CHAPTER V

EMERGING TRENDS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: INDIA AND KUWAIT

Decentralisation brings government closer to the people. The existence of local political arenas in India and Kuwait makes it easier for ordinary citizens to participate and exert influence. When power is brought closer to the citizens, the political process becomes more tangible and transparent and more people can become involved. Decentralisation may also create a more open political system in that it implies a division of powers in society; many channels of representation and power sharing become available. This counteracts the monopolisation of power by certain elite groups, often the consequence of centralised political and administrative structures. A decentralised system is also more accessible to new political movements and minority groups in their attempts to influence politics. This is particularly important in ethnically divided societies, where political exclusion can have seriously polarizing effects. In case of Kuwait, the most significant changes has been in the role of the Kuwaiti women.

"Due to the maritime and trading activities of their menfolk during the pre-oil period, it was the women who provided a strong focus for family life in Kuwaiti society. While they have retained this important position,

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Kuwaiti women have become much more active in economic spheres in recent years and their influence is now no longer confined within the family.\(^4\)

Decentralisation promotes participation and improves the controlling function held by the lower levels of the political system. Its greater degree of political inclusiveness may also have important conflict-dampening effects. In addition to such consequences – which have obvious democratic merits – decentralisation can also be an effective means of enhancing state capacity. As is well known, the actual steering capacity of the public administration is fairly weak in many developing countries. In its centralized form – often bloated with excessive staff – the state apparatus has in many instances proved to be poor at implementation. The state proclaims several things, but barely reaches down to the base level of society. Among the citizenry, the organs of the state are regarded with detachment and contempt. The legitimacy of public bodies may be considerably boosted by the greater involvement and influence of ordinary people due to the greater decentralisation.

Decentralisation may entail the transfer of autonomy in the following areas:

1. Policy autonomy: local bodies are entitled to make their own decisions in certain (more or less restricted) fields of policy;
2. Organisation autonomy: local bodies are free to decide about their organisational structure;
3. Staff autonomy: local political leaders and administrative personnel are selected without interference from central authorities;

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4. Fiscal autonomy: local bodies are able to raise revenues independently and/or receive grants from the center without any strings attached (so-called block grants) ‘proximity to politics’ that decentralisation entails.\(^5\)

This tends to strengthen the state’s capacity for implementation. Furthermore, a decentralised bureaucracy adapts more easily to local identities and norms, which may increase effectiveness. Decision-makers who are rooted in the locality and knowledgeable of conditions on the ground are better placed to formulate concrete policies for that area than functionaries from the centre. While professional competence may be lacking, such decision-makers are more able to accommodate local demands by tapping into the “silent knowledge” that exists among the local public about the problems at hand and their possible remedies.\(^6\) Moreover, as elected representatives of their communities they can draw on an essential amount of popular legitimacy, which makes policy implementation easier.\(^7\)

In addition, decentralisation has a system effect that can increase efficiency. A decentralised system sets the stage for policy experimentation on a large scale. With many independent decision-making bodies, there is considerable room for different initiatives. New approaches can be tried, and those that turn out well can (through diffusion) be applied in other places as well. In this respect, a decentralised political system can function as an open ‘market’.\(^8\) Seen from this perspective, decentralisation looks highly


attractive: it can be seen as an irresistible remedy for developing countries. It should be borne in mind, however, that decentralisation also has potential drawbacks. It goes without saying that in a decentralised system, political leaders have to give up the desire to pursue a unified, national public policy. Decentralisation implies that the content of policy may differ to a substantial degree from one community to the next. Hence, citizens are treated differently. To uphold certain rights and services uniformly across the country, a centralised political and administrative state structure is normally needed. Another possible consequence concerns the effects of decentralization on the sphere of governance. There are many examples of decentralization having had a highly detrimental impact on the quality of political and administrative practices. An increase in the incidence of corruption, mismanagement and patronage has gone hand in hand with the empowerment of local bodies. This naturally has a negative effect on the efficiency of the public sector, which in turn has adverse consequences for the welfare of a country's citizens. It also affects political life. Bad or corrupt governance lays the foundations for clientelistic forms of political organisation. Such an order – due to its elitist nature – provides only limited opportunities for grass roots influence. In addition, public bodies often come to lack legitimacy.⁹

Hence, instead of enhancing the democratic quality of public decision making and strengthening state capacity, decentralisation may have the opposite effect. Such reforms may just turn out to benefit the traditional local elite which can utilise the extended decision competence and accompanying resources to its own advantage, politically as well as

These unintentional results have been observed many times across the world. By increasing local autonomy, local fiefdoms of corruption, patronage and political domination are created. As a result, public resources are wasted and misused as they are spent primarily on serving narrow clientelistic and personal ends. What is true is that the reforms were rapidly implemented, without a clear idea of the potential problems they might pose, based on the optimist ideal that participation develops and fosters the very qualities necessary for it, and that the more individuals participate, the better able they become to do so. Since its full independence almost a third of a century ago, Kuwait has been a hereditary monarchy under the Al Sabah family with a Constitution that not only gives rather broad assurances of human rights and the rule of law but also provides for a freely elected parliament. The system is supposed to have given Kuwaitis much greater freedom and expression. On October 5, 1992, Kuwait held elections in 25 voting districts for 50 seats in the National Assembly.

Thus, if the intention of the transfer of decision-making capacity and appropriate resources to popularly elected local bodies is to provide a foundation for successful democratic decentralisation, such reforms must be accompanied by efforts to improve the quality of governance among the bodies in question. Proper institutions must be installed to safeguard administrative regularity and efficiency, and a fruitful division of responsibility and control between local bodies and the centre needs to be established. Furthermore, channels of communication and active influence

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must exist in the local communities. Meaningful participation requires informed citizens who have the capacity for taking joint action. The press and local civil society can play a critical role in this context. At the grassroots level, many more individuals needed, wanted and demanded to be involved, not to mention in Kuwaiti tribes where tribal chiefs heretofore unchallenged were unseated by fellow tribesmen in local ballots. The majority of the relatively deprived Bedouin tribes have moved from the sidelines to the forefront in demanding societal recognition and equality the basis for which is found in Islam. The gradual change allow the regime to evolve slowly and maintain power simultaneously.

A well-functioning state is needed at the local level in order to make the public sector work effectively in accordance with popular demands – thus setting the stage for the development of democratic governance. However, efforts to decentralize decision-making competence and resources may easily result in “local predatory capture”, i.e. a strengthening of prevailing networks of corruption, patronage and the rule of local ‘big men’. The latter tends to weaken state capacity and bar democratic development.

However, we also know that the first (positive) scenario is not just wishful thinking in developing countries. Studies made by Uphoff (1985) Ostrom (1990) and Tendler (1997) demonstrate that it is possible to establish fairly well-functioning local organs even under difficult structural
conditions (in terms of low levels of economic development, insufficient infrastructure as well as rampant corruption and clientelism). However, these studies illustrate exceptional cases, and their authors only partly summarise their findings in ways that make them generally applicable. Their efforts have mainly illuminated some specific, encouraging cases. Nevertheless, by drawing on these case studies (and some other inquiries) it seems possible to point out a number of strategies that could be applied in order to achieve the possible positive consequences of decentralization programmes.

Before elaborating on these different strategies, however, a general condition needs to be accentuated – namely that the centre be committed to pursuing reform. Successful decentralisation can hardly be brought about without strong support from key political leaders. Reform at the local level requires the involvement of, and backing from the state government. This is a matter of actually bringing down decision-making competence and resources to the local level while, at the same time, making sure that the modes of decision-making and the way resources are allocated meet certain quality standards. If, instead, the political status of the central leadership depends on its nurturing traditional networks of corruption and patronage, it is normally only half-heartedly interested in strengthening lower organs (after all, this is a matter of surrendering powers that can be utilised politically). In such cases there are few incentives for eradicating existing patterns of political clientelism, corruption and mismanagement.

Successful decentralisation is the result of an interplay between central and local actors. What the centre can do is establish incentives and the rules of the game, thus encouraging new modes of behaviour at the local

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level. The trick, as it were, is to initiate a local dynamic that works independently in support of political and administrative reform.

Central government in India can do much to control local activities – both ex ante and ex post. There is a broad array of measures to be applied ex ante (that is, before local programmes are started). The central government can, for example, lay down specific criteria for choosing local programmes and for Uncontroversial as this may seem, this stands in contradiction to the position of e.g. the World Bank (1997) in its strong reliance on the one-sided capacity of NGOs and recommendations for "down-sizing" the state. It can also specify the decision processes to be applied. To ensure that local organs do things right, it is sometimes required that the central government (or its representatives) endorse local budgets, and even individual programmes. Such a requirement implies, however, that the local authorities enjoy only limited autonomy.

Another way for the state to intervene ex ante is to influence the recruitment of local personnel. In some successful programmes, central government has taken charge of recruitment of the agents who should carry out the work in the field, with the intention of safeguarding an essential degree of professionalism and work-engagement among these field agents. This strategy also deprived local authorities of an important source of patronage, since the distribution of jobs is often a key factor in exerting political dominance. This was, of course, an intended consequence although no doubt, by intervening in local recruitment processes, the centre may create troublesome tensions between itself and local power-holders.

In controlling ex post, central authorities try by various means to supervise and monitor programmes that have been carried out. This,

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however, is not an easy task. As observed by Ostrom (1990), the supervision of local activities from the centre is seldom efficient, mainly because it is difficult to obtain reliable information on what really has been achieved. While people have been working and money has obviously been spent, it is difficult to find out from a distance what has actually been done and what the outcome has been, especially if a number of dispersed small programmes have been operating simultaneously. New information systems that make it possible to trace economic transfers even at the local level may increase the degree of transparency.\textsuperscript{22} Such systems are still scarce in poor countries, however. Besides, economic transactions are only one side of the problem. Other policy instruments that promote good performance are therefore also needed.

Studies of successful reform programmes reveal that work ethics can make a big difference. Great efforts have sometimes been made to motivate field agents to perform well. It is important to create a feeling among those involved in a programme that it is not just a matter of doing a job (and getting a salary), but of carrying out a mission. An enhanced work ethic has also proven to be a side-effect of recruitment on merit. Employment on the basis of certain qualifications of a technical or personal character gives prestige to the staff in question, and this in turn tends to generate dedication in carrying out the job. When projects have got off the ground, official appreciation of good performance, e.g., by awarding prizes to successful communities and individual participants, is another way of boosting the work-spirit.\textsuperscript{23}


\textsuperscript{23} Tendler 1997 \textit{Op Cit}
Another important policy instrument is information to the general public about the goals of the programme, about the resources that have been invested, and about the achievements that have been made. This increases awareness in society, especially among potential beneficiaries, about the programme, and generates valuable popular support for the measures taken, thus facilitating the operation of the programme. Such publicity, moreover, tends to further the work-spirit of the agents. In addition, enhanced awareness among the general public makes it easier for society to exert control.24

The principal argument in Ostrom's study (1990) is that in order to bring about sustainable reforms, a process of change must take place in the local community. Central government can facilitate such a development in several ways, but it cannot accomplish the process itself; this can only be done by local actors on the ground. To a great extent it is a matter of mobilizing and empowering the local community.

