The web of intergovernmental relations in the study area assumes special importance because of the location of the local authorities within the limits of the Calcutta Metropolitan District. The urban local authorities, under survey, form an integral part of a wide stretch of territory unified by physical and economic ties. When communication and economic patterns are so woven that the movement of population, goods and services flows freely across local authorities boundaries, it is the static, area-bound local government that tends to become anachronistic. The industrial developments over the past years along both banks of the Hooghly coupled with the magnetic pull of the twin cities of Calcutta and Howrah have led to the gradual growth of a compact built-up area, the mosaics of which are the urban local authorities, under survey. The statutorily delimited local boundaries of these authorities have almost been obliterated by the continuous urban spread, which has in many cases spilled over into adjacent rural tracts whose identities are hardly recognisable. Such physical interlocking of areas is naturally expected to be translated into formal governmental-administrative relationships. It is against this background of physical developments and governmental needs that the inter-governmental relations in the research area have to be described and critically reviewed.
Local government, be it a multipurpose or a single purpose authority, has no separate constitutional status similar to that enjoyed by the Union and State governments. It is a creature of State statute which defines its constitution and functional jurisdiction. Hence, the relationship between the State Government and the local authorities is the most important of all the intergovernmental relations in the study area. The other less important but potentially useful relationship is between the local authorities and the Union Government. The courts of law have also the power to review the acts of the urban local bodies, when these are referred to them. For, “as a public authority the local body’s legal liability is no less than that of any other organ of government, and its competence is no more than is set forth in the laws and rules under which it is established.”

The relationships of the urban local bodies among themselves and with other authorities may be discussed under two categories: (1) horizontal, where relations are between authorities at the same level, and (2) vertical, where relations are between authorities at different levels.

1. The Barrackpore Cantonment is, however, created by a Union Government statute viz., the Cantonments Act, 1924.
1. Horizontal Relations

(a) Relationships between the municipal bodies

Under the Bengal Municipal Act, 1932, the municipal authorities are empowered to undertake cooperative ventures among themselves in order to provide any civic service. Sec. 87 of the Act provides for the establishment of joint committees for the execution or supervision of joint ventures. Actual instances of inter-municipal cooperation are the sharing of ferry-revenues as in the case of Serampore Municipality and Barrackpore Cantonment, a joint ambulance service run by Khardah and Panihati, a dispensary managed jointly by Titagarh and Khardah and a single joint water works operated by Baranagar and Kamarhati. Also, Garden Reach, South Dum Dum, Dum Dum and Barrackpore Cantonment have entered into a contract with the Calcutta Corporation for the purchase of filtered water from the latter.

(b) Relationships between the municipalities and the rural local bodies

Since the rural local bodies lie close to the municipalities and many of their interests overlap, it is expected that formal and informal methods of cooperation would develop among them. But actual instances of such cooperation have not been many. Before the establishment of panchayati raj, the Hooghly District Board jointly owned ferries with each of the Municipalities of Bhadreswar and Bhata. Now the ownership has passed on to the Hooghly Zilla Parishad which replaced
the District Board in 1964. The West Bengal Zilla Parishads Act, 1963, envisages cooperation between the urban and rural local bodies located within a district. Thus under section 4 of the Act, the chairman of a municipality or the mayor of a municipal corporation in the district is appointed by the State Government as a member of the district's zilla parishad.

Section 18(1) provides for contribution from the zilla parishad toward the cost of water supply or anti-epidemic measures undertaken by a municipality or within the district. Again, under section 20(2), any road part of which runs through a municipality can be maintained and controlled by the zilla parishad of the district and the municipality will have to bear a portion of the costs involved. Aside from the first provision for municipal representation on the zilla parishad, all the other forms of rural-urban cooperation are yet to develop in the study area.

