्साहन राशि **₹ 30,000/-**
(तीस हजार) से **₹ 1,00,000/-** (एक लाख) तक
प्रदान की जाती है।

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जनजाति वर्ग के स्थायी निवासी
अभ्यर्थी इस योजना के लाभ हेतु
पात्र होंगे।

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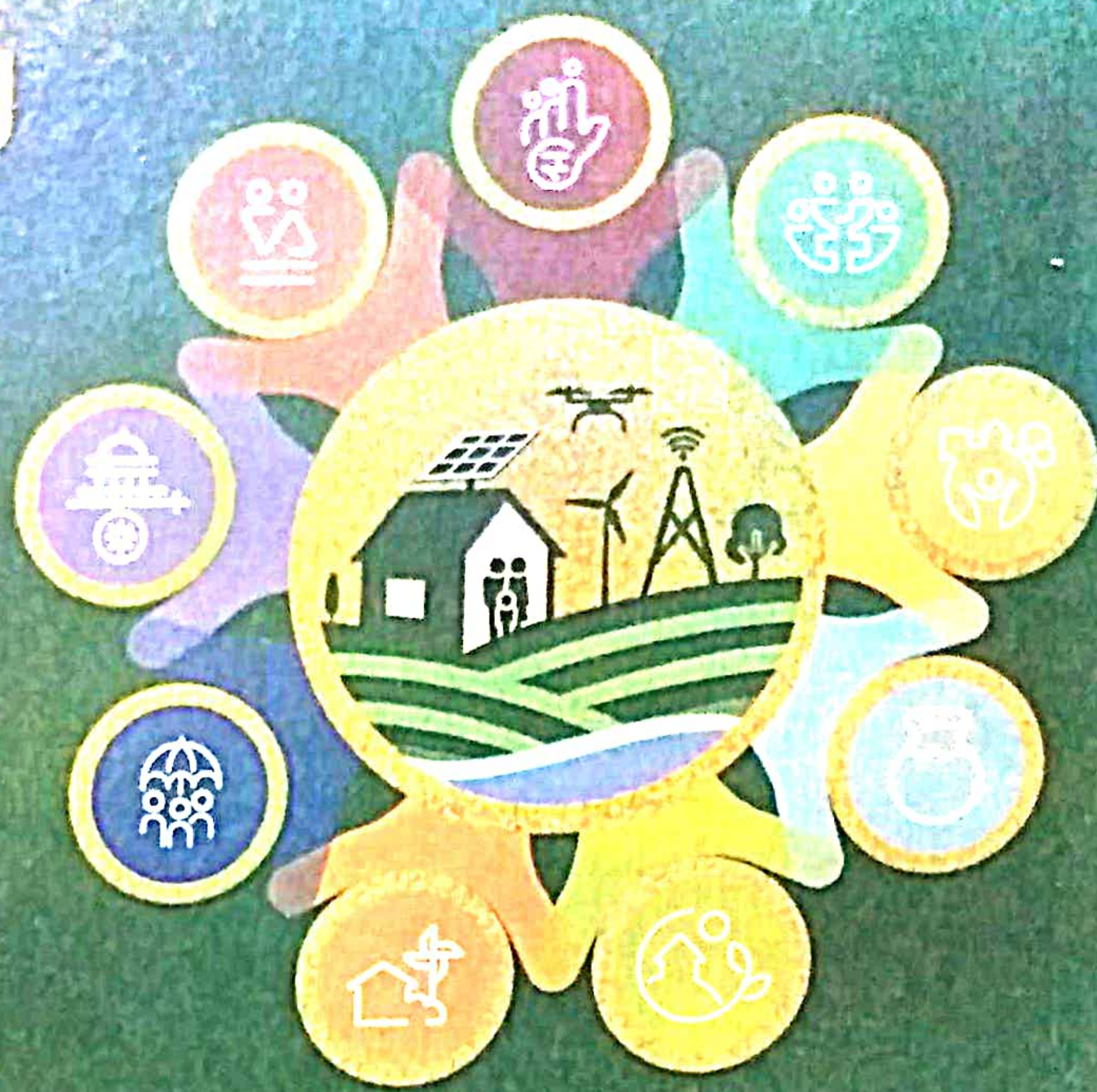


