

APPENDIX CMain Recommendations of the Balwantrai Mehta
Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions (1957)

1. The Government should divest itself completely of certain duties and responsibilities and devolve them to body which will have the entire charge of all development work within its jurisdiction, reserving to itself only the functions of guidance, supervision and higher planning.
2. At the block level, an elected self-governing institution should be set up with its jurisdiction co-extensive with a development block.
3. The panchayat samiti should be constituted by indirect elections from the village panchayats.
4. The functions of the panchayat samiti should cover the development of agriculture in all its aspects, improvement of cattle, promotion of local industries, public health, welfare work, administration of primary schools and collection and maintenance of statistics. It should also act as an agent of the State Government in executing special schemes of development entrusted to it. Other functions should be transferred to the panchayat samitis only when they have started functioning as efficient democratic institutions.
5. The State Government should give to these samitis adequate grants-in-aid conditionally or unconditionally or on a matching basis, with due regard to economically backward areas.
6. All Central and State funds spent in a block area should invariably be assigned to the panchayat samiti to be spent by it directly or indirectly excepting when the samiti recommends direct assistance to an institution.
7. A certain amount of control should inevitably be retained by the Government, e.g., the power of superseding a panchayat samiti in public interest.
8. The constitution of the panchayat should be purely on an elective basis with the provision for the co-optation of two women members and one member each from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. No other special groups need be given special representation.

9. Main resources of income of the panchayat will be property or house tax, tax on markets and vehicles, octroi or terminal tax, conservancy tax, water and lighting rate, income from cattle ponds, grants from the panchayat samitis and fees charged from the registration of animals sold.

10. The budget of the village panchayat will be subject to scrutiny and approval of the panchayat samiti, chief officer of which will exercise the same power in regard to the village panchayat as the collective will in regard to the panchayat samiti. No village panchayat should however, be superseded except by the State Government who will do so only on the recommendation of the Zilla Parishad.

11. The compulsory duties of the village panchayats should include among others provision of water supply, sanitation, lighting, maintenance of roads, land management, collection and maintenance of records and other statistics and the welfare of backward classes. It will also act as an agent of the panchayat samiti in executing any scheme entrusted to it.

12. The judicial panchayat may have much larger jurisdiction than even a Gram Sevak's circle, and out of the panel suggested by village panchayats the sub-divisional or district magistrate may select persons to form judicial panchayats.

13. To ensure necessary coordination between the panchayat samitis, a Zilla Parishad should be constituted consisting of the presidents of these samitis, M.L.As and M.Ps representing the area and the district level officers. The collector will be its chairman and one of the officers will act as Secretary.

Main Recommendations of the Ashok Mehta
Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions (1978)

1. In the Panchayati Raj structure, there should be a two-tier set up, a district level, Zilla parishad and a mandal panchayat covering a population of 15,000 to 20,000.
2. With the two tier structure, the Committee also suggested ultimate abolition of the block as a unit of developmental administration.
3. All the development functions relating to a district which are now performed by the State Governments should be placed under the Zilla parishad.
4. The term of Panchayati Raj institutions should be 4 years. Direct elections to these bodies should be held simultaneously.
5. Political parties could participate in the Panchayati Raj elections.
6. Elections to panchayati Raj bodies should be conducted by the Chief Electoral Officers of the States in consultation with the Election Commission.
7. Nyaya panchayats should be kept separate from the developmental panchayats. A qualified judge should preside over them and elected panches should act as members of benches of Nyaya panchayats.
8. Panchayati Raj bodies should normally not be superseded, but if supersession become necessary, election should be held within six months.
9. Representation of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in all Panchayati Raj bodies should be on the basis of their population.
10. There should be complete transfer of the land revenue collections to panchayati Raj institutions over a period of five year.
11. A permanent annual grant of not less than Rs.2.50 per capita should be made to the mandal panchayats.
12. The committee agreed to the need for some provision in the Constitution in order to provide the Panchayati Raj institutions the requisite status as well as assurance of continuous functioning, and wanted that this aspect should be considered.