As we have argued above, a basic weakness of centralisation is the fact that this mode of decision-making is inflexible to varying local demands and conditions. In addition, central actors are severely restrained when it comes to monitoring the actual implementation of programmes out in the field. Involving local actors with an independent responsibility for accomplishing certain activities may mitigate these drawbacks. This is a fundamental argument for decentralisation. The problem, however, is that existing local decision-makers often have their own policy agenda and are therefore likely to divert programmes for their own ends, to the detriment of the community at large. To counteract this tendency, it is necessary to

24 Ibid.
inspire the stakeholders – the intended beneficiaries – to become involved in the process.

As noted above, one important parameter is information, i.e., to bring knowledge about ongoing programmes to the local public. Another is popular organisation. Groups in civil society could be encouraged to become involved in the work. In the last decade there has been what almost amounts to euphoria about the significance of civil society as a vehicle for reform. Robert Putnam’s study on democracy and governance in Italy has been very influential in this regard. A strong organisational life can certainly be a great asset, as it serves as a means of popular influence, and may also have important effects in the area of democratic schooling. Civil organisations can channel popular demands, and can also strengthen society’s capacity for holding decision makers accountable. Such organisations can even be made responsible for actually realising certain programmes. It should be observed, however, that civil society is a mixed bag. It may contain highly reform-minded elements. But it could also hold important elements that are closely tied to a prevailing clientelistic structure that is mainly interested in preserving the status quo. If reform-minded groups do exist – be they churches, unions, cooperatives, professional associations, business groups, human rights groups, etc. – it is natural to invite them to take part in the process. Sometimes however, such groups do not exist at all, or are poorly developed. Under such conditions it has at times been possible – in

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connection with a reform project – to establish new organisations of reform-minded local stakeholders, or to give support to existing feeble ones. As demonstrated by Fox (1994), where such organisations have been established for ad hoc purposes they may endure and subsequently take on new tasks. Another key factor is the existence of institutions at the grass roots level that can channel influence upwards. Community organs at the village or ward level can be supported and actively involved in the reform programme to ensure that measures meet the demands of the local community at large. Where such organs do not exist, they can be established. Some successful programmes of decentralization have created and mandated new local decision-making bodies with broad social representation to handle certain issues. Explicit, implicit, and perceived external pressures in the post-war period influenced the regime in the direction of democratic reform and energized the pro-democracy movement.

It is thus argued that a mixed strategy needs be applied to effectively challenge prevailing structures of corruption, patronage and poor governance at the local level. Some kind of coalition should preferably be established between a reform-minded centre and supportive groups at the grass roots level. Such a coalition puts the prevailing local elite – accustomed to running things its own way – under concerted pressure from both above and below. Under such pressure, it has been shown, even representatives of the ‘old order’ can gradually change their behaviour, either out of political

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29 Fox, J 1994 "The Difficult Transition from Clientelism to Citizenship Lessons from Mexico", World Politics, vol 46, no 1, pp 151–84
necessity, or as a result of a process of socialization into new viewpoints and attitudes.\footnote{Tendler, 1997. *Op Cita*}

A major difficulty with regard to this mixed strategy is getting the rank and file activated. Political participation is often very low at the local level in developing countries; turnout in local elections is an indication of this. This is not primarily a question of a lack of support for democratic principles.\footnote{Bratton, M and R Mattus 2001 “Africa’s Surprising Universalism”, *Journal of Democracy*, vol 12, no 1, pp 107-21} At the moment representative democracy, Kuwait-style seems to be alive and well. It is necessary to demonstrate that public representatives can be trusted, and that political participation can really make a difference in terms of improved public services. This, in turn, presupposes access to resources and a critical administrative capacity on the part of the public organs in question. In other words, there is a reciprocal relationship between state capacity (i.e., the quality of governance) and democratic activity. These factors mutually reinforce each other. Low levels of governance and state capacity breed low levels of democratic activity among the citizenry – which, in turn, makes it easy for the traditional local elite to stay in power and utilise public resources to its own advantage. We know, however, that such a circle can be broken and turned into a positive one. The interesting question is how such a dynamic can be initiated.

Some previous studies indicate fruitful strategies for successful decentralisation, involving the establishment of effective and democratically responsive local governments. However, there is scant evidence as to the conditions that make such development possible. This study focuses on the experience of decentralisation and reform in two countries: India and Kuwait. The most far-reaching programme has been initiated in India and
some states have also taken fairly ambitious steps in that direction. The focus on Indian state of West Bengal, where an ambitious and relatively well functioning decentralization programme has been in operation for several decades. The study makes a survey of experiences from local government reforms in some other states of India as well. In all, at the turn of the century, some seventy states have been implementing decentralization schemes involving the strengthening of local governments.\textsuperscript{34}

In general analysis of different means of enhancing democratic governance in low-income countries, the main argument is that the advancement of democratic governance is a two-way process. Different forms of control – from above and from below – need to be at work. To be effective, the two spheres of control should be interlinked and mutually reinforcing. The central government must take measures to enhance the responsiveness of its field agents and to further the development of local institutions and civic networks. The establishment of effective institutions of statutory control is likewise a prerequisite. Factors enabling pressure at the local level include – amongst others – well-organised and competitive political parties, vigorous public meetings and watchdog committees, a vital media and a politically active civil society. It goes without saying that such a three-case inquiry is mainly explorative in nature. The aim is to obtain an array of examples which have made possible some general conjectures about feasible strategies for decentralisation of state authority, entailing the improvement of democratic governance.

Decentralisation and Local Governance in India

Decentralisation and local governance are central issues in India today. When India gained independence in 1947 it had a population of 360

\textsuperscript{34} IDEA. 2001. Democracy at the Local Level. International IDEA. Stockholm.
million, living, apart from the Provinces under direct British rule, in 562 princely states that came together to form the Union of India under the Constitution adopted on 26 November 1949. In terms of plurality of religion, culture, language and diversity, India has no parallel. When India became a republic on 26 January 1950 it was considered a highly centralized system.

In the last five decades, India has travelled a long road towards decentralisation, especially through institutions of local self-government. The chapter examines briefly the half-century history of the decentralization process, which has been democratic rather than administrative. The factors which have accelerated this process and the problems faced in bringing about full-fledged decentralisation, especially with regard to local governance, are dealt with in some detail. However, the focus of the study is the accountability mechanisms built into the present system from the village community to the district level, and the status of their functioning.

India’s traditional society with its stratification and hierarchy based on the caste system give ample scope for the growth of clientelism, patronage and primordial loyalties perpetuating favouritism, corruption and misappropriation of public funds. To what extent could regular elections to the local bodies, socio-economic reforms and institutional mechanisms arrest these tendencies? What are the mechanisms in operation at the state level and measures taken up by citizens at the local community level? While these questions are discussed on the basis of the experiences of several states from north to south, the working of local bodies in the state of West. By democratic decentralisation we mean the devolution of powers to regularly elected local bodies, which have maximum autonomy as institutions of local self-government. Administrative decentralisation aims at efficiency by
delegating functions to bodies at lower levels, especially through bureaucratic structures.

Self-governing village communities had existed in India from the earliest times. These village bodies of five persons were known as panchayats, a term that could best be translated as Village Councils. They looked after the affairs of the village, had police and judicial powers and were the lines of contact with higher authorities on matters affecting the villages. Custom and religion elevated them to a sacred position of authority. These panchayats were the pivot of administration, the centre of social life, and, above all, a focus of social solidarity. Besides these panchayats or village councils, there were also caste panchayats, whose role was to ensure that persons belonging to a particular caste adhered to its code of social conduct and ethics. Even during the medieval and Mughal periods, this characteristic of the village panchayats remained unchanged. So much so that Sir Charles Metcalfe, who was the Governor-General of India (1835-36), called the panchayats “the little republics”. Given the caste-ridden feudal structure of the village society of those days, these republics left much to be desired. B. R. Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution, did not think highly of these panchayats and, in fact, his own experience had given him a negative view of them.

Ambedkar’s well-known remark in the Constituent Assembly on 4 November 1948 that “these village republics” have been the ruination of India and that they were “a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism” has validity in several parts of the country even today. With the advent of the British, the self-contained village

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13 Malaviya, H. D. 1956. Village Panchayats in India. Economic and Political Research Department. All India Congress Committee
communities and their panchayats were replaced by formally constituted village administration. Local self-government in India – in the sense of an accountable, representative institution – was the creation of the British. The Indian Caste system broadly divides society hierarchically into two categories, varna and jati, on criteria of purity and pollution. Under the varna system there are Brahmins (the priestly class and teachers), Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), Vaishyas (traders and merchants), Shudras (peasants and artisans) and Atisudras/Antyajas (outsiders, i.e. untouchables).

There are hundreds of jatis or endogamous groups in each of the linguistic areas of India. The Ripon Resolution reforms of 1882 providing for local boards consisting of a large majority of elected non-official members and presided over by a non-official chairperson, is considered to be the Magna Carta of local democracy in India. Although the progress of local self-government on the lines of the Ripon Resolution was tardy, the term self-government had begun to gain currency and it triggered several resolutions aimed at strengthening the panchayats and local government on the part of the Congress Party, which was fighting for India’s freedom, including self-government as the political goal for the country. But most importantly, village panchayats became central to the ideological framework of India’s national movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. For him the village panchayat was a complete republic based on perfect democracy and individual freedom.\(^6\)

In spite of its history, the nationalist movement’s commitment to panchayats and Mahatma Gandhi’s unequivocal propagation of the ideal, the first draft of India’s constitution did not include a provision for panchayats.

\(^6\) Srinivas, M N 1966 *Social Change in Modern India*. Allied Publishers, New Delhi
\(^7\) Gandhi, M K 1942 “My Idea of Village Swaraj”, *Harijan*, 26 July
The argument of those who pleaded for the inclusion of village panchayats in the constitution finally prevailed only in a modest measure. (A provision was included in Part IV of Indian Constitution, which is not mandatory). The Gandhians considered panchayats both a means and an end and sincerely believed in their immense potential for democratic decentralization and for devolving power to the people. There was a basic conviction among those who fought for India’s independence from British rule that village panchayats could play an important role in the social transformation and implementation of development programmes. Why were they not given constitutional status? The answer lies in the fact that the urban and rural elites and their political representatives felt a disdain for panchayats which has, moreover, remained intact ever since. Whatever genuine attempts were made on behalf of a devolution of power, these interests saw to it that the attempts did not succeed. A break from this negative approach took place after about four decades, mainly because of the unrelenting, continuous upsurge of people’s quest for meaningful democracy at the grassroots level, demands for people’s involvement in development, decentralisation and devolution of funds, functionaries and functions from the centre (federal level) to the villages and towns.