(c) Relationships between the municipal bodies and the special purpose authorities

Although there are a number of special purpose authorities in the Calcutta Metropolitan District, the municipal bodies do not have statutory relations with all of them. The Corporation of Calcutta and the Howrah Municipality have statutory relations with the Calcutta Improvement Trust.

and the Howrah Improvement Trust respectively, and both the municipal authorities are represented on the Commissioners for the Port of Calcutta. Under the Calcutta Port Act, 1890 (a Union Act), the Commissioners for the Port of Calcutta is a body corporate consisting of elected, nominated and ex-officio members including the representatives of the Corporation of Calcutta and the Howrah Municipality. It has jurisdiction over the dock areas in Calcutta, Howrah and Garden Reach, over navigation in the Hooghly River downstream from the Howrah Bridge to the Bay of Bengal, and over construction or excavations on or in the river between Kannagar and Budge Budge. Its chairman, deputy chairman and heads of departments are appointed by the Union Government under whose administrative supervision it functions. The Corporation of Calcutta supplies water to ships, declares roads maintained by the Commissioners to be public thoroughfares, and undertakes their cleaning, lighting and maintenance. The Corporation of Calcutta is also represented on the Smoke Nuisances Commission which is a statutory body established under the Bengal Smoke Nuisances Act, 1905. It is the duty of the Commission to abate nuisances arising from the smoke of furnaces and fire-places mainly in Calcutta and Howrah and their suburbs. Another special purpose body which has recently been set up and with which the municipal bodies have statutory relations is the Calcutta Metropolitan Water and Sanitation Authority. As this Authority forms part of a series of
governmental reorganisation proposals for the CMD, it has been taken up for detailed examination in Chapter XIII.

The Improvement Trusts of Calcutta and Howrah have close relationships with the municipal government of both the cities. To carry on the work of improvement and expansion of the city of Calcutta, the Calcutta Improvement Trust was set up under the Calcutta Improvement Act, 1911. It has a Board of Trustees consisting of a Chairman appointed by the State Government and ten other members, of whom four are State nominees, two are elected by the chambers of commerce and three are elected by the Calcutta Corporation. In addition, the Commissioner of Calcutta Corporation is an ex-officio member. The Trust undertakes general improvement schemes, street schemes, and housing and re-housing schemes within the jurisdiction of the city. Once the street improvement schemes have been executed, the Trust reports to the Corporation for the lighting, cleaning, repair and maintenance of the streets. Also the Corporation contributes to the finances of the Trust to the extent of 2 per cent of the annual rateable valuation.

On the lines of the Calcutta Improvement Act, 1911, the Howrah Improvement Act of 1956 was enacted to create the Howrah Improvement Trust. Its jurisdiction extends over the entire area of the Howrah Municipality. Broadly speaking, both the Calcutta and Howrah Improvement Trusts exercise the same powers and functions, although the latter is specifically authorised to prepare a sewerage
and underground drainage scheme for Howrah. Also, the Howrah Improvement Trust is specifically authorised to carry out bustee improvement schemes, provided it makes arrangements for alternative accommodation for the displaced persons.

The Chairman of Howrah Municipality and three other commissioners elected by the commissioners of the Municipality from among themselves are members of the Board of Trustees. Functional relationships between the Municipality and the Trust are ensured by the provision that the Municipality can make an official representation to the Board for formulating any schemes under the Act. The State Government would act as the arbiter in case of frictions between the Board and the Municipality. The Municipality is statutorily obliged to make quarterly payment to the Board amounting to three-fourth per cent per quarter of the annual rateable valuation.

2. Vertical Relations

The two higher level governments that are concerned with the local authorities are the Union Government and the State Government. Of these, the Union Government's interest in local government may be said to be lately increasing. The State Government, on the other hand, is directly and closely related to the local authorities. Their respective roles can be more fully discussed below:

(a) Union-local relations

Local government being constitutionally a State subject, the Union Government, as Lady Hicks observed, "must confine its

interest in the development of local government to advice
and exhortation.\(^5\) The various commissions and committees
that have been set up under the auspices of the Union
Government to study specific aspects of local government
bear testimony to the growing interest of the Union Government
in the development of local government. Currently, it has under-
taken to finance local projects on water supply, drainage and
sewerage, and slum clearance and improvement. For this purpose
specific development schemes have been formulated viz., the
National Water Supply and Sanitation Programme and the Slum
Clearance and Improvement Schemes. Also, there are some
Central housing and allied schemes such as the Land Acquisition
and Development Scheme and the Integrated Subsidised Housing
Scheme for Industrial Workers and the Economically Weaker
Sections of the Community, which can also be availed of by the
urban local bodies. The Union Government offers financial
assistance in the form of loan and/or grants to the urban
local bodies if they propose to undertake projects under these
schemes. During the Third Five Year Plan, two other schemes were
launched by the Union Government, viz., the Preparation of City
Master Plans Scheme and the Urban Community Development Scheme.
The City Master Plans Scheme is intended to organically link
the development of the urban areas with the programmes of national
development to secure planned and regulated urban growth. The
Urban Community Development Scheme is the long-awaited urban

