APPENDIX - II

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ZILLA PARISHAD AND MANDAL PANCHAYAT EVALUATION COMMITTEE 1989

(1) The actual performance of Zilla Parishads and Mandal Panchayats is impressive. Virtually in all districts the operation of schools and health facilities has improved vastly. Considerable progress has been made in the allocation of housing sites under various schemes. Performance in the fields of inland fisheries, horticultural and forests has also been good. Generally development works are being executed more speedily and there is better control of field staff.

(2) The ZPs and MPs have given ample evidence of their willingness and ability to mobilise resources.

(3) Notwithstanding the novelty and complexity of legislative and procedural arrangements for transfer of power, men and women at local levels have become keenly aware of their altered political status. The calibre of men and women elected to the offices of Zilla Parishad Adhyakshas, Upadhyakshas is remarkably high. The Mandal Pradhans command respect and seem to have a good appreciation of their role. Women and scheduled caste members of the Mandal Panchayat still appear to be hesitant in asserting themselves.
(4) A harmonious relationship exists between officials and non-officials at the district level and now public servants are more conscious of their accountability to the people. Unfortunately some officers are not yet attuned to the new climate and often attempts are made to make inroads into the authority of local governments. Such attempts should be resisted absolutely at the political and official levels.

(5) There is plenty of evidence that legislators, ministers and officials of the State Government still have mental reservations about the scheme of decentralisation. This attitude has to change.

(6) We did not come across any evidence to show that the conditions of the scheduled castes and other under privileged people have worsened consequent upon the introduction of Panchayat Raj. If the rural vested interests have waxed strong, it is for reasons which have been long at work, and which partisan politics at Central and State governments have regrettably encouraged.

(7) There is a gross mis-match between the functional responsibility of Mandal Panchayats and their direct command over resources. The Mandal Panchayats command over resources and freedom of action should be progressively enlarged.
(8) There is no immediate need to amend the 1983 Act. For the present the accent should be on developing proper conventions to guide inter-governmental relations and a commitment politically to press ahead with the actualities of decentralisation.

(9) If quick and effective steps are not taken to enable Mandal Panchayats to discharge their functions well, and the Gram Sabhas fail to appreciate the constraints on them, people could lose interest in attending Gram Sabha meetings or accepting Mandal Panchayat as the effective local authority.

(10) On the whole there has been improvement in the selection of beneficiaries and implementation of poverty alleviation programmes. A lasting remedy to partisan decision making by Mandal Panchayats is the eternal vigilance of local communities. It is, therefore, vital that the requirement of canvassing Gram Sabha meetings at least twice a year should be enforced.

(11) Overall it would appear that there is a good amount of cooperation and mutual respect along members of Mandal Panchayats even when they belong to different political parties or caste groups.
(12) We do not recommend any change in the electoral system for local elections or enhancement of reservations.

(13) There is a strong case for improving the salary and allowances of Mandal Panchayats.

(14) A serious flaw in the system has been the absence of proper operational linkages between Mandal Panchayats and Zilla Parishads.

(15) Considering the circumstances in which Panchayat Faj was introduced it was probably necessary to have MLAs as Chairmen of Taluk Panchayat Samithis. We are of the view that in due course it would be a healthy convention to limit a person's membership to one or the other of three tiers of government that would exist in the State.

(16) With a view to improving the linkages and means of communication between the Mandal Panchayats and Zilla Parishads a practical course would be for one Zilla Parishad Member holding the office of Adhyaksha, Upadhyaksha or Chairman of Standing Committees to be designated as the contact person for a number of Mandal Panchayats.
(17) Many of the schemes presently allocated to Zilla Parishads can conveniently be transferred to Mandals, with a redeployment of existing staff and transfer of the required resources to the Mandal Account.

(18) Instead of leaving the Chairmanship of the Taluk Panchayat Samithi as a sinecure for the MLAs, a better arrangement will be to establish the convention of rotating the Chairmanship annually among MLAs, ZP members and Mandal Pradhans; or, on a rotating basis, election of a Chairman for each meeting from amongst those present.