Since the mid-1950s, the central government and state governments had been appointing high-powered committees to look into the working of the panchayats and recommend ways and means to improve their functioning. Mention may be made of the Balwantray Mehta Committee of 1957 and the Asoka Mehta Committee of 1977. The discussions and debates such measures generated led to the building up of a positive social climate for radical measures to establish local governments on a firm footing. It is well established that constitutional support and legislative measures are
necessary for bringing about social change, but they are not a sufficient condition to achieve the goal. The Indian experience in the more than fifty-five years since independence bears witness to this fact. The same observation is true of democratic decentralisation. Of course, one can argue that since there was no constitutional support for self-government below the state level until December 1992, no state government took the process seriously. It may be observed here that along with constitutional guarantees, political will and popular political awareness are essential to bring about democratic decentralisation below the state level. In the five decades in which the Constitution has been in effect, it has become more and more clear that a three-dimensional approach – political will, popular awareness, and the building of healthy conventions and traditions underpinned by constitutional and legislative measures – is essential for any far-reaching changes to be brought about in Indian society; when one of these dimensions is weak, an entire measure may remain form without content. Although state governments were not compelled to establish full-fledged panchayati raj (panchayat government) without a constitutional mandate, some states like West Bengal, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh had gone ahead, as far as they could, in the devolution of powers to the panchayats. However, they had felt that the concentration of power at the federal level acted as a serious impediment. For instance, in 1985 Abdul Nazir Sab, the minister for panchayati raj and rural development in Karnataka stated, “Without a constitutional amendment guaranteeing the ‘Four Pillar State’, our efforts may not be as fruitful as we desire.” In 1985, he pleaded with intellectuals to ponder this question and to initiate a public debate on the necessity of a

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constitutional amendment. There was a growing realisation that it was lack of constitutional support that had led to the sorry state of affairs where local governments were concerned in several states. The Asoka Mehta Committee (1977) made the first official recommendation for including panchayati raj in the Constitution, in keeping with its approach that panchayats should be regarded as political rather than mere developmental institutions. This committee also favoured participation of political parties in panchayat elections.

For instance, Malcolm Adiseshiah, commenting on the fact that the State of Tamil Nadu had not held panchayat elections for 15 years, raised a pertinent question: "Why is it that we cannot have a constitutional amendment which will make it obligatory for local elections to be held on time? We should earnestly work for a constitutional amendment to put the panchayati raj elections on the same footing as the Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections." The remarkable enthusiasm among the ordinary people in West Bengal and Karnataka on the implementation of panchayati raj strengthened the moves to incorporate constitutional provisions for it. Based on the positive results of the West Bengal experience and the Karnataka initiative in this direction, the idea of 'district government' came into vogue. It was against this backdrop that on 15 May 1989 the Constitution (64th Amendment) Bill was drafted and introduced in Parliament. Although the 1989 Bill in itself was a welcome step, there was serious opposition to it. Though the Constitution Bill won a two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha (lower house), it failed to meet the mandatory requirement by two votes in the Rajya Sabha (upper house). The National Front government introduced the 74th Amendment Bill (a combined bill on
panchayats and municipalities) on 7 September 1990 during its short tenure in office but it was never taken up for discussion.

By this time, all the political parties had supported a constitutional amendment for strengthening panchayats in their statements and manifests and a pro-panchayati raj climate prevailed in the country. In September 1991, the Congress Party government introduced the 72nd (Panchayats) and 73rd (Municipalities) Constitutional Amendment Bills, which were passed in both chambers in December 1992 as the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts, and came into force in 1993. The main features of the amendments were:

1. Panchayats and municipalities were defined as “institutions of self-government”.

2. Gram sabhas (village assemblies) comprising all the adult members registered as voters became basic units of the democratic system.

3. For all states with a population above two million the panchayats shall have a three-tier system at village, block/taluk (intermediate) and district levels, with seats at all levels filled by direct election.

4. Seats and posts of chairpersons of panchayats at all levels are reserved for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in proportion to their population. One third of these must be women.

These amendments to the Constitution brought about a fundamental change not only in the realm of local self-government but also in India’s federal character which was succinctly put by Nirmal Mukarji: “The amended Constitution requires the states to constitute panchayats as institutions of self-government not only for villages but also at intermediate and district levels. Consequently, there will, henceforth, be three strata of government: the union, the states and the panchayats. A more radical change
is difficult to visualise. Its implications are far-reaching. This journey from the local self-government idea of Lord Ripon to the institutions of self-government concept in the 73rd Constitution Amendment, which took more than a century, has been described at some length to bring home the fact that today’s decentralisation and local government in India is the result of an evolutionary process that a traditional and complex society has gone through because of internal compulsions, pressures and demands from the people, channelled through communities, civil society organisations, intellectuals, political parties and ideologies, people’s movements, occasional interventions of the state (provincial) and central (federal) governments – and above all because of people’s urge for participation in development and governance through democratically elected bodies.

For the panchayati raj institutions in India to function as institutions of self-government, the essential prerequisites are:

(a) clearly demarcated areas of jurisdiction;
(b) adequate power and authority commensurate with responsibilities;
(c) necessary human and financial resources to manage their affairs;
(d) functional autonomy within the federal structure.

Since the constitutional amendment opens up possibilities for fulfilling these conditions, the new panchayati raj was seen as a “third tier of governance”. As a study by the Institute of Social Studies puts it, “The argument that freedom to choose local representatives places everyone on an equal footing, allowing each to have their interests represented equally, is only a farce in the absence of proper accountability”.

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Transparency International has rated corruption in India very high. According to perceptions of the degree of corruption as seen by business people, risk analysts and the general public, on a scale of 10 (highly clean) and 0 (highly corrupt) India scores 2.7. Two methodologies used by the World Bank’s Operation Evaluation Department in evaluating public sector performance have direct relevance for the local government’s accountability. These are: a) Is the public manager doing the right things? The ‘right things’ are those that are responsive to the needs of the community. b) Is the public manager doing things in the right way? This question brings in the issue of efficacy and efficiency.42

The local government institutions (LGIs) are required to play an active role in the planning and implementation of development programmes. The success of LGIs will depend on the extent to which they are able to improve the delivery of programmes, which can be done through participation, transparency and accountability. In order to avoid malpractice and misuse of power by the functionaries and elected representatives of these institutions, all state governments have introduced relevant legislative provisions in their panchayati raj acts. Broadly, the checks and balances in terms of state control over the panchayati raj institutions can be categorised as:

(1) power to cancel/suspend a resolution;
(2) power to take action in default of a gram panchayat;
(3) power to remove elected representatives;
(4) power to dissolve panchayats;
(5) power to give direction to panchayats;

(6) power to call for records and inspection: and
(7) power to conduct an inquiry.

The gram sabha (village assembly of all voters) is the basic unit of Indian democracy. As the Indian Constitution makes no provision in respect of the functions and powers of the gram sabha, the state acts have given it only a marginal role. If the gram panchayat is to be made effective in the present context there is a strong feeling that there must be certain amendments to the Constitution making it incumbent on the states to bestow compulsory necessary powers on the gram sabha. The sabha should also have its committees to oversee the functioning of the gram panchayats. It should have power to approve the plan, the budget, the list of beneficiaries, sites for different works and accounts of the panchayat.

A significant development in the last few years in the sphere of accountability and anti-clientelism has been the struggle for the right to information. Information is necessary for citizens to participate in governance, especially at local levels. Since information is power, those in authority deny ordinary people access to information. The bureaucracy in India still keeps up the colonial culture of secrecy, distance and mystification. Today there is a strong movement for every citizen to be given "the enforceable right to question, examine, audit, review and assess government acts and decisions, to ensure that these are consistent with the principles of public interest, probity and justice. It would promote openness, transparency and accountability in administration by making government

more open to continuing public scrutiny.

The government is also taking steps to familiarise its employees with the process of carrying out jan sunwais.

The Ombudsman in Southern Indian state of Kerala is not only an advisory body but will also be given legal teeth. Kerala also has special women's watchdog committees at the gram panchayat and municipality level. Any such committee should have two nominees from each gram sabha or ward committee, one being a member of a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe. Such committees have the same rights as social audit committees and may scrutinise costs, estimates, the quantity and quality of materials used in works, adherence to norms in selection, etc.

Regular elections are the best democratic instruments allowing voters to use electoral sanctions against members of any elected body if found corrupt or despotic. John Echeverri-Gent has commented in the context of West Bengal, where regular panchayat elections have been held without fail from 1978 onwards, that the issue of accountability can be addressed through holding regular elections to local bodies with substantial positive results in accountability and service delivery. It is a great achievement that regular elections to the local bodies are now taking place in all the states, although in the beginning there were several obstacles in the way. The turnout in elections to the panchayats and municipalities in India is much higher than for elections to the state assemblies and Parliament. When candidates in an election spend huge amounts of money to get elected, they

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46 The Hindu, 3 April 2002
will naturally use the first opportunity while in office to make up for their election expenditure. It is recorded that panchayat presidents have succinctly summed up their opposition to transparency and accountability, saying that if there were to be transparency in the panchayats, how would they recover the money spent on election campaigns?.

The policy of the Left Front government to bring the panchayats to the fore through the strong foundation of land reforms led to what may be called a social renaissance. Nirmal Mukarji\textsuperscript{50} who was Cabinet Secretary of India underlines the point when he says that the land reforms had, considerably weakened the hold of the big landlords who had traditionally led rural society because of their dominant economic and social position. It sets in a process of change of mind at least among a few functionaries at the cutting edges of the administration\textsuperscript{51}. This was the essential first step for functional linkages between officialdom and the panchayats. According to Westergaard, the result of the land reforms was a preliminary step towards helping sharecroppers come out of their dependency relationship vis-à-vis the landowners.\textsuperscript{52} A study conducted on the West Bengal panchayat elections in 1993 came to the conclusion that even though party affiliation is an important consideration in determining whom to vote for, the personal qualities of the party candidate are an important factor\textsuperscript{53}. Thus, the “decentralisation that took place in the state was in the nature of ‘deconcentration’ of power under which the panchayats served principally as the implementing agencies of state government. The process was not carried

\textsuperscript{50} Mukarji, N. 1993, “The Third Stratum”, Economic and Political Weekly, May 1, p 862.
\textsuperscript{51} Bandyopadhyay, D., 1980, Land Reforms in West Bengal, Government of West Bengal, Calcutta. p 11.
\textsuperscript{52} Westergaard, K., 1986, People’s Participation, Local Government and Rural Development – The Case of West Bengal in India, CDR Research Report No 8, Copenhagen. p 8.
\textsuperscript{53} Ghosh, B. and G. Kumar, 2003, State Politics and Panchayats in India, Manohar: Delhi, p 84.
to its logical extent of ‘devolution’ type of transfer of functions, resources and authority from the state government to the PRIs”. One argument going around is that Kerala had been facing a crisis in the economic sphere and decentralisation was seen as a means of overcoming such a crisis. In contrast, West Bengal has witnessed rapid economic growth in rural areas and this has tempered popular demand for further reform. But this explanation has not been satisfactory, for there is no evidence that people do not demand transparent, accountable and participatory local government institutions or more devolution of functions and resources to the local bodies.