\(^5\) Ursula K. Hicks, Development From Below, Oxford, 1961, p. 293.
counterpart of the rural community development programme. Its purpose is to bring about basic changes in the attitude of the urban population through local initiative and community efforts.\(^6\)

For all these schemes, the Central funds are channelled to the urban local bodies through the State Government and the local authorities do not have direct contact with the Union Government. Since urbanisation has been taking place at a rapid pace and the bigger urban areas are attracting more and more population from the rural areas, these phenomena have serious repercussions on the already inadequate urban local government services. The State Government finds it difficult to provide enough funds for the local bodies and look to the Centre for additional resources. Also, with the operation of the five year plans it has been increasingly felt that the local bodies should be gradually integrated into the plan programmes. It is in this context that the Central Government has embarked upon schemes of development of specific local services. This is just the beginning of Central participation in urban development and, so far, the Centre cannot be said to have involved itself in this sphere in a big way. For instance, the Third Five Year Plan made provision for Rs. 3054.17 lakhs on water supply and sanitation programme, and the State of West Bengal within which the urban bodies, under study, fall was

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allocated only Rs. 230.03 lakhs. It may however be expected that Central assistance will increase considerably in the coming years and even direct Union-local relations can develop much like the federal-local relations in the United States of America.  

With the launching of the planning operations of the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation of the Government of West Bengal, the Calcutta Metropolitan District has been looked at as a compact and integrated area for planning and development purposes. Instead of providing funds separately for separate services such as water supply, drainage and sewerage etc., the Third Five Year Plan created a special pool provision of Rs. 20 crores shared by the Central Government and the State Government on 50:50 basis. Such a method of financing, which is the first of its kind in urban development financing, was adopted with a view to ensure co-ordinated and integrated development of metropolitan Calcutta. This experiment marks another step toward increasing Central participation in urban development programmes.

7. These figures are collected from the Central Public Health Engineering Organisation of the Union Ministry of Health.
10. The Central Government has since agreed to implement the long awaited circular railway system for Calcutta, which would go a long way in easing the traffic and transportation problem of the metropolis.
In discussing union-local relations, the case of Barrackpore Cantonment Reserves special mention. Under the Cantonments Act, 1924, the Cantonment functions like any other municipal authority under the general supervision of the Union Ministry of Defence. The Ministry appoints the executive officer of the Cantonment, keeps close watch on its administration, gives grants-in-aid and retains the power of suspension. Its relationship with the Cantonment is, broadly speaking, much the same as that obtaining between the State Department of Local Self-Government and the urban local bodies.

(b) State-local relations

As already mentioned, the close relationship with the State Government is the most important of all the inter-institutional relationships that the urban local bodies have in the study area. There is hardly any theory of central-local relationship, as there is no general theory of local government. In most cases, the nature of local government and its relationship with the central government are determined by local traditions of governance and historically evolved administrative practices. Through continued operations, local authorities come to occupy what is called a 'local field' and develop certain characteristics and attitudes which eventually shape their relationship with the central government. Even then, such terms as 'surfeit of

11. Here the word 'central' is used to mean the State Government.

local autonomy' or 'central dominance' cannot explain fully the central-local relationship. These are static concepts which can hardly be applied to the dynamic relationship that obtains everywhere between the central government and the local authorities.

