

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
RURAL DEVELOPMENT
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3401
ANSWERED ON:20.03.2001
EMPOWERMENT OF GRAM SABHA
ANANDRAO ADSUL;M. CHINNASAMY

Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government propose to empower and encourage Gram Sabhas to mobilise its own resources;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether it is proposed to make the decisions of the Gram Sabhas binding on the Gram Panchayats;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) if not, the reasons therefor?

Answer

MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU)

(a) to (e): Panchayati Raj being a State subject, the State Governments are required to devolve powers and functions to Gram Sabhas through State Legislations/Government orders in accordance with the provisions of Part - IX of the Constitution. While under the Tenth Finance Commission award grants to Panchayati Raj Institutions were linked with the contribution by the local bodies, the Central Government have also taken the following steps to empower Gram Sabhas: -

- (i) The Central Government declared the year 1999-2000 as the `Year of Gram Sabha`.
- (ii) The State Governments/Union Territory Administrations have been advised to ensure that the Gram Sabhas meet atleast once in every quarter, preferably on 26th January, 1st May, 15th August and 2nd October.
- (iii) A letter was also addressed to all the Sarpanches/Pradhans of Gram Panchayats to hold the Gram Sabha Meetings atleast once in a quarter so that the Gram Sabhas can come up with action oriented and time bound plans for all-round development of the village in an integrated way.
- (iv) The Chief Ministers/Administrators of States/UTs were requested to initiate, inter-alia, the following measures to empower Gram Sabhas: -
 - a) vest powers in the Gram Sabha giving them powers of ownership, management and control over natural resources, as envisaged in the provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act 1996;
 - b) Gram Sabhas should have full powers for determining the priorities for various programmes;
 - c) Panchayats should be accountable to the Gram Sabha in unequivocal terms;
 - d) members of Gram Sabhas be made aware of their powers and responsibilities and steps should be taken to ensure mass participation, particularly of SCs/STs and women;
 - e) The Gram Sabha should have the powers to evolve its own procedure to carry out social audit of development programmes.
- (v) The guidelines of the Rural Development Programmes such as the Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY), the Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY) & the Swaranjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) also envisage the role of Gram Sabha in selection of beneficiaries. The Gram Sabha is also authorized to approve works to be undertaken under the JGSY.