The Asoka Mehta Committee in India observed in 1978 that PRIs are dominated by economically or socially privileged sections of society and have as such facilitated the emergence of oligarchic forces yielding no benefits to weaker sections. These oligarchic forces are the traditional rural elite consisting of agricultural landowners, moneylenders and upper caste people. Against this background, the report stated that the utility of panchayats for the average villager had been seriously limited because of corruption, inefficiency, scant regard for procedures, political interference in day-to-day administration and ‘parochial loyalties’. One worrying aspect is the nexus between political representatives and officials in corruption and spoils sharing. Although India has been striving to create a citizen-oriented public service through the checks and balances, this nexus still prevails. The Rajasthan experience in this regard is revealing. Panchayat representatives,

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56 Ghosh B and Kumar G. 2003. State Politics and Panchayats in India, Manohar, Delhi
58 Ibid., p 7

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despite their written assurances to furnish all documents to the electorate, have taken the cue from the panchayat secretaries and BDOs (both government officials) and organised themselves as a lobby against transparency. Examples of this type of collusion are found all over the country.\textsuperscript{59}

The bureaucracy in independent India is the legacy of British colonial government. Its responsiveness to the democratic system has been on the whole positive, especially when power was concentrated at the federal level and state (provincial) levels. Harsh Mander and Abha Singhal Joshi put it, “There are no ready answers because people’s audit of public authorities is a new avenue of people’s action. Clearer answers would emerge after more experience is gathered by diverse groups working in different regions on varied issues. However, recourse to some kind of organized peaceful protest seems inevitable, if state authorities remain recalcitrant”.\textsuperscript{60} However, the situation is slowly changing. In spite of norms set by legislative measures there is a tendency among the officials at the higher levels to stick to their old work culture of appeasing their ‘bosses’, which quite often goes against the people’s interests by twisting the existing laws and rules. Therefore pressure from below is a must at this critical stage in the transformation of India’s polity, economy and governance.

There is little conformity amongst various authors on the meaning of the term decentralisation. One of the most commonly accepted distinctions is to regard decentralisation as a blanket term encompassing a number of subcategories. i.e. devolution (or democratic decentralisation), deconcentration and delegation. Devolution (democratic decentralisation) is the most

\textsuperscript{59} Roy, A , Dey, N and S Singh, 2001, “Demanding Accountability”. Seminar, April, New Delhi
\textsuperscript{60} Mander, H and A S Joshi, 1999 (reprinted 2001), The Movement for Right to Information in India People's Power for the Control of Corruption, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

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extensive form of decentralisation. It is the “conferment of rule-making and executive powers of a specified or residual nature on formally constituted sub-national units”. Devolution/democratic decentralization generally has the following characteristics.

1. Local government should be separate constitutionally from central government. It should be responsible for a significant range of services.

2. Local authorities should have their own treasury, a separate budget and accounts, and their own taxes to produce a significant part of their revenue.

3. Local authorities should have the right to allocate substantial resources, which should include the power to decide over expenditure, to vary revenue and to appoint and promote staff.

Deconcentration is usually the least extensive form of decentralisation. It often involves the transfer of workload from the central government head offices to regional branches. Field staff may have limited discretion to perform functions within the constraints of central government policy. Effective control over major policy decisions resides at central level. Delegation entails the transfer of broad authority to plan and implement decisions concerning specific activities to organisations such as local government that are technically and administratively capable of exercising them. Although delegated power is usually controlled by the imposition of conditions by the delegating body, this form of delegation can

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64 Ibid p 138
lead to the exercise of a certain amount of judgement and discretion on the part of the local authorities.

The right of local representatives to make local policy is the bedrock of local democracy. Councillors are elected by local citizens and ultimately should be accountable to local voters. However, decentralisation is meaningless unless local governments have sufficient financial resources to exercise their functions. As Manor points out, democratic decentralisation will flounder if there are not concomitant financial resources. The lack of financial resources is a major problem facing many local governments in low-income countries. Party politics and decentralization as a framework is a useful starting point for analysing political decentralisation. It is however a necessary but not a sufficient condition. An overreliance on legal intergovernmental relations sometimes obscures the real nature of power at local government level. For example, Migdal (1988) argues that although many Third World states ascribe huge powers to themselves, they are often extremely weak and unable to implement their own legislation. This means that a nominally centralised country, at least outside the national capital, in practice, could be rather decentralised by default in that the state apparatus lacks capacity in rural areas. The role of party politics in gauging the extent of political decentralization is also very important. Elazar’s argument that the existence of a non-centralised party system is perhaps the most important element in a decentralised system may still be valid today. Some of the distinctive features of party politics at local government level are:

1. Candidates are selected by the party.

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2. A distinct policy programme is formulated for a local party group.
3. A party election manifesto, to which all party candidates are expected to adhere, both during the election campaign and once elected, is produced.
4. An attempt is made to implement the manifesto in the event of the party winning a majority of seats on the council.
5. Councillors are organised into party groups for the purposes of allocating committee places and other positions of leadership and responsibility, to develop and co-ordinate party policy, to determine strategy and tactics, and to ensure group discipline.
6. Group leadership, comprising an individual leader and usually a committee of group executive officers, is elected by the members of the group.
7. Pre-council and pre-committee party group meetings are convened to enable party group members to agree on policy and plan their debating and voting tactics.\(^{67}\)

In many countries, there has been greater party politicisation at the local government level, particularly in larger cities. Some of the advantages of party politics are:

1. There are more candidates and fewer uncontested areas in local elections.
2. There is clarification of the issues, as the parties are challenged by their opponents to defend and justify their arguments and assertions.
3. Citizens have more awareness of and interest in local government, which is generally reflected in a higher electoral turnout.

4. Change and initiative are stimulated, as parties, with their underlying principles and collective resources, develop policies to put before the electorate.

5. There is enhanced accountability as the parties collectively and their candidates individually make public commitments and promises, which, if they are elected, they must seek to implement and for which they will subsequently be called to account.

6. Government coherence is achieved through the existence of a majority party, clearly identifiable by the electorate and officers alike, which is able to carry out the policies on which it was elected.

7. Democracy is enhanced through the existence of electorally endorsed policies and programmes, which reduce the potential policy influence of unelected and unaccountable officers.\textsuperscript{68}

On the other hand, the disadvantages and pitfalls of party politics in local government would include the following:

1. There are more party candidates and fewer independents as the major parties, with their institutional resources, make it increasingly difficult for minority party candidates and independents to get elected.

2. There is a narrower debating of issues, with party rhetoric playing a major role.

3. There is less public involvement, as many citizens not wishing to join a political party are excluded from areas of local community life.

4. There is nationalisation of local elections, as supposedly local campaigns focus much of their attention on national issues and personalities.

\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Ibid.}, p.279.
5. There is reduced representation on councils, as the winning party takes all positions of responsibility and seeks to implement its policies to the exclusion of all others.

6. There is excessive party politicisation of issues, with the parties feeling obliged to adopt adversarial positions on subjects that might more satisfactorily be approached consensually.

7. There is reduced local democracy, as councillors are disciplined into voting with their party regardless of their personal convictions or judgements.

8. Professional advice is excluded, as all effective decisions are made by party groups, usually without the benefit of professionally trained and experienced officers in attendance.\(^6^9\)

Political decentralisation to local government is favoured for a number of reasons. Some of the more important arguments are that it enables minorities to avail themselves of government power, it can keep power close to citizens, it can prevent arbitrary central government rule, it can promote political participation and it ensures more efficient delivery of local government services.\(^7^0\) There is a ‘motherhood and apple pie’ version of decentralisation that views it almost as a synonym for democratisation. This view was particularly associated with early public choice theory. However, decentralisation has not always achieved the desired results of its proponents. Indeed, decentralisation has often been associated with political clientelism, corruption and mismanagement (Migdal, 1988). Appointment of


staff is an important ingredient of local autonomy. However, extensive local government control over local staffing without the central impetus of ensuring sound personnel practices can lead to corruption and nepotism. This was pointed out as far back as the 1960s by the United Nations (1962). Appointment of staff is an important area for patronage. Often newly empowered city politicians want to hire their own employees, for political as well as efficiency and loyalty reasons.\(^7\) In the United States, the strong mayor system was historically associated with large-scale patronage. A newly elected mayor could dispense with a large percentage of existing staff. With the modernisation reforms in the United States, the extent of patronage has greatly declined. However, such systems persist in other parts of the world. For example, in Latin America, municipal employment is not regarded as a means to the end of delivery services to communities. Conversely, it is regarded as an outcome in its own right – a just reward for favours rendered or to be rendered.\(^7\)

Decentralisation implies the devolution of state authority. Decisionmaking capacity and resources are transferred from the centre to organs at the local level. As noted in the introductory chapter, such reforms can enhance the quality of democratic governance: the state becomes more effective and more responsive to popular demands. But decentralisation may also have the opposite effects by breeding corruption, mismanagement and the rule of self-serving local elites. Governance concerns the performance of public organs. It is, on the one hand, a matter of procedures; of upholding certain modes of operation that accord with generally accepted codes of sound administrative behaviour (such as the principles of transparency,


\(^7\) Nickson, R A. 1995 *Local Government in Latin America*. Lynne Rienner, Boulder Colorado
accountability and the rule of law). On the other hand, and more fundamentally, governance concerns the state’s capacity to deliver. Public organs should not only behave in accordance with the book; they should also get things done. The bottom-line, in other words, is effectiveness: the ability of state authorities to actually provide society with certain goods and services. It is generally assumed, however, that these two aspects of governance are in concert. Sound administrative practices (if properly applied) are believed to increase state efficiency.

Governance does not in itself, however, say anything about what the state ought to do, about which of society’s demands and interests should be promoted – which is where democracy becomes relevant. When we talk about democratic governance we refer to a state that is capable of effectively meeting broad popular demands. It is generally agreed nowadays that this can only be achieved by means of democratic procedures: through the introduction of essential democratic rights, such as political freedoms and elections. It is only the people themselves that should judge the needs and interests that should be served in political life. Hence, the establishment of democracy’s different representative organs, and other channels of political action and expression that allow people the opportunity to articulate and put pressure behind their various policy demands. At the same time, people should be able to gain an insight into the performance of public organs, which may boost administrative regularity and efficiency. To that end, organs for administrative and legal control are put in place as well. This combination of popular involvement and bureaucratic and judicial scrutiny – two forms of pressure and control that can be mutually reinforcing – is

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believed to further democratic governance. The state becomes responsive to broad popular interests – given the resources at hand – while operating in an orderly and effective way.