The way local self-governing institutions grew up in India and functioned for a sufficiently long period has an important bearing on their nature and relationship with the central government. The growth of local institutions before the famous Ripon Resolution of 1882 is attributable to the need for financial decentralisation. Local institutions were supposed to be capable of raising local funds more easily and bring welcome relief to the strained Imperial finances. The municipal institutions, thus created, were, however, under the complete control of the district magistrate. It was the Ripon Resolution which breathed the idea of 'self-government' into the government-controlled municipal bodies. Political education of the local public was for the first time given precedence over administrative efficiency. In practice, Ripon's high philosophy could do little to change the spirit of administration and local government remained as before under the tutelage of the district magistrate. This state of affairs later attracted the attention of the Decentralisation Commission of 1909 which urged that the urban authorities "should be released from official leading
The Montagu-Chelmsford Report emphasised that "the Ripon policy had been sacrificed to administrative expediency, the presence of an official element on the boards has been prolonged ... up to a point at which it has impeded the growth of initiative and responsibility". Steps were therefore taken toward "progressive realisation of responsible government in India". The control of local institutions was taken out of the hands of the district magistrate and a separate department was set up with a popular minister as its head to look after the local self-governing bodies. Such a change-over greatly facilitated considerable relaxation of provincial control and the conferment of more freedom on the local institutions. Still, the powers of the provincial government to take punitive measures and even to supersede them were retained.

As the national freedom movement was intensified and the political leaders began to work more and more for it, local government came to be neglected and it was suspected as a red herring diverting their attention from the cause of national emancipation. Independence brought with it new hopes and ideas. Local self-governing institutions in the rural areas have benefited most after Independence. Aside

from their constitutional recognition in Article 40, a completely new system of rural local government, commonly known as Panchayati Raj, has been set up with extensive powers and considerable administrative and financial resources. Generally speaking, in the urban sphere, no comparable attempt has so far been made to invigorate the moribund urban local institutions. Only some sporadic efforts have been made to assess their needs, which have invariably been followed by numerous recommendations whose acceptance and implementation have to wait till another committee or commission is set up in almost the same line. Thus urban local government, left to its own fate, has been trudging on with obsolescent structure, meagre resources and mounting problems. Unfailingly, the State Government has been issuing directives, conducting inspection and supervision, and clamping down supersession. Hardly any thought is given to probe deep into the inherent weaknesses of a system that is urgently in need of a thorough overhaul. Unless this is done, the punitive and restrictive measures which are usually adopted by the State Government will lead to a further deterioration of the situation. The Rural-Urban Relationship Committee which has recently reported seems to have realised this urgency and its remarks are worth quoting in this connection: "The municipal administration, as it exists today, has inherited and legacy of the past..."
weaknesses. It has neither the perspective nor the resources to fulfil its appropriate role in a developing and changing society, where towns are centres of social and intellectual life, of economic enterprise and political activity. Consequently it is of the greatest importance that it should be adequately equipped to play its part properly, notwithstanding the small size of the urban sector in the total population of the country.  

This short historical sketch offers the background against which the actual relationship between the State Government and the urban local bodies, under survey, can be profitably discussed. At this stage, we can deal with the different modes of contact between them.

The central government can deal with the local bodies in either of the two ways: (i) there can be a single central agency over local affairs; or, (ii) functional relationships can exist between several central departments and the local authorities. Although some of the American states such as New Jersey, North Carolina and Indiana deal with local affairs through a single integrated department of municipal affairs, the general pattern in the United States is, however, to have functional relationships with the local bodies through several departments. Following the British practice, the States of the Indian Union have been dealing with the local bodies through an integrated department of local self-government. However, this does not preclude direct contacts between the local bodies and the

Within the study area the relationship between the State Government and the urban local bodies takes place in three ways: (i) functional relationships exist between specific State departments and the urban local bodies; (ii) overall responsibility for local government vests in the integrated Department of Local Self-Government; and (iii) contacts take place between the urban local bodies and the State areal administration. In the case of the Corporation of Calcutta, however, there is hardly any contact of the last type.

(1) Functional Relations

Aside from the Department of Local Self-Government, the major State departments with which the urban bodies have functional relationships are the Departments of Education, Health, Public Works and Development and Planning.

(a) Education Department

The Education Department frames general educational policy and prescribes syllabuses which are followed in the

17. This is also true of England. See in this connection, J. A. O. Griffith, *Central Departments and Local Authorities*, London, 1966.
municipal schools. The Department sanctions recognition to schools and awards grants directly to the urban local authorities.

