In the preceding chapters, discussions have been made on the location, structure, functions, personnel and finances of the urban local bodies under survey. In addition, their relationships with other governmental agencies have been dealt with in some detail. However, since these urban local bodies are being studied within the wider framework of a metropolitan area, other local authorities which have not been dealt with so far in this study but which operate within the CMD, need also to be taken into account to draw a complete picture of the total local administration apparatus within the Metropolitan District. Only thus can we see the maze of government in the CMD and consider alternative solution patterns.

(a) Rural Local Bodies

In Chapter XI (Table 3), reference has been made to the non-municipal towns and rural units (muraas) within the CMD. So far as local government administration is concerned, these towns and rural units are both looked after by a multiplicity of rural local authorities. The persistence of rural form of local government in the non-municipal towns shows the inability of local institutions to keep in step with growing urbanisation. The form of rural local
government administering these areas is a recent innovation, which is familiarly known as panchayati raj. In accordance with an all-India pattern, a three-tiered structure has been designed for each revenue district. At the top is the district-level body called the zilla parishad; the second tier is the anchalik parishad at the level of the development block, which comprises about one hundred villages with not more than 100,000 population; at the bottom tier is the village-level body known as the gram panchayat. In West Bengal, the lowest tier has been further sub-divided into two types of authorities called the anchal panchayat and the gram panchayat. An anchal panchayat embraces the areas of eight to ten contiguous gram panchayats. All these types of rural local authorities—four types in the CMD—have overlapping jurisdictions and functions and the entire structure is hierarchical, the topmost body being the supervisory and co-ordinating body for the whole revenue district. Within the CMD, parts of the areas of the four Zilla Parishads of 24-Parganas, Howrah, Hooghly and Nadia fall and the number of lower tier authorities in these parts run into few hundreds (Fig. 1).

1. In addition, each gram panchayat has a gram sabha which consists of the entire electorate in a gram panchayat area, and which possesses very limited powers.

The outer fringes of the CMD cut across the boundaries of four revenue districts where the regional units of the State Government perform a host of local functions directly, many of which are now gradually being vested in the newly created rural local bodies. The main administrative units are the district, the sub-division and the block. The district administration headed by the district magistrate exerts considerable influence and control on the rural local bodies. Next to him is the sub-divisional officer in each sub-division of a district who functions almost as an agent of the district officer within the sub-division. Finally, at the development block level operates the block development officer. These three units - district, sub-division and block - have each its own complement of field officials who serve the local areas directly. Thus, in the rural areas and the freshly urbanised tracts where rural authorities are still now functioning, the regional units of State administration operate in close association with the elected rural local bodies.

3. The functions of these State rural units and their officers are gradually being integrated into the panchayati raj bodies. At the 'block' level, this integration has already taken place.
(c) Kalyani Notified Area Authority

It is a recently created special type of local authority. Under the provisions of the Bengal Municipal Act, 1932, the State Government may create a notified area authority for rendering municipal services in respect of the following areas:

(a) Any area not fulfilling the conditions for being constituted as a municipality; (b) any area which falls within a newly developing town; or (c) any area in which new industries have been or are being established. The Kalyani township was developed by the State Development and Planning Department and now the Authority has taken it over. The Notified Area Authority functions just like any other municipality, but it consists of only State Government nominees.

Fragmentation of Authority

Aside from the urban bodies discussed in earlier chapters, these authorities are responsible for undertaking their specific range of functions within parts of the Metropolitan District. There are still other functions and services which are administered by a multiplicity of authorities. Production and supply of gas are undertaken by the State-owned

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Oriental Gas Company Limited; electricity undertakings are
manned by the State Electricity Board and a number of private
companies, principal among whom is the Calcutta Electric
Supply Corporation; housing is mostly done by the State
Housing Department and partly by the Calcutta Improvement
Trust; police is under direct State control; transport
services are operated by the Calcutta State Transport
Corporation, the Calcutta Tramways Company Limited (a private
company), the bus syndicates formed by private operators,
a few taxi cooperatives and the Railway Board (in respect of
suburban services particularly); and the fire services are
directly under the management of the State Local Self-Government
Department.

Apart from the Housing Department and the Local Self-
Government Department which operate specific services within
the Metropolitan District, there are a number of State
departments which are concerned with either supervision or
administration of other services. Thus, the major open
spaces within Calcutta, such as the Zoological Garden, the
Eden Gardens, and the Calcutta Maidan are looked after directly
by the Departments of Animal Husbandry, Forestry, and Public
Works. The Home (Transport) Department has under it the
Calcutta Regional Transport Authority which issues licenses,
regulate bus routes and exercises supervision over the transport
undertakings. The Salt Lake project which is creating usable
land with the help of "silt from the Hooghly to build a new township near Calcutta," is now under the charge of a special engineering wing of the Department of Irrigation and Waterways. Under the supervision control of the Commissioner for Town and Country Planning within the Development and Planning Department, the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation has been set up to secure and promote planned development of the Calcutta Metropolitan area. Inspection and regulation of hospitals and dispensaries, drugs control and food inspection, and notification of epidemics, are some of the important functions undertaken by the Department of Health within the CMD.

Even some of the Union ministries have direct involvement in the administration of specific geographical parts of the Metropolitan District and particular functions within it. The port of Calcutta, for instance, is administered by the Commissioners for the Port of Calcutta under the direct supervision of the Union Ministry of Transport. The maintenance and control of the Howrah Bridge and its approaches are the responsibility of the Commissioners for the Port of Calcutta functioning under the Howrah Bridge Act, 1926. The Union Ministry of Transport is also responsible for developing and maintaining the national highways servicing the CMD, such as the Grand Trunk Road. Again, the Union Ministry of Defence controls the Fort William, part of the Calcutta Maidan, the extensive military areas in Ballygunge and Alipore, and the
Ichapore Defence Estate and exercises supervision over the Barrackpore Cantonment. The Union Ministry of Education controls, maintains and develops the Indian Botanical Gardens at Sibpur near Howrah, and the Dum Dum air-port falls within the administrative jurisdiction of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism.

The thirty-six urban local bodies and the departments, ministries and other agencies mentioned above represent the multiplicity of authorities administering the metropolitan area and amply demonstrate the extent of fragmentation of governmental responsibilities within the CMD. One is tempted at this stage to quote what Robert Wood said about the New York Metropolitan Region. Here is "a governmental arrangement perhaps more complicated than any other that mankind has yet contrived or allowed to happen".6 There are overlapping jurisdictions, multiplication of authorities in almost the same fields of operation, discordant administration, and pathological indifference to common problems. While social, physical and economic forces tend to integrate the entire metropolitan area and throw up identical "community problems", the arrangement of government stands "gloriously or ridiculously fragmented".