Some theorist argues that Kuwait requires first a redefinition of the “local” and a commitment to look in new directions for identifying success and spaces of empowerment, rather than accepting municipalities as the de-facto institutions to be analyzed.⁷⁴ Although, Kuwait has become the only Arab country in which an elected legislature serves as a powerful check on executive power.⁷⁵ There have been successes at the national and departmental levels, described as anti-corruption motions in Parliament in connection with the privatization of the telecommunications corporation and the importation of arms, pro-transparency legislation recently ratified in Kuwait. The rulers were genuinely concerned that Kuwait should be seen by other countries of the world as a modern state possessing a modern system of government.⁷⁶ Since a wave of democracy and like institutions were in vogue, a constitutional and parliamentary system seemed ideal to project its image abroad.

The Kuwaiti Constitution envisages that “the system of government shall be democratic under which sovereignty resides in the people, the source of all powers.”⁷⁷ While anti-corruption initiatives are gaining momentum and strength through initiatives by the legislature in Kuwait, the actions are not integrated into a comprehensive national strategy. In all the

⁷⁵ Freedom House, 2004
⁷⁷ Bansidhar, Pradhan 1992 Kuwait’s slippery Road to Democracy. Link, 18 October, p 36
Arab countries, including those having these initiatives, corruption, in general, and malpractices in HRM, in particular, remains a serious challenge. For a long time the Audit Bureau was the only formal supervisory body. The Bureau's principle responsibility is to monitor the State's revenues and expenditures. It supervises the collection of state income and expenditures and ensures that the systems and means used are appropriate to protect public funds. This supervision covers all ministries, public administrations, municipalities, public institutions and authorities and those companies in which 50 per cent of the capital is owned by the State. But based on the ministry council law no. 271, a new body was established, namely “the agency of civil service and performance evaluation”, which is headed by Sheikh Mohammed Abd e Alla al Mobarak Al Sobah. Such body has two main goals:

1. Performance evaluation of the services provided through imposing effective managerial monitor, thus citizen would feel that there is a control mechanism on the service provided and there are continuous efforts to develop the government administration and combat corruption.

2. Demonstrate the importance of citizen’s opinion and seeking effective participation, by highlighting the positive areas and avoiding the weak arenas.

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79 Arab Administrative Development Organization (ARADO) 2002 Administrative Development and Administrative Reform in the Arab World Report, Cairo Author (Original in Arabic) and www.csc.net.kw
In context of role of administrative reform and development institutions in Kuwait, what the Constitution of Kuwait attempted was to consciously promote executive leadership while at the same time allowing for democratic changes.

There are four main institutions responsible for the administrative reform:

1. **Civil Service Council**: It is mainly responsible of setting the general policies of different arenas, as well as proposing corrective action plans. Furthermore, it is also accountable for design systems that promote nongovernmental bodies to employ people.

2. **Civil Service Agency**: It is responsible for translating the general policies to action plans and setting guidelines and mechanism for the policies to be realized.

3. **The Bureau of Administrative Development**: It conducts the main studies and proposes developmental plans, offer council in reform issues and finally suggest the system for training the staff.

4. **General Administrations of Managerial Development**: These are mainly responsible for conducting organization/structural studies, concerning the procedures of work, as well as establishing the system for performance evaluation.

Analyzing different organization structures and work flow, job duplication, redundancies, overstaffing, as well as overlap between functions were found. That is why, a team of consolers, specialists and researchers was formed by civil service agency to conduct a comprehensive analysis of job

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80 Crystal and al-Shayji 1995 'The Pro Democratic Agenda in Kuwait', in Brynen, Rex, Baghat, Korany and Paul Noble (eds), Political Liberalisation and Democratization in the Arab World: Theoretical Perspectives, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, p 114
82 Ibid
description and specification. As a result, eight groups on the central level (state level), and fifteen decentralized governmental bodies were specified in Kuwait. Furthermore, a law was issued concerning “administrative reform and determining responsibility and autonomy”, which was an effective tool in many conflict resolutions.

The devolution of authority taking place in Kuwait to ministries, agencies and local units in personnel matters should be balanced by increased coordination and control by the central civil service or public employment agencies. Accordingly, the council of ministry issued the decision no. 551 which focused on the centralization of hiring employees of the state through the agency of civil service. This includes setting and publicizing the requirements and received applications online and announces the results through the net. This development prevents any arbitrary decision by an administrative authority as procedures are embedded in an IT automated process that prevents any undue intervention in a regular and legally complaint request.

However, after the adoption of IT, citizen now can evaluate the services and file complaint online, which can further speedy. Since the early 1990s, the government in Kuwait has been undertaking a number of key initiatives to modernize its institutions and existing delivery system for

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1. Al Dowihis M 1997 *The State of Kuwait Experience and Efforts in Administrative Reform in Arab Experiences in State of Kuwait* (Original in Arabic)
2. ARADO. 2002.
3. Corm, G 2004 *MENA Good Public Governance Initiative* Draft background paper on Governance and Investment for Growth OECD pp 1-21
public serves. These initiatives are underlined by a keen desire for change on the part of the government as well as citizens.\textsuperscript{87}

According to the board of ministries decision no.(759) for year 2000, a committee was established along with the central technical body to activate the uses and application of modern technology (Al Gihaz Al fany al markazy), and the project of electronic government started. This project faced resistance at first, because people thought it is a new way of conducting work. However, soon afterwards, it started to gain support and consensus when it was realized that the e-government would create new jobs for new generation. This is in addition to the promotion efforts by the government.\textsuperscript{88} Today, there is a network connecting different governmental bodies together (intranet) and connecting government agencies with the public (extra-net). Each agency has its own database that avail a lot of data to different parties and stakeholders.\textsuperscript{89} That is why, these efforts have been rated by the UN as high e-government capacity, based on the e-governance index, which is a composite of web presence measures, IT infrastructure measures and human capital measures. Kuwait scored a 2.16 on the 0 to 3.25.\textsuperscript{90}

**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE**

Of late there is a renewed debate on governance and administration in India. Administrators, politicians, academics, citizens at large, and even businessmen are talking about issues like constitutional reforms, good

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\textsuperscript{88} ARADO. 2002.

\textsuperscript{89} www.csc.net.kw

\textsuperscript{90} UN. 2004.
governance, transparency, corruption, ethics, state in the market economy, new role of government under economic liberalization, electronic governance, etc. Also, the classical models of governance/administration with emphasis on division of work, rule orientation, and bureaucratic hierarchy with rule book defined regulations and lines of authority is giving room to new ways of governance in the form of New Public Management. The new public management paradigm seems to be born out of the frustration of a common man, the citizen of a country, at not receiving the quality of service that he expects or pays for. Not many citizens go to the consumer redressal at the district, state or national level. The world over, people are talking about good governance and ‘public management’ and less about ‘public administration’, per se. In India, the process of reforms in administration began as early as 1949 with the setting up of the O&M Division in the Government of India.

The recent decision to review the Indian Constitution is a landmark in Indian administration. However, most of the reform efforts have been on paper only. They have all talked about improving effectiveness, efficiency, responsiveness, record-keeping and filing systems, integrity in public service, right to information, parameters of good governance, like political and bureaucratic accountability, independence of judiciary, participation of religious and social groups, and freedom of expression and information, etc. Phrases like ‘reinventing government,’ ‘mission-driven government’, ‘market-oriented government’, ‘service first’, and ‘empowering citizens’, etc., have been used frequently in India also. At best, they reveal some good intentions only. Even if some of these had been achieved to a reasonable level, there would not have been as much debate, so much debate, so much of a crisis, so much of turbulence that there would be need for ‘redefinition’
of the role of government itself. The disappointing fact is that we have not been able to convert promises into performance and agenda into action to any significant level. Hopefully, opportunities provided by Information Technology will have an impact on governance of the country. Need to ‘rightsize’ the government and restructuring and redesigning will become the order of the day. Remedies like across-the-board budget cuts, employment and salary freezes, reorganizations, endless task forces, and the like never address the systemic issues that create and sustain poor ‘government business’ processes.

One of the reasons for inadequate implementation of the reform process in the governmental agencies is that the reforms have been suggested as generalizations which are too vague to be implemented. They merely reflect good intentions and are only good policy statements. Implementing them is an unsurmountable problem. In addition, there are some typical characteristics of government and public agencies that inhibit implementation of good governance and good public administration. There include:

1. Monopoly and protectionism breeding inefficiency;
2. Too inward looking, leaving no scope for initiative for innovating;
3. Unwieldy in size, like the legendary dinosaurs, with no flexibility to adjust itself to present-day demands;
4. Trapped inextricably in a cobweb of rules, regulations, procedures resulting in ‘passing the buck’ or ‘disposal’ meaning only shifting the file from one table to another;
5. Providing scope for exercising arbitrary and extra-constitutional authority in the name of ‘discretion and judgment’ to practice nepotism and corruption of the highest order; and
6. Personnel policies on selection, posting, transfer, allocations, etc., having no relations to the individual’s competence, capability, performance or relevance to organizational requirements.

**Information Technology and Good Governance**

Public administration, in general, and governance, in particular, once again are at the crossroads and so are governmental organizations in India. The process of governance cannot remain unaffected by powerful winds of change and the thrust of the IT revolution sweeping the globe. The direction India chooses now will determine its future status worldwide. It is a ‘now or never’ situation. IT will continue to change at a mind-boggling speed in terms of price of performance, leading to significant shrinkage of time and space. In the context of administration, it has to be used as an ‘enabling technology’ to achieve the broader goal of good governance. But to have an idea of how to go about it, let us take a look at some of the agenda items of good governance as follows:

1. Enhancing effective and efficient administration;
2. Improving quality of life of citizens;
3. Establishing legitimacy and credibility of institutions;
4. Making administration responsive, citizen-friendly, and citizen-caring;
5. Ensuring accountability;
6. Securing freedom of information and expression;
7. Reducing cost of governance;
8. Making every department result-oriented;
9. Improving quality of public services;
10. Improving productivity of employees;
11. Eradication of corruption to re-establish credibility of government by ensuring integrity of individuals;
12. Removal of arbitrariness in exercise of authority; and
13. Use of IT-based services to de-mystify procedures and improve the citizen-government interface.