(b) Health Department

There are close functional links between the Health Department and the urban local bodies. These local authorities are statutorily empowered to undertake sanitary services including water supply, drainage, garbage clearance and sewage disposal. The supervisory powers of the State Government in relation to these services are exercised by the Health Department. The Directorate of Public Health Engineering within this Department executes water supply and sanitary schemes including drainage and sewage disposal in the urban areas. Since the ultimate control and supervision of all health activities in the State are the responsibility of the Health Department, next only to the Department of Local Self-Government, the most important relationship of the urban local bodies is with this Department.

(c) Public Works Department

Although this Department primarily executes public works programmes of the State Government, it is also concerned with the execution of schemes for municipal road development on a contributory basis.

(d) Development and Planning Department

The Town and Country Planning Branch of this Department is concerned inter alia with urban and regional planning which has important bearing on the planning and development
of the urban areas under study. The Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation, under this Branch, is entrusted with the task of framing a master plan for the development of the Calcutta Metropolitan District.

(e) Other departments

Among other departments, Finance and Land and Land Revenue come in contact with these urban local bodies. The share of the motor vehicles tax which is distributed among these authorities is estimated and announced by the Finance Department. Besides, any State policy or project on local government which has a bearing on State finances is subjected to the scrutiny of this Department. Contacts between the Department of Land and Land Revenue and the urban bodies take place on matters relating to land acquisition and development with which the Department deals. It may be mentioned in this connection that the Department of Refugee Relief and Rehabilitation has also released grants to some of the urban authorities to provide water supply to the refugee colonies within their jurisdictions.

(ii) Relationship with the Department of Local Self-Government

The Department of Local Self-Government is in overall charge of local government affairs and has intimate contact with the local authorities under survey. The diverse kinds of relationship that exist between this Department and the urban local bodies can be discussed under the following heads:

(a) Legislative-constitutional

The Department is responsible for formulating general
State policies concerning local government, and for administering the Acts relating to urban local bodies. The areas, jurisdictions and boundaries of the urban local bodies are defined and demarcated by the Department, and it is statutorily empowered to create new urban bodies and to extinguish, merge and alter the boundaries of the urban authorities. It delimits electoral districts or wards into which an urban area is divided for election purposes, and supervises the elections to the urban local bodies.

(b) Administrative-supervisory

It is the responsibility of the Department to see that the administration of the urban local authorities is run properly. To this end it can ask the municipalities to appoint an executive officer and delegate to him necessary powers and authority. He cannot ordinarily be removed from office except with the approval of the Department. For the exercise of specific powers, an executive officer may also be appointed by the Department, in which case it amounts to partial supersession of a municipality in the matters concerned. The State Government's powers in relation to municipal personnel, as described in Chapter VIII, are exercised by this Department. Also, the State powers in relation to key appointments to the Calcutta Corporation, as pointed out in Chapter X, are exercised by it.

The Department exercises wide supervisory powers over the urban local authorities. It issues notifications, conducts inspections and requires the local authorities to
submit reports, returns and statistical and other information. There is an inspector of local bodies in each administrative division who periodically inspects the work of the municipal authorities falling within his jurisdiction and submits inspection report to the Department. Aside from these general supervisory powers, the Department can take drastic measures which, not infrequently, amount to direct intervention in the operation of the local authorities. Thus, it has powers to annul local decisions, compel local authorities to perform specific duties and, in default, can set the duties done by State officials or agencies and charge the cost on the authorities concerned. As an extreme measure, the Department can supersede a local authority and take over the municipal administration.