Main Recommendations of G.V.K.Rao
Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions (1985)

1. Panchayati Raj Institutions have to be activated and given all the support needed so that they can become effective organizations for handling people's problems. Elections to these bodies should be held regularly.
2. The Committee recommended a 3-tier structure for Panchayati Raj Institutions.
3. The district should be the basic unit for policy planning and programme implementation. The Zilla Parishad should, therefore, become the principal body for management of all development programmes which can be handled at that level.
4. The President of the Zilla Parishad can be directly elected for a term co-terminus with the Zilla parishad or for one year each on the Mayoral Pattern. The work of the Zilla Parishad should be done by a number of Sub-Committees elected on the basis of the proportional representation so that participatory democracy could be developed and encouraged.
5. Panchayati Raj Institutions at the district level and below should be assigned important role in respect of planning, implementation and monitoring of rural development programmes.
6. The Committee recommends the introduction of the concept of district budget. It is desirable that it is brought into being as quickly as possible.
7. The concept of properly prepared district plan is reiterated. The preparation of a proper plan is a pre-requisite for having a process of development which will ensure that the poor are properly taken care of. All the development departments should clearly indicate the activities which they would undertake for assisting the poor.
8. The district plan should include all the resources available both in the plan and non-plan as well as institutional resources.

9. The Committee is of the view that development administration at the district level has to be treated as a major activity involving significant responsibilities and therefore, recommends that a post of District Development Commissioner (DDC) be created to look after and coordinate all the development activities in the district.

10. The DDC may be made the Chief Executive of the Zilla Parishad in those states where the Panchayati Raj institutions hold the responsibility for planning and implementation of various development programmes.

11. In those states where Zilla Parishad are not in position, the DDC could function as Chairman and Chief Executive of the District Development Council.

12. The office of the DDC should be of a higher status than that of the District Collector in order to establish the primary of the Development administration over maintenance administration.

13. The Committee recommends that the Block Development Office should be the sheet-anchor of the entire rural development process. For this purpose the status of this office should be upgraded. The Chief Executive Officer of the block/tehsil may be designated as Assistant Development Commissioner (ADC). The ADC should be an officer of the status of Sub-Divisional Officer.

14. The ADC should be a dynamic young person, preferably below the age of 35 and in any case not above 40. His background, training, managerial capability and motivation should be appropriate for the task as the leader of a team which will be incharge of all development functions in the block.

15. On the basis of certain criteria of population, area and terrain, average size of the block may be one lakh population in the plains and 50,000 population in the hilly and difficult terrain and tribal areas.

Main Recommendations of Dr.L.M.Singhvi
Committee for the Concept paper on
Panchayati Raj Institutions (1986)

1. Village may be reorganized and many of them may in the process be grouped and unlarged in order to make for more viable village panchayats.

2. The Panchayati Raj Institutions have to be viewed as institutions of self-government which would naturally facilitate the participation of the people in the process of planning and development flowing from and as part of the concept of self government. Development planning should be democratic planning.

3. The operational dynamics of Panchayati Raj should be directed to achieve community and social mobilization, transcending the barriers of caste, religion, sex and disparities of wealth and surmounting social disabilities and disadvantages.

4. Local self-government should be constitutionally recognised, protected and preserved by the inclusion of a new chapter in the Constitution.

5. A Panchayati Raj - Judicial Tribunal to be constituted in each State to adjudicate controversies in relation to elections, suspensions, supersessions, dissolutions, and other matters relating to the working of panchayati Raj institutions and its elected personnel.

6. Ways and means should be found to ensure the availability of adequate financial resources of Panchayati Raj Institutions to function effectively.