The foremost requirement for implementing the reforms agenda is to shift approach from macro to micro, from generalization to organization-specific solution and implement these effects in each process of governance. This would need a fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of government processes as marginal improvements here and there have not helped during the last five decades. The new agenda for governance will be to achieve dramatic improvements in critical, contemporary measures of performance, such as cost, quality, service and speed of individual public organizations/departments. Though difficult to imagine, it needs to be emphasized that an institution or a government department is not created or established for the welfare of its employees, nor for the benefit of trade unions or their federations. It is created for servicing the customers, the client, the beneficiary, the citizen. Therefore it must be fully realized that an organization is built by employing personnel in the expectation that the people will carry the organization to achieve its goals and mission and not the other way round. As such, all efforts of an organization have to be directed to a one-point program of service to the customer. Areas of IT Applications are:

1. Urban Services: Development of an online integrated information and monitoring system for delivery, accounting, compliance, and payment for services like water supply, electricity, telephones, etc. There is a need to the web technologies to create electronic networks
at all points of contact between the citizens and the concerned governmental agencies. Citizens in the urban areas should be able to obtain and submit electronically all forms for any service or clearance from the government. It should be possible for them to pay their bills electronically. Conformance to delivery of service would be critical for the concerned agencies to achieve.

2. Compliance and Payment of Taxes: It should be possible for a citizen to pay taxes and duties to all kinds electronically. Filing of returns on account of income tax, sales tax, house tax, etc., need to be facilitated through the use of IT.

3. Filing of Complaints: A common citizen feels harassed if he is required to visit a police station to lodge a complaint or an FIR against any violation of law. Things would be different if such complaints can be lodged electronically.

4. Managing traffic on the Roads: Traffic violations and alleged attendant corruption/payoffs represent one of the most glaring forms of bad governance. A hand held electronic card reader-cum-recorder along with electronic speed sensors should do the trick of punishing the offenders of traffic laws.

5. Development Projects: Application of IT-based models for planning and execution of development projects at the national, state, district, and village levels, would help ensure significant achievements with minimum time and cost overruns. The benefits to the rural masses would be tremendous though increased production, productivity and market access.

6. Managing Imports and Exports Cargo: In the case, of one of the largest economic activities of the Indian economy, that is, imports
and exports, five entities, namely, ports (or airports), shipping lines (or airlines), customs, container stations, and importers (and exporters) are involved in the process.

**Improving Citizen-Government Interface:**

There are large number of areas representing interface between IT and governance. Highly professional systems for communication, information, and control can be successfully designed and implemented for the benefit of society. Some of them may be in areas like:

1. Integration of passport, driving licence, ration card, income tax identification, voter identification, etc., into an electronic (SMART) card that can serve the purpose of a citizen card;
2. Registration of vehicles;
3. Monitoring of traffic violations through SMART card;
4. Public distribution system;
5. Immigration information and monitoring;
6. Management of public health;
7. Water and power supply;
8. Property taxes; and

**E-GOVERNMENT SERVICES IN KUWAIT INCLUDE:**

1. The ministry of education: Traditional methods of learning are no longer the main emphasis of the nations. E learning represents the trend of all developed nations. Based on this belief the ministry of education in Kuwait adopted this project in the secondary level. (www.moe.edu.kw).
2. Kuwait university: Students of the university can now follow up their progress online, file requests for financial aid, register, pay and know their schedule online. Furthermore, there is a database for all the professors teaching there. (www.kuniv.edu.ku).

3. Civil service commission: It offers the central agency for hiring and recruiting employees. This agency is central that means it serves as intermediary between the labour force and all the governmental agencies with vacancies. Furthermore, a comprehensive online system is developed where people can get acquainted with training programs, jobs, salaries. Furthermore a comprehensive online guide, explaining all governmental services provided online. (www.csc.net.kw)

4. Ministry of planning (MOP): There are different projects that were transferred to be delivered electronically:
   a) company registry
   b) internal & external training
   c) ministry of planning
   d) Help desk

Moreover, the ministry of planning introduced the service (G2B), which indicated the relationship of the ministry with the companies, whether they have an updated register of their business yearly in the Ministry of planning (MOP) database. This is to classify companies according to their activities, size, then a certificate of registration is issued. Furthermore this eliminates duplication of information acquisition by different state institutions. In addition, the MOP offers training services, where it coordinates between different government agencies and private sector that offers such training. Thus private sector would update their data on the MOP’s databases and government agencies would identify the different
training program avail the current year. Not to mention that government agencies could acquire MOP’s approval through the net, i.e. G2G “government to government”.

Finally, MOP has a remarkable project called “knowledge bar”, which avails information flows to different managerial levels. As well as “help desk” that aids the users in solving technical and non-technical problems, like how to fix computers or how to submit a request for a vacation. (Al Tama and Aloosh, 2004).

**CHALLENGES OF E-GOVERNMENT IN KUWAIT**

Kuwait faces many structural problems in its budget: excessive dependence on oil revenue, growing government expenditures due to the need for continued high defence spending, growing social expenditures resulting from high levels of government employment and provision of heavily subsidized social services and utilities. These subsidies on welfare include: electricity costs, subsidized foods, government housing is available to all married Kuwaitis who are employed and who do not own property, education and medical treatment. The country’s increased spending is offset by higher oil revenues, thus recording a surplus.

PPBS. Planning, Programming Budgeting System introduction is MOP’s contribution to the on-going effort at administrative and budget reform in the State of Kuwait. It is an improved system of budgeting that reoriented the focus of budgeting from items of expenditure to results from that expenditure. Unlike the traditional budgeting system, which focuses on preparing a detailed list of resource requirements according to the various items of expenditure identified in the budget format, PPBS provides a wider scope focusing on objectives, outcomes, optimum solutions. It aims at
improving resource allocation through planning, priority setting and justifying expenditures by planned performance; and focusing budgeting and control more on the results (outputs and impact) to be obtained from the proposed expenditure.( www.mop.gov).

There are many achievements of the administrative reform program, which could be summarized in the following:

1. Adoption of technology in a wide number of fields of the government which resulted in a simplification of procedures and better service provision.
2. Restructuring of the executive branch
3. Human resource development

As it can be analyzed, although Kuwait scores higher on the government effectiveness index, which is an index on the quality of public service provision, the quality of bureaucracy, the competence of civil servant and the independence of the civil service from political pressures and the credibility of the government’s commitment to policies, 2002 government effectiveness is lower than the previous period.

The administrative reform program in Kuwait however faced different impediments:

1. The time gap between the conduct of the studies and taking action plans to enforce them, so other aspects arise that were not taken in consideration.
2. Plans that do not tackle social and economic aspects into consideration, for instance the process of hiring Kuwait which might contradict their qualification education, specialization.
3. Simulating other countries’ experiences without taking cultural and social differences into consideration
4. Action plans were not properly designed to incorporate resistance that employees might exhibit.

5. Wrong focus on side issues or some modification without focusing on integrated and comprehensive plans.⁹¹

Official data does not reflect that Kuwait receives financial aids or donation, in fact Kuwait invests part of its revenues in foreign aid. It takes many forms, such as loans, joint financing, equity participation, and direct grants, particularly in support of Arab causes. In the 1960s, the government began placing funds in the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), established in 1961. The best known of Kuwait’s investment organizations and one that was used as a model by other oil exporters, KFAED functioned as both an investment and an aid agency.

Many projects were initiated and either is now completed or still ongoing such as a modernization project with the Council of Ministers and the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research. Both, projects provide a new paradigm for the collection and dissemination of data and information for policy makers in the government. Support to Public Management Reform (1995-97). The project is to support governmental reform, including restructuring of the Executive Branch, by assisting the Government with substantive advice, management services and programme development assistance. It provided short-term subject matter technical experts for:

1. Business process reengineering
2. Decision support systems
3. Restructuring of the executive Branch of the Government
4. Project Management and Support Services and other areas as needed.

⁹¹ ARADO. 2003.
5. Stakeholders in the Arab region are fast recognising the role of civil society in promoting good governance and advancing sustainable human development. The synergy and complementarities between civil society, the private sector, and the state is critical. In Kuwait, UNDP is carrying out initiatives aimed at building the capacity of civil society to play an active role in development.

A project of development of a Client Inquiry System for the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has been competed. The client Inquiry System established an on-demand inquiry system for the public at large. Transparency of access to government information is the primary thrust of this effort. The technology was developed and demonstrated though a prototype of the proof-of-concept. This prototype can be replicated in other government agencies to increase access to information and deliver service status reporting. The civil service commission (CSC) has taken full ownership of these efforts. The UNDP-supported efforts are not restricted to the Administrative Development Sector but have also moved into CSC’s MIS division and the unit for mission and scholarships.

The Kuwait Ministry of Planning (MOP): Strengthening the National Planning System (1997-2001). This project is intended to support one of the principle goals of Government’s Program of Action for the period 1997-2000, namely, to change the process of formulation and implementing the development policies essential to achieve a new vision of Kuwait society, by putting in place either a strategic planning process or an improved long-term planning process which closely link the long-term vision for the nation, the medium-term development priorities and the annual budget. The project, planning for economic and social development, will also build capacities within Government to effectively implement this new system and will
produce a strategic or long-term plan, a medium-term plan or program, and an annual plan which applies the new system. The project had a budget of $496,800 and supervised by the division of social policy and development. Accomplishing this goal calls for a two-pronged approach. First, strengthening the effectiveness of the system adopted by the government to carry out its planning responsibilities. Second, strengthening the capacity of the relevant organization to enable them to apply this system to its maximum impact.

Computer-based development planning support system (1995-Now): A project to support a Development Planning Decision Support System for the Ministry of Planning is in the pipeline funded by the UN with $1,278,792, implemented by UN/DESA Statistics Division. The project will establish, on a pilot basis, a computer-based development planning support system (DPSS) for the Ministry of Planning. It will provide the capability for policy makers, strategic planners, and socio-economic analysts to improve the effectiveness of the development planning process, using the latest information technology tools. It will train and prepare a cadre of multidisciplinary teams in three main areas, namely, computerization, aspects of the DPSS, use of the DPSS for socioeconomic policy formulation and testing and development of national accounts statistics.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES IN KUWAIT

1. Good governance requires the State to be a facilitator, a catalytic force for enabling the innovative sharing of responsibilities and creating environments that provide incentives and support people and partners in pursuing their legitimate objectives. Although people view the state
as the service provider, although it should be supervising the service provision process. (Al Zamii, 1997).

2. Diversifying the sources of revenues, that is decreasing the country dependence on oil, a deployable source. Kuwait has been rated with a high credit risk; this is mostly attributable to decrease in oil prices, creating a deficit. Of course, as soon as there were increases in oil prices, it allowed them the necessary financial resources, the GCC countries made remarkable progresses in modernising their economic infrastructures, almost non-existent until the middle of last century. As for the expenditure side, the government needs to minimize the welfare program provided to Kuwaiti, which represents a great portion of the government expenditure, since the efforts to transform Kuwait from a welfare state into a market economy and ease its reliance on ablated public sectors, which employees around 94% of the workforce, have progressed slowly as the Kuwaiti people cling to generous government subsidies.