If the appointment of an executive officer by the State Government signifies partial eclipse of local self-government, the appointment of an administrator after supersession marks its total eclipse. It is expected that such extreme measures would be taken very sparingly, only when other techniques of control and supervision have been fully tried without success. But the history of the urban local bodies under survey tells otherwise. Since 1947, the whip has been cracked on many of them, and some have even suffered more than once. As Table 28 shows, between 1947 and 1963 as many as 19 municipal bodies were superseded at different times either partially or completely.
### Table 28

Calcutta Metropolitan District: Municipal Supersession, 1947-63

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Partly (a) Superseded</th>
<th>Fully (b) Superseded</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Baidyabati Municipality</td>
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<td>2. Bansberia</td>
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<td>3. Bhadreswar</td>
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<td>5. Boogly</td>
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<td>6. Chinsurah</td>
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<td>9. Serampore</td>
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<td>10. Uttarpara</td>
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<td>13. Barrackpore</td>
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<td>14. Barripur</td>
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<td>15. Bhutpara</td>
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<td>16. Badge Budge</td>
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<td>17. Dum Dum</td>
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<td>18. Garden Reach</td>
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<td>19. Garulia</td>
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<td>20. Hallabazar</td>
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<td>21. Kamarhati</td>
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<td>22. Kanchrapara</td>
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<td>23. Khardah</td>
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<td>24. Sahati</td>
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<td>25. North Barrackpore</td>
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<td>26. North Dum Dum</td>
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<td>27. Panighati</td>
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<td>28. Salpur</td>
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<td>30. South Suburban</td>
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<td>31. Titagarh</td>
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<td>32. Bally</td>
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<td>33. Bhowrah</td>
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<td>34. Barrackpore</td>
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<td>35. Cantonment</td>
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<td>36. Chandernagore</td>
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<td>37. Corporation</td>
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<td>38. Calcutta Corporation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(a) Executive officer appointed by the State Government to exercise specific powers.
(b) Administrator appointed by the State Government to take over municipal administration.
* Superseded twice.
+ by affirniation.

municipalities were twice under complete supersession.

In some instances, the period of supersession was as long as four to five years. Such statistics do not speak much for the success of urban local self-government within the study area, which has been in existence long enough since the last half of the nineteenth century. One would even doubt, after watching the procession of supersessions, if in fact the best way to cure a patient is to kill him.

(c) Fiscal-financial

This aspect of State-local relations is of crucial importance, as it is concerned with the financial resources of the local bodies and their proper utilisation and disbursement. Through statutory provisions, the State Government delimits the tax fields of the urban bodies, and their revenues are further affected by intergovernmental transfers in the form of tax-sharing and grants-in-aid.

State financial control over the urban bodies is very tight indeed. In the first place, budgetary control is exercised by laying down detailed rules of procedure which the local bodies must follow. Deficits in local budgets are not permissible and the local authorities must carry a minimum balance. Local taxation proposals and expenditure proposals beyond a specified sum need the sanction of the State Government. The budgets of all the municipal bodies except Calcutta are forwarded to the State Government for approval and sanction.
In the second place, control is exercised through inspection and audit of local accounts. Inspection of the municipalities is done by the inspector of local bodies, who is appointed by the State Government for each administrative division. The task of auditing municipal accounts is statutorily entrusted to the Examiner of Local Accounts, who is the Accountant General, West Bengal, functioning under the administrative jurisdiction of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. So far as the Corporation of Calcutta is concerned, the State Government has powers to make rules laying down the procedure for keeping accounts, and specifying the powers and duties of auditors. Because of low credit-worthiness of the local bonds in the capital market, the urban bodies can hardly raise loan funds from the open market and local borrowing must be approved by the State Government, which stands guarantee for the local bonds. In fact, the urban bodies, under survey, depend entirely on the State Government for loan funds. The latter fixes a ceiling on local borrowing and closely supervises loan-financed expenditures.

(iii) Contacts between urban local bodies and State area administration

Under the statutory provisions and relevant rules made thereunder, many of the powers of the State Government in relation to the urban local bodies are delegated to its area representatives, such as the divisional commissioner in a division and the district magistrate in a district. Except Calcutta, twenty-two of the remaining thirty-five urban local bodies fall within the revenue district of 24-Parganas, eleven within Hooghly, and two within Howrah.
With the exception of the Barrackpore Cantonment, which is under the supervision of the Union Ministry of Defence, the thirty-four urban bodies are supervised by their respective district magistrates as agents of the State Government. Of the three districts, 24-Parganas and Howrah belong to the Presidency Division, and Hooghly forms part of the Bardwan Division. The commissioners of these two divisions have supervisory powers over the urban local authorities falling within their respective jurisdictions. The divisional commissioner is responsible for dividing the municipalities into electoral wards. The dates of regular municipal elections are fixed by the district magistrate who acts as the electoral registrations officer for the municipal constituencies and is responsible for preparing and keeping up-to-date the electoral roles for such constituencies. The divisional commissioner and the district magistrate are empowered to inspect municipal immovable property and work in progress. They have access to all municipal records and proceedings, and it is their duty to see that the proceedings of the municipal authorities are in conformity with