Main Recommendations of Thungon
Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions (1988)

1. Panchayati Raj bodies should be constitutionally recognized.
2. A three-tier structure for Panchayati Raj with Village Panchayat at the bottom, district panchayat at the top and mandal block panchayat in the middle, has been recommended where it does not already exist.
3. The Sub-Committee is in favour of a model with the Zilla Parishad as the only planning and development agency in the district.
4. The Sub-Committee also suggests the setting up of a Planning and Coordination Committee at the State level under the Chairmanship of the Planning Minister. Presidents of the Zilla Parishad would be members of the Committee.
5. The judicial functions of the village panchayat are required to be revived so that simple disputes can be sorted out at the village level itself.
6. The Committee has recommended that MPs and MLAs should be suitably associated with Zilla Parishad.
7. The elected member of the Zilla Parishad, in addition to members like MPs, MLAs, could as a general rule be 5 to 15 in areas with the population of less than 15 lakhs and 15 to 60 in areas with a population of over 15 lakhs.
8. As regards the procedure for the approval of the District Plan, it has been suggested that the District Planning and Coordination Committee at the Zilla Parishad should be well equipped and should be able to draw upon the latest technology including computer linking the district with the Divisional Headquarters and the State Capital with a two-way querying system.
9. The suitable constitutional provision be made to ensure timely and regular elections. The elections could be conducted by the Chief Electoral Officers of the State.
10. In case a local body does not function in accordance with law or grossly abuses its powers, it could be suspended or dissolved by the State Government.

After any dissolution, the State Government will have to bring a Resolution in the State Legislature before the end of the session or within six weeks of the commencement of the session whichever is earlier for approval by the House. In any case, a body should not be superseded for a period of more than six months.

11. The term of Panchayati Raj bodies should be for a period of 5 years. However, the State Government may choose the term depending upon their requirements but this term may not be less than 3 years.

12. It is recommended that a separate Panchayati Raj Judicial Tribunal should be appointed by the State Government to adjudicate controversies in matters which hamper the functioning of these institutions.

13. It is recommended that the system of reservation for all the three-tier of Panchayati Raj bodies should be as per population. In case of areas with the tribal population of more than 30%, the Chairman of the body should be a member from the Scheduled Tribes. Vice-Chairmanship of all the Panchayati Raj bodies should be reserved for a SC or ST member.

14. It is recommended that as a rule not less than two women should be members of Panchayati Raj bodies at each level. In case of bodies of small size with membership upto five there would be only one place reserved for a woman member.

15. Collector/DC should be the pivotal point for both regulatory as well as development administration. Collector should be the Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Parishad. The State Government should appoint officers of the rank of Additional Collectors to assist the Collector in development and regulatory administration respectively.

16. The Sub-Committee feels that a detailed list of subjects to be dealt with at the district level should be prepared and included in the corresponding schedule of the Constitution.

17. It is recommended that State Government should set up Finance Commissions to lay down the criteria and guidelines whereby resources would be allocated to the districts.

18. Funds should be allocated to the concerned departments like PWD, Irrigation, Public Health, Rural Water Supply, etc. through the Zilla Parishad.

19. The Sub-Committee envisage a District Budget where various schemes and projects required in a district are to be taken into account along with contingencies which have not figured in the district budget.

20. A Constitutional provision could be made whereby regular and timely elections to local bodies could be ensured and the various powers and functions of these bodies delineated.

21. The Sub-Committee recommends that the Government of India could also consider formulating a model Panchayat Act. The States could be requested to consider this model Act for adoption.

22. The Sub-Committee felt that the Government of India could also promote Panchayati Raj institutions by giving certain incentives to State Government, e.g. by way of increasing grants-in-aid with reference to financial and other powers devolved upon these institutions by the respective State Government.

23. The Central Government could organise training programmes for both officials and non-officials of local bodies so that they could be fully familiar with the potentialities of these bodies for development administration.

Source: Lok Sabha Unstarred question No.2809 of 1 December, 1988, cited in Parliamentary Research and Information Service, Seminar on Panchayati Raj, Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, August 4-5, 1989 pp 25-34.