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Strengthening Rural India

The Power of Capacity Building in Panchayats



PRIs have been an integral part of India's democratic framework, playing a vital role in ensuring that the benefits of development reach the grassroots level. To make PRIs more effective and efficient, continuous capacity building is essential. Capacity development must be integrated with developmental initiatives, ensuring structured and sustained knowledge and skill enhancement. A well-structured CB&T framework serves as the backbone for strengthening PRIs, equipping them with the necessary skills, awareness, and understanding to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

***Dr Mohsin Uddin**

****Dr Vasantha Gouri**

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1993 laid foundation for strengthening grassroots democracy by mandating the functioning of Panchayats at the village, intermediate, and district levels, as per Article 243B. The Amendment empowered State Legislatures with the necessary powers and responsibilities, to ensure these local self-governing institutions work effectively (as per article 243G). Further as specified in the 11th schedule of this amendment, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have been entrusted with the

crucial task of preparing and implementing plans for economic development and social justice aiming at providing rapid economic progress and social equity in rural areas through participatory planning and inclusive governance. Accordingly, all States have implemented a three-tier system of Panchayats – Gram Panchayats, Intermediate Panchayats and District Panchayats to fulfil this mandate.

The Need for Capacity Building in PRIs

The implementation of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment marked a watershed moment in

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be integrated with developmental initiatives, ensuring structured and sustained knowledge and skill enhancement. Capacity building is not a one-time activity; rather, it should be a continuous process to ensure long-term sustainability. A well-structured CB&T framework serves as the backbone for strengthening PRIs, equipping them with the necessary skills, awareness, and understanding to fulfill their responsibilities effectively.

India's democratic journey, shifting democracy from being merely representative to truly participatory. By establishing a third tier of government, the Amendment significantly transformed governance at the grassroots level. However, for this transformation to be meaningful, it is imperative that all stakeholders actively participate in PRIs. Their effectiveness hinges on proactive engagement in governance, planning, service delivery, and decision-making processes. This requires a comprehensive understanding of their roles and responsibilities, highlighting the critical role of Capacity Building & Training (CB&T) in ensuring that PRIs function as robust and dynamic institutions of self-governance.

To make PRIs more effective and efficient, continuous capacity building is essential. Without strengthening their capacities, the empowerment of PRIs remains incomplete. Capacity development must

PRIs have been an integral part of India's democratic framework, playing a vital role in ensuring that the benefits of development reach the grassroots level. However, PRIs have faced multiple challenges related to governance, financial resource mobilization and management, and community engagement. These challenges, if left unaddressed, hinder their effectiveness and limit their capacity to deliver essential services.

To overcome these challenges, the National Capacity Building Framework (NCBF) 2022 was formulated, providing comprehensive guidelines to enhance the competencies of various PRI stakeholders. This framework aims to build the capabilities of elected representatives and other key players, empowering