18. Even in the case of the Cantonment, the Cantonment Board has, as one of its members a first class magistrate who is nominated by the District Magistrate of 24-Parganas. Also, the latter has power to override the decisions of the Board.
the relevant laws and rules. If, in their opinion, municipal orders and resolutions are likely to cause public injury or a breach of peace, they have powers to suspend them. Such suspension orders need, however, to be approved by the State Government. The divisional commissioner has power to sanction municipal drainage projects and water works costing less than Rs. 60,000 and to impose a ceiling on the budget expenses of municipal commissioners. He is also responsible for appointing municipal assessors and for making recommendations to the Department of Local Self-Government for settling territorial disputes between urban and rural local authorities. A municipality desiring to undertake a project for water supply or sewerage has to submit detailed plans and estimates for the project to the State Government through the district magistrate concerned. Thus, the State Government keeps a close watch on the activities of the urban local bodies through its field officers, such as the divisional commissioner and the district magistrate.

Evaluation

Of the intergovernmental relationships described above, it is the State-local relationship which is long-
relationships have not developed to the desired extent. One striking feature is the involvement, in recent times, of the Union government. This has however, been piecemeal and oriented toward specific services. The danger involved in such an approach to urban problems is that the needs of the urban areas are not considered as a whole, which might lead to distorted urban growth. What is needed instead is a strategy of urban development evolved at the national level on the basis of which co-ordinated area development plans could be launched.

In fact, this concept of coordinated area development was the underlying theme of the "pool fund" provision for the Calcutta Metropolitan District. This is the first of its kind in India and in future more metropolitan areas could be financed in this line. But, before this is attempted, an authoritative definition of the metropolitan area has to be established. As already mentioned in chapter III, our census has not attempted it so far. The Calcutta Metropolitan District was delineated by the geographers of the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation. But, if Central funds are to be used for metropolitan area development on an all-India basis, it is imperative that an authoritative definition on the basis of
uniform and scientific criteria should be established.

The descriptive account of the varied relationships which the urban local authorities have within the study area highlights some important administrative problems. Firstly, it is revealed that although 'local government' falls within the administrative jurisdiction of the Department of Local Self-Government, the supervision over specific local functions such as water supply, drainage and sewerage and town and country planning is fragmented at the state level. The approach toward local development lacks unity and integration. Each department deals with specific local functions and there is no mechanism to deal with the diverse problems of local government in a unified fashion and to ensure coordination among the different arms of the state government.

Secondly, it appears that so far as the state government is concerned, its relationship with the local bodies has all along been oriented towards control and supervision rather than advice and guidance. The accent seems to be
on the punitive and restrictive measures as distinguished from measures for stimulating and developing local government administration. It may be mentioned in this connection that the retention of supervisory powers in the hands of the State areaal administrators, such as the divisional commissioner and the district magistrate, has hardly any justification at all. This is perpetuated on an old assumption that the administrative aberrations of local government need to be bridled by the State field officials whose superiority over the elected local councillors was almost an accepted principle of administration in pre-Independent India. Field level administrative and technical support to the local bodies can go a long way in stimulating local government and it is this aspect of State field administration that needs to be carefully planned and expanded.

Thirdly, perhaps the most important administrative problem in the study area is that of coordination and cooperation among the constituent local authorities themselves. There are very few instances where these authorities have entered into voluntary agreements to solve their common problems, although because of
their location in the Calcutta Metropolitan District, many of their problems transcend their respective local limits and can be solved with the active cooperation of neighbouring bodies. Thus, governmental coordination at both state and local levels, which is so vital for solving the myriad problems of the local bodies under survey, is yet to be achieved either through institutional reorganisation or voluntary cooperation.