3. Revitalizing the private sector and encouraging its participation, since good governance allows civil society and the private sector to become key partners of national and sub-national governments in the transition towards improved forms of local governance through decentralization. The private sector is uniquely capable of generating jobs, instead of the inflation the government size, attempting to hire all Kuwaiti.

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4. Encouraging the e-culture and changing the mindset of people from mechanization to automation.\(^93\)

**THE INDIAN SCENARIO**

After independence in 1947, there has been two major landmarks in the process of governance in India. One of those being the Constitutionalism and the other being Planned economic development. The Indian Constitution is considered the corner stone of social revolution. The founding fathers of Indian Constitution have given a sovereign, socialist and secular democratic republic. It has been their major endeavor to secure for the citizens of our nation, social, economic and political justice, liberty, equality, dignity of individuals and unity and integrity of the nation. To achieve these objectives we ushered in a planned economic development to raise the standard of living and to open for the people of India new opportunities for a rich and varied life. Our approach to development did not mean augmentation of resources but a process of building institutional framework adequate to the need and aspirations of people. Stress was laid on politico-administrative set-up as a prerequisite to successful implementation of the plan document. Decentralization of power, participation of citizens in local decision-making and implementation of schemes affecting their livelihood and quality of life are essential aspects of good governance. Thus, in India, consensus has emerged in achieving the goals of accountability, citizen-friendly government, transparency, right to information and improving performance and integrity of public services at the Central and State levels. A large

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\(^93\) For one such case, see John Cooper. 1995. 'Testing Times for Kuwait's Democracy.' *Middle East Economic Digest*, May 26.
number of states, Union territories and the Central Government have already taken several steps in this direction.

Encouraged by the overwhelming response and positive feedback received on the E-Readiness assessment, Department of Information Technology, Government of India, initiated E-Readiness Assessment 2004 for the States and Union Territories. The findings of the study have been published in the "India: E-Readiness Assessment Report 2004".94

E-readiness and National ICT strategies are complex exercises, which must encompass a variety of issues covering many areas such as infrastructure, applications, institutions, people, and policies. If they are carried out with a sense of purpose and an ambition to use globalization as a source of energy for the social and economic development of the country, they can prove to be an effective shortcut to higher levels of equity in the emerging information economy.

In this context, it has become important to regularly take stock of e-readiness at the country level, States/UTs level and in major verticals to ascertain the status of underlying infrastructure, human resources; policy regimes, investment climate etc. and arrive at what steps need to be taken to optimize investment and reach full potential. In that sense, "India: E-Readiness Assessment Report 2004" which carries out the assessment at the disaggregated level of States/UTs throws up some useful and valuable insights. The value of the e-Readiness index at the state level reflects the capacity of a state to participate in the networked economy vis-à-vis the other states. For a project to be sustainable, there has to be a purposeful mission attached to it such that it serves the cause of the state. It should have a strong business model attached to it such that it is a self-sustaining

http://www.niti.gov.in/e-readiness/index.asp
profitable venture. This has been exemplified by case studies on e-Choupal and Akshaya. The state of Karnataka has further improved its governance through the expansion of the Bhoomi initiative. Projects like RASI in Tamil Nadu have been an instance in capacity and skill building. The case studies have thus been used to examine whether various hypotheses that IT is indeed an enabler of developmental goals, is pervasive and cross cutting, facilitates dis-intermediation and the creation of an alternative development paradigm is validated in the Indian context through an empirical and critical analyses of these case studies.

The report finally draws out a set of actionable recommendations gained from insights arising from the National level and the State level analytical models. Based on the above analysis, the report suggests that Policy planners could broadly look at the recommendations. These recommendations are based on the following premises:

1. Empowering and including marginalized sections through evolution of networked states/provinces.
2. Sustainable/Scalable/Profitable rural development initiatives.
3. Adopt proactive policies to consciously move the states up the pyramid to the status of ‘average achievers’ and above.
4. Match potential of Indian states for IT application with actual level of applications in the state with assistance from the Central government.
5. Developing a domestic market for IT applications to reduce vulnerability from the external environment.
6. Improving readiness of verticals.
7. Increasing awareness of potential benefits of ICT in rural development.
India's attempts at moving towards an e-ready economy should therefore focus on providing a favourable environment for the Central and State governments. Indian Information Technology (IT) and IT enabled services (ITES-BPO) during the year continue to chart remarkable growth. The Indian software and services export is estimated at Rs. 782.30 billion (US$ 17.2 billion) in 2004-05, as compared to Rs. 582.40 billion (US $ 12.8 billion) in 2003-04, an increase of 34 per cent both in rupee terms and dollar terms. This segment will continue to show robust growth in future also. IT exports likely to grow by 30-32% in dollar terms during 2005-06. The production of the Indian electronics and IT industry is estimated at Rs. 1483.60 billion during 2004-05, as compared to Rs. 1182.90 billion during the year 2003-04, a growth of 25.4%.

During the year, ITES-BPO sector industry continues to grow from strength to strength, witnessing high levels of activity – both onshore as well as offshore. As export revenues from ITES-BPO grew from US $ 2.5 billion in year 2002-03 to US $ 3.6 billion in years 2003-04 and US $ 5.1 billion in the year 2004-05.

The ITES-BPO sector has become the biggest employment generator amongst young college graduates with the number of jobs almost doubling each year. The number of professionals employed in India by IT and ITES sectors is estimated at 1,045,000 as of March 2005. The increased attractiveness of India as an investment destination in IT has led to the reversal of the brain drain – people of Indian origin who went to pursue careers abroad are now attracted to work in India.

Another significant milestone achieved during the year was that Global IT & Telecom giants (Microsoft, Intel, AMD, Semindia, Cisco, Flextronics, Nokia, Alcatel, Ericsson etc) have announced their investment
plans of more than 8 billion USA dollars in the country over the next 3-5 years. These investments cover the entire gamut of IT services (software, microprocessors and networking equipment) and Telecom equipment manufacturing.

The whole exercise of making “India as Telecom & IT equipment Manufacturing hub” started with Indian IT Minister, Dayanidhi Maran’s announcement immediately after taking over Minister of Communications & IT in May 2004, of achieving a target of 250 million telephone connections by the year 2007 and taking the tele-density to about 22. And for the IT sector, he also announced 10-point agenda.

The National Common Minimum Programme adopted by the Government accords high priority to improving the quality of basic governance and in that context has proposed to promote e-Governance on a massive scale in areas of concern to the common man. A National e-Governance Plan (NEGP) has accordingly been drawn up covering 26 Mission Mode Projects and 8 support components to be implemented at the Central, State and Local Government Levels. India is aiming at achieving the objective of:

“Making all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, throughout his life through a One-stop-shop (integrated service delivery) ensuring efficiency, transparency & reliability and at affordable costs to meet the basic needs of the common man”

For realizing this objective, Data Connectivity and Services Delivery Access points need to be established all over the country, including the remotest areas. Government has already approved a scheme for the establishment of State Wide Area Networks (SWANs) at a total outlay of Rs.33.34 billion over a period of 5 years. These SWANs will extend data
connectivity of 2 Mega bits per second up to the block level in State or Union Territory in the country. The block level nodes in turn, will have a provision to extend connectivity further to the village level using contemporary wireless technology. Under the scheme, proposals from 17 States/UTs have already been sanctioned and first installment of grant released to them.

Government is also formulating a proposal to establish 100,000 Common Services Centres that would extend the reach of electronic services, both government and private to the village level. Various government departments have been advised to design and evolve their Mission Mode Projects laying adequate emphasis on Services and Service levels in respect of their interface with citizens and businesses.

The Department has implemented “India Portal” project through NIC which would facilitates single window web based availability of Government information and services at the National Level. The First version of “India Portal” is now operational (and can be visited at www.india.gov.in).

Government has also activated an Institutional mechanism for evolving and enforcement of Standards for NEGP (National e-Governance Plan). National Informatics Centre (NIC) would steer the process of evolving standards, Apex Committee (under the Chairmanship of Secretary, DIT) would be approving standards and STQC would be responsible for documentation, adoption and enforcement of standards.

The Programme Management Unit set up by the Department provides secretarial support to the Apex Committee and other Line Ministries in evolving project proposals for the execution of various Mission Mode Projects and Components under the NeGP.
The nature and scale of e-governance initiatives planned in the domain of the State Governments would entail major managerial and technological challenges. This necessitates Capacity Building both at Programme level and Project level in States. The Planning Commission has allocated funds as Additional Central Assistance (ACA) to all the States for taking up Capacity Building measures as a first step towards NeGP.

For the benefit of various state governments and for maintaining uniformity, Department of Information Technology has formulated guidelines for Preparation Detailed Proposal by the respective states for capacity building. This also includes Suggested Institutional framework and formation of State e-Governance Mission Team (SeMT) attached to a suitable Department for supporting the State Policy and decision makers for taking up e-Governance Programme and projects in a comprehensive manner. The Department jointly with NISG held series of workshops to create awareness for Capacity-Building requirements. States have been advised to prepare Capacity Building Road Map and detailed project proposal for Capacity Building for the next 3 years.

The Department has prepared a ‘Conceptual Policy Framework to promote growth of Electronics/IT Hardware Manufacturing Industry’ in consultation with the industry associations. It addresses issues on – Tariff policy, EXIM policy, Hardware Manufacturing Cluster Parks, supporting R&D, marketing Made in India, inviting large Electronics Manufacturing Service Companies to set-up Indian operations, development of semiconductor industry, labour laws, patenting, etc. The discussion paper on ‘Conceptual Policy Framework to promote growth of Electronics/IT Hardware Manufacturing Industry’ has been forwarded to National Manufacturing Competitive Council (NMCC).
The Government of India has approved the National E-Governance Action Plan for implementation during the year 2003-2007. The Plan seeks to lay the foundation and provide the impetus for long-term growth of e-Governance within the country. The plan seeks to create the right governance and institutional mechanisms, set up the core infrastructure and policies and implement a number of Mission Mode Projects at the center, state and integrated service levels to create a citizen-centric and business-centric environment for governance.

The National E-Governance Action Plan was presented to Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh on 22rd May, 2003. The Plan has been approved in-principle and endorsement has been given to the overall program content, implementation approach and Governance structures. However, for budgetary outlays separate approvals from Planning Commission/ Ministry of Finance are envisaged. Key observations while endorsing e-governance in India are:

5. Adequate weightage for quality and speed of implementation in procurement procedures for IT services
6. Incorporation of suitable system of incentivization of states to encourage adoption
7. Trend of delivery of services through common service centres should be encouraged and promoted
8. Wherever possible services should be outsourced
9. Full potential for private sector investment should be exploited
10. Connectivity should be extended up to block level through NICNET/ SWANs Government Systems R&D to be undertaken

As stated under the Indian Prime Minister’s 15 important initiatives announced on Independence Day 2002, Government intends to implement a
comprehensive programme to accelerate E-Governance at all level of the Government to improve efficiency, transparency and accountability at the Government – Citizen interface.