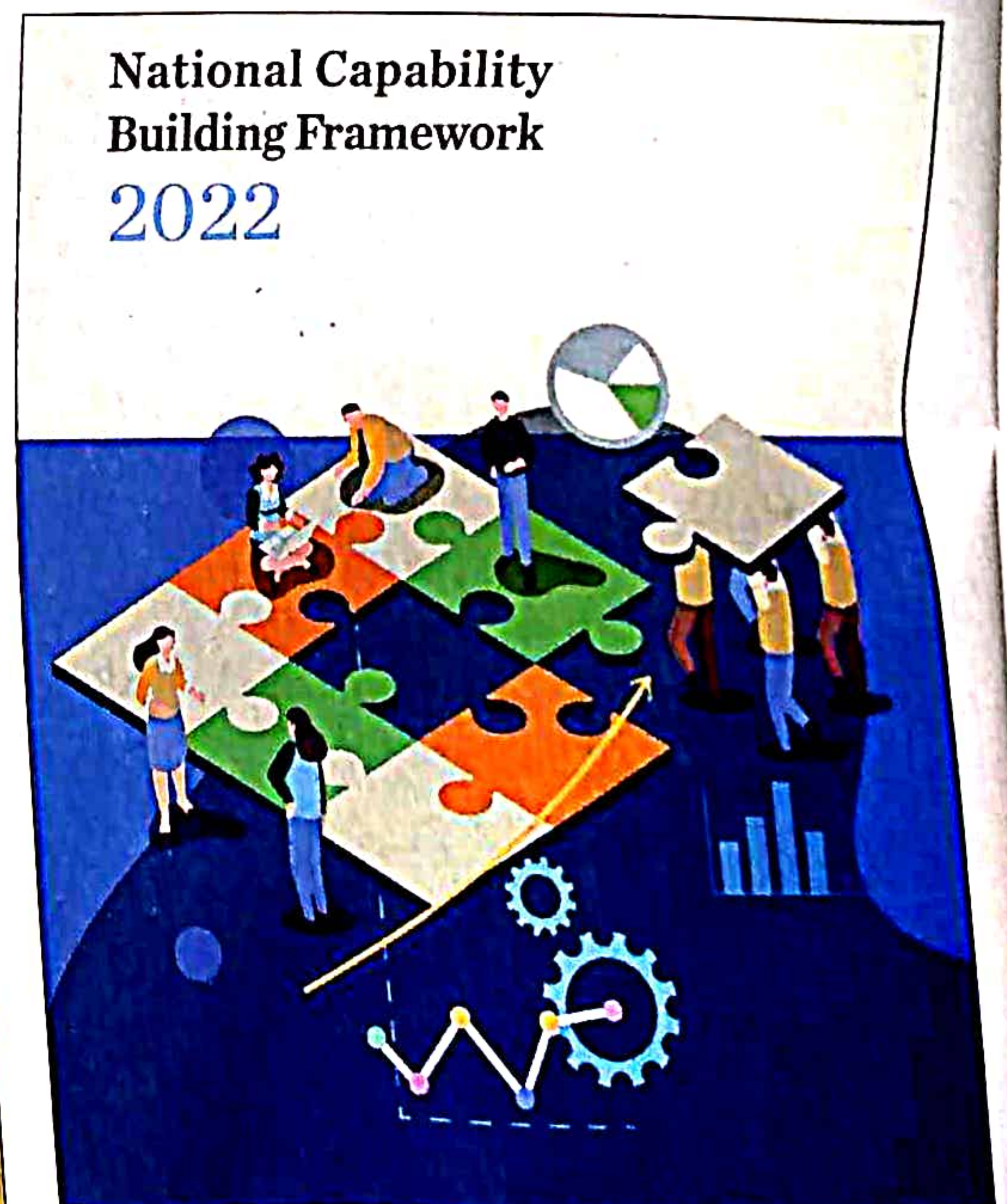


Table 1 : Year –wise Training of Participants under Various Schemes

S.No.	Year	Scheme	Participants Trained
1	2014-15	Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Sashatikaran Abhiyan (RGPSA)	930589
2	2015-16		1457656
3	2016-17	Capacity Building-Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan (CB-PSA)	3437500
4	2017-18		5370068
5	2018-19	Rashtriya GramSwaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)	4304651
6	2019-20		3398194
7	2020-21		3328472
8	2021-22		3210525

Source : Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. †539 Answered On 06/02/2024

them to perform their roles more efficiently. The operational guidelines outline step-by-step action points for implementing the key components of NCBF 2022 for PRIs. States are granted full flexibility to introduce new approaches or improvements, encouraging innovation while maintaining structured capacity-building efforts.