(19) Zilla Parishads, with their larger staff and budgetary support compared to Mandals have functioned with greater authority and facility. Development programmes for which they are responsible have been competently implemented.

(20) A good part of the inter-party and intra-party differences operating at the State level has spilled over to the Zilla Parishad Adhyakshas and leaders of opposition parties have conducted themselves with commandable responsibility and a substantial amount of legislative and executive work has been carried out on an agreed basis.
(21) At present there are nine Standing Committees. We recommend that the number of Standing Committees be reduced to four or five by regrouping the existing ones and that their regular meetings could be once in two months rather than every month, with a provision for special meeting when the need arises.

(22) While we are opposed to a statutory allocation of authority between the Adhyaksha and Upadhyaksha, we suggest that the Adhyakshas could assign some specific administrative responsibility to their deputies besides presiding over the General Standing Committee and acting in their stead in their absence.

(23) The State Government should reiterate its total and unequivocal commitment to the progressive devolution of authority to Panchayat Raj institution.

(24) The State Cabinet should make absolutely clear within the government that any direct or indirect measure to reduce the authority of Zilla Parishads and Mandal Panchayats will not be tolerated.

(25) The practice of assigning State Ministers responsibility for individual districts should be discontinued forthwith.
(26) Steps should be initiated to work out a time bound programme for transfer of all or most of the authority for district administration to Zilla Parishads & Nyaya Panchayats at the ground level.

(27) The State Development Council should be reactivated and we strongly urge the State Government to organise regular meetings of the Council. We also recommend that secretarial responsibility for the council be transferred to the Secretary, Panchayat Raj Department.

(28) Procedures and conventions should be modified to prevent State Ministers and the State Legislature becoming concerned with day to day administration of the Zilla Parishads.

(29) A political change of the kind brought about by the 1983 Act necessarily implies major mental adjustments. Having taken the formal step of creating Panchayat Raj institutions, we earnestly hope that State Ministers and Legislatures will create a favourable environment for the Zilla Parishads and Mandal Panchayats to function efficiently.

(30) State department heads have retained substantial administrative control over their staff in the districts. It is necessary to review this arrangement so as to enable the ZP's Chief Secretary to have effective, administrative control over all district level offices and their staff.
(31) Notwithstanding the substantial transfer of power to Zilla Parishads, the actual operations of these bodies are seriously circumscribed by administrative and financial restrictions. There are also a large number of circulars or orders issued by Finance, Planning and other departments limiting the freedom of action of Zilla Parishads and MPs.

(32) The attitude at the administrative level has palpably been one of continuing past practices and procedures and in some cases, tightening them on various grounds.

(33) We recommend the appointment of a Committee headed by an outside expert in government and including official representatives of both the State and Zilla Parishads as well as some non-official members to review all Government orders and instructions, with a view to modifying them in such a way as to prevent any abridgement of the rights conferred by statute on Panchayat Raj institutions.

(34) There is the need to restructure the Government budget and reorganise Government Departments with a view to enhance the technical support they can give to Panchayat Raj institutions. After the transfer of developmental and supervisory responsibilities to Zilla Parishads, the State Departments generally are left with more staff than they need. The High Power Committee could look into these matters and make appropriate recommendations.
(35) In the process of redefining the scope and functions of different departments, special attention should be paid to the nodal departments: viz Panchayat Raj and Planning. We recommend that Panchayat Raj work be entrusted to a full-fledged department under an officer of the rank of Addl. Chief Secretary and explicitly empowered to function as a nodal point for Zilla Parishad and Mandal Panchayat affairs.

(36) It is urgently necessary to strengthen and streamline the administrative setup at the Mandal, Taluk and District levels. It should be possible to pull out a sufficient number of village accountants from the Revenue Department to provide one more functionary for each Mandal Panchayat. Junior Engineer's responsibility to work for each Mandal should be specifically identified and Mandal Pradhans should be empowered to write confidential remarks on junior engineers.

(37) The post of BDO should be upgraded to Class-I, I.A.S. Officers in the Junior Scale, State Civil Service Officers, hand picked officers of other departments and fresh graduates of I.I.M. IRMA and I.I.S. should be appointed on contract to posts of B.D.O.