The E-Governance framework in India includes Back-ends (databases of the different government agencies, service providers, state governments etc.), Middleware and the Front-end delivery channels (home PCs, mobile phones, kiosks, integrated citizen service centers etc) for citizens and businesses. The Middleware comprises of communication and security infrastructure, gateways and integrated services facilitating integration of inter-departmental services. The National E-Governance Action Plan was presented to Indian Prime Minister on 6th November, 2003. The Plan has been approved in-principle and endorsement has been given to the overall program content, implementation approach and Governance structures.

Devolution of power has indeed taken place in the countries under study – albeit with some deficiencies. Local governments have been established that are endowed with significant decision-making authority. Most important for the actual capacity of local organs, however, is their access to economic resources. In poor countries, the local fiscal base is normally very constrained, and especially so in rural areas. For the most part, money must be transferred from the central level. Such an approach makes the programme fragile, since it can be dismounted or undermined by a change in government. It is therefore a critical condition for success to have long-term support from the centre under stable rules, including a predictable infusion of resources. The rationale given by the centre is generally the safeguarding of an adequate degree of professionalism and

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political independence among local administrators. However, since such central appointments of local bureaucrats virtually 'insulate' them from local influence, the practice can sometimes create a difficult problem of accountability, as it obviously conflicts with the principles of electoral control and social auditing.

An alternative policy approach could aim at advancing the work-spirit and commitment of agents in the field, i.e., a motivation component. An example of this is the approach used in West Bengal, where administrative personnel were required to live for a short period of time among the people targeted for a certain programme, in order to learn to see things from the clients' point of view. This, however, seems to be a rare example. In India, as in many developing countries, there is often a huge gap – due to status differences and traditions of hierarchy – between administrative personnel and ordinary people. This could indeed work as an impediment to democratic governance. Governance, it should be borne in mind, is not only about doing things right, but also doing the right things. To this end, different modes of 'democratic schooling of bureaucrats' should be considered. The creation and introduction of different systems of rewarding local bureaucrats for good performance also warrant creative thinking. As noted by Theobald (1990)\textsuperscript{96}, state softness at the top has a strong inclination to extend throughout the system. There need to be clear rules about sanctions against misconduct, and these rules need to be impartially implemented and effectively enforced. Active support from the centre and the existence of effective organs of administrative and judicial control can be seen as crucial conditions for successful local democratic governance – a fact that is

\textsuperscript{96} Theobald, R., 1990, Corruption, Development and Underdevelopment. Macmillan.
sometimes neglected by advocates of popular participation.\textsuperscript{97} If such conditions do not exist, any efforts to initiate a constructive local dynamic will be an up-hill battle. As for the substance of representation (the second possible insufficiency noted above) it is well known that political representation in developing countries – and generally in new democracies – often leaves much to be desired due to personalism, vague political platforms, and a lack of party coherence.\textsuperscript{98} It is also well established, turning to the third point above, that actual representation for new social groups does not amount to the empowerment of the groups in question.

Political parties are normally the vehicles of representation in elections, and it has been said that “modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties”.\textsuperscript{99} Two political deficiencies in particular can be attributed to the existence of parties: the political exploitation of tensions between segmental groups in the population, sometimes leading to unmanageable conflicts; and the establishment of clientelistic networks of power-seeking that tend to breed corruption and mismanagement, thus thwarting the process of representation. But there is another story to be told. In some Indian municipalities the presence of strong opposition parties in the process of decision-making has contributed to a higher degree of transparency. Such parties have kept a watchful eye on local governments, constantly seeking to win political mileage by bringing irregularities into the public sphere. Hence, party competition breeds accountability; it helps keep the party in power on the path of decency.

\textsuperscript{97} see e.g. Ostrom, 1990; Fiszbein, 1997; Blair, 2000.
\textsuperscript{99} Schattschneider, E. 1942 \textit{Parties Government}. Farrar and Rinehart, pp 1
Thus, good governance is not a final product. It represents a continuous quest and an endless effort. The quest is for mass prosperity and liberal democracy, and the effort is towards sustaining and upgrading whatever level of good governance has been accomplished. Whereas the desirable contents of mass prosperity and liberal democracy are subjects of perennial though familiar debates, an author can save the time of readers by communicating candidly his own preferences and priorities. In India, the gap between potentialities and actualities remains wide. Lapses in economic, political, social and administrative fields are as numerous as they are noticeable. In order to explore the most pragmatic way to remove these lapses, one need to test public policy and governmental performance in the light of ground realities. For this purpose, there is a need to consult an amazing variety of primary and secondary source materials, and has not allowed orthodoxy to obstruct the search for truth. This has enabled him to pay necessary attention to crucial developments in national/state capitals as also in remote rural areas. The easy blending of cross-disciplinary macro analyses with an immense assembly of micro assessments endows this book with a rare richness.

Government effectiveness and stability, Rule of Law, Public administration, Public finance and outcomes were a few selected governance indicators taken by a study group for evaluating India’s standing amongst different countries However subjective it could be, this assessment revealed that India compared favourably with many developing countries though it had a long way to go to attain the levels of developed countries. India is unique in many respects with its diverse culture, languages and many states. People of some states enjoy good prosperity, high literacy, developed

100 Ray, Jayanta Kumar 2001 India in Search of Good Governance. K P Bagchi & Company Calcutta
infrastructure and rule of law while many are wanting in different degrees in some or all parameters although they are all under a common union government with the same financial, legal and administrative system. Nevertheless big differences persist amongst them depending upon the level of governance by the central and respective state governments. What is governance and how does its presence or lack of it impact on the people? Governance, shorn of jargon, means the way the government conducts its operations in economic, financial, industrial, agricultural, political and social spheres that concern the citizen and the country.

The country/state moves forward progressively towards development and prosperity if the governance is good. In such an ambience the people enjoy higher per capita income at all levels, wide spread literacy, adequate health facilities with longer average life. Weakness in governance results in poor growth and slow development of economy and the country. It invariably leads to higher levels of corruption in all areas. It brings in its wake social disparities, neglect of the economically weak, poor financial management coupled with lack of transparency and disproportionate growth of some sections to the detriment of others.

Poor adherence to rules and regulations that accompany bad governance leads to loss of faith in the government and established institutions by the people and witnesses the emergence of alternative and often-illegal remedies. The level of parallel economy of black money generated in such an environment aided by rampant bribery and avoidance of the legitimate revenues to the governments is a certain index of the level of bad governance. There is generally a very close relationship amongst the politicians, bureaucracy and corrupt business houses in an atmosphere of bad governance. Bribery at all levels, high taxes and poor collections, high
discretionary powers, absence of an effective mechanism to oversee deviations, weak rule of law and a disdain for the observations of established institutions created by the Constitution strengthens the informal economy. There are several governance indicators as mentioned in a World Bank policy research paper tested on a few countries in transition. We shall see India’s status as a whole with reference to these parameters and where it is lagging behind.

Firstly, the processes, by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced is one such indicator. Unlike some neighbouring countries Indian method of electing the government has fully demonstrated the democratic ethos reflected in the Constitution. However the hung legislature, a recent phenomenon, with no party commanding an overall majority has brought about fragile coalition governments with a common agenda that is weak in content and strong in the desire to share the power. The larger partner, however well intentioned, is compelled to accommodate elements that they would fain avoid and to tolerate the deviations from the common purpose. It is a very difficult task to offer good governance in such a situation though efforts are not wanting in this direction. The replacement of such a coalition set up if at all wanted is frustrated on TINA principle. The electoral laws are to be changed to overcome this problem to enable a two or three party system evolve which would allow the government at the helm to carry on good administration with no let or hindrance.

Secondly, political stability and lack of violence is another indicator to assess the threat to the government by unconstitutional means. Luckily this is in our favour. The supremacy of Indian civil authority has never been questioned in the country. There are however pockets of violence and insurgency in certain parts of the country mostly by terrorist outfits and
these pose no danger. In certain Northern states crime is pronounced with private armies and goons operating freely for ransom, casteist feuds and show of power abetted by poor law enforcing machinery. These states suffer consequently in their development.

Thirdly, another parameter is the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies. This is being done to the extent possible within the constraints of a coalition. There is also the predictable opposition to usher certain essential reforms that would need two-thirds majority. This again is the outcome of a defective electoral system. There had been a steady erosion of values towards established institutions from early seventies that witnessed the imposition of emergency, committed bureaucracy, and utter disregard for established institutions and norms in administration and emergence of extra constitutional authorities. This trend has been fortunately reversed from mid eighties and the steel frame today at the centre is by and large independent and capable. Substantial changes in the economy have been ushered for the good of the country as a sequel to the reforms since early nineties and sound policies are in place. Nevertheless a certain amount of transparency in government’s dealings is felt necessary by diluting the rigorous Official Secrets Act.

Fourthly, many institutions like regulatory authorities/commissions are there or have been created to ensure that the institutions that govern economic and social interactions between the people and the government are properly conducted. The active and alert judiciary informed by social activism and its encouragement of public interest litigations is an able facilitator for rule of law. This is despite the inadequacies in the legal system
that needs a peremptory overhaul tuned to the needs of the times. The archaic laws, mounting arrears in the courts, delayed justice that is given after several years, the endless appeals, the unfilled vacancies and poor infrastructure need to be addressed on a war footing. This pillar of Indian democracy can be ignored only at the cost of good governance.

Fifthly, there is yet another disturbing feature in India. The rank amongst the corrupt nations as measured by Transparency International is not flattering. The government has no doubt strengthened CVC giving it a statutory recognition and bringing CBI under its supervision. The exclusion of officers above a level by single directive is a retrograde step that is not conducive to eliminating corruption. The series of cases of alleged complicity of high ranking officers in corrupt or illegal practices brought out in the recent past should open the eyes of the government not to succumb to the pressures of higher bureaucracy to exclude them from the purview of CVC. The CAG and his officers serving effectively as watchdogs of the public finance is another merit in our system. His reports highlighting irregularities should get the attention they deserve and discussed in the legislatures to avoid recurrence of the same points year after year. Corruption has become a part of our system and sustained efforts to eradicate it are needed at all levels throughout the country. This should commence from the political level accompanied by changes in the electoral system that would reduce the heavy election expenses for the parties. Besides full encouragement and hundred percent safety should be provided to whistle-blowers and under no circumstance they should be harassed.
Finally, the emergence of e-governance and the importance being given to it by the governments should usher an era of good governance before long. Once e-governance is in place in Kuwait and India there will be greater accountability, access to information and transparency in all transactions and witness a larger the percolation of benefits to the intended classes. The gap between promise and performance hopefully would also get reduced gradually. Finally the litmus test for good governance in Kuwait and India rests on the quality of life that the people particularly in the lower strata lead and the extent of their participation in the affairs of the society.