Implementation of Capacity-Building Initiatives for PRIs

The Ministry has undertaken several initiatives to strengthen the Panchayati Raj system by enhancing the capacities of elected representatives and stakeholders. The Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan (RGPSA) was implemented from 2012-13 to 2015-16, followed by the Capacity Building – Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan (CB-PSA) during 2016-17 and 2017-18. These efforts led to the training of 11,195,813 participants between 2014-15 and 2017-18, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to strengthen grassroots governance.

Building upon these initiatives, the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) was introduced from

2018-19 to 2021-22, with a focus on enhancing the capabilities of Elected Representatives (ERs) and other key functionaries of PRIs. This initiative provided comprehensive support to States and Union Territories for CB&T, ensuring active participation in developmental programs. Special attention was given to aspirational districts, empowering them to prepare and execute effective development strategies. Additionally, Panchayat Resource Centres were established as hubs for learning, knowledge sharing, and technical support. These efforts led to the training of 14,241,842 participants between 2018-19 and 2021-22.

To further strengthen the capacity building of Elected Representatives and other stakeholders of PRIs, the Government approved the Revamped Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme for implementation from 2022-23 to 2025-26. The primary goal of this initiative is to enhance the capabilities of PRIs by providing training to ERs and other stakeholders, enabling Gram Panchayats to function efficiently and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through localized efforts.

Table2 : Category-wise Training Data for 2022-23 and 2023-24 (as on 31st Jan, 2024)

S.No.	Category	2022-23	2023-24 (as on 31 st Jan, 2024)
1	General Orientation Trainings	7,76,271	494702
2	Refresher Trainings	2,63,987	403566
3	PDP Trainings	10,40,011	754670
4	Thematic Trainings	11,90,701	604868
5	Specialized Trainings	1,93,169	132408
6	Any Other Trainings	7,33,129	179205

Source : Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. †539 Answered On 06/02/2024



Strengthening Governance through RGSA

The Revamped RGSA aims to enhance governance capabilities at the grassroots level by providing continuous capacity-building initiatives for ERs and other stakeholders of PRIs.

Leadership & Management Development Program (MDP)

To expand leadership training, the Ministry introduced the Leadership/Management Development Program (MDP), a strategic initiative designed to enhance the leadership and managerial skills of Elected Representatives, officials, and functionaries of PRIs. This initiative serves as a transformative tool to enrich the competencies of community leaders at the grassroots level.

Collaboration with Premier Institutes

The Ministry has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with six Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs)—Ahmedabad, Shillong, Amritsar,

Jammu, Bodh Gaya, and Rohtak—along with IIT Dhanbad and the Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA). The MDP focuses on Leadership and Teamwork, Project Management, Financial Management, Creativity, and Rural Innovation, with flexibility to tailor modules based on specific State and Union Territory (UT) needs.

Ongoing Capacity-Building Initiatives

Training programs under RGSA are conducted throughout the

year by institutions such as the National Institute for Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR), State Institutes of Rural Development (SIRDs), and other training centres. The first Leadership/Management Development Program for Elected Representatives and PRIs functionaries was held at IIM Ahmedabad from January 15-19, 2024, providing expert training on leadership and management to strengthen grassroots governance.

Conclusion

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment significantly strengthened grassroots democracy by empowering PRIs to function as self-governing bodies. However, their effectiveness depends on continuous capacity building and active stakeholder participation. The government has consistently implemented initiatives like RGPSA, CB-PSA, and RGSA to enhance the competencies of elected representatives and PRI functionaries. The Revamped RGSA further reinforces this commitment by aligning PRI functions with SDGs.

Leadership and management training programs, in collaboration with premier institutions, play a crucial role in equipping local governance leaders with essential skills.

Moving forward, innovation and adaptation must be encouraged to refine these initiatives further. A robust and responsive PRI system will contribute significantly to inclusive and sustainable rural development, ultimately leading to a more equitable and prosperous society. □

Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)

- Cabinet approves continuation of revamped Centrally Sponsored Scheme of **Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)**
- Total financial outlay of the scheme is **Rs.5911 crore**
- Will help **2.78 lakh** Rural Local Bodies to achieve Sustainable Development Goals