

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
PANCHAYATI RAJ
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1528
ANSWERED ON:09.12.2004
POWERS TO GRAM SABHA
Rawat Shri Kamla Prasad

Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is contemplating to delegate more powers to Gram Sabhas so as to strengthen the Panchayati Raj;
- (b) if so, whether any proposal for modifying the Panchayati Raj System is under the consideration of the Government;
- (c) if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether the Government is contemplating to extend the scope of Panchayati Raj Institutions;
- (e) if so, the details thereof; and
- (f) if not, the reason therefor?

Answer

MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR)

(a), (b) & (c), During the Conference of Chief Ministers and State Ministers in charge of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj on Poverty Alleviation and Rural Prosperity through Panchayati Raj held at New Delhi on 29-30 June, 2004, jointly organized by the Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Panchayati Raj, the Conference decided to hold seven Round Table Conferences to formulate a draft action plan for achieving the objectives of strengthening of Panchayati Raj Institutions to enable them to become true institutions of self-government for the implementation of programme of economic development and social justice, as envisioned in the Constitution. Six Round Table Conferences have already been held. In the first Round Table Conference held at Kolkata on 24-25 July, 2004 the subject of Gram Sabhas was discussed. The resolution passed by the Ministers in charge of Panchayati Raj and their representatives for recommending to their respective Governments for joint acceptance by the Centre and the States in respect of Gram Sabha is enclosed as Annex.

(d), (e) & (f) Six Round Table Conferences have already been held and the seventh Round Table Conference is scheduled from 17th-19th December 2004 at Jaipur. In these Round Table Conferences all the aspects to strengthen the Panchayati Raj Institutions have been discussed. These resolutions are proposed to be unanimously adopted by the Ministers of Panchayati Raj on 19th December, 2004 at Jaipur and thereafter these resolutions will be discussed during the meeting of the Chief Ministers scheduled to be held in early next year, in which these resolutions will be jointly accepted by the Centre and the States. After the acceptance of these resolutions it is expected that the scope of Panchayati Raj Institutions will get enhanced considerably.

FIRST ROUND TABLE OF MINISTERS-IN-CHARGE OF PANCHAYATI RAJ - KOLKATA.

24-25TH July. 2004

Gram Sabhas :

I) Article 243-A of Part IX of the Constitution provides for the establishment of Gram Sabhas to `exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide`;

II) A strong system of Gram Sabhas is the indispensable foundation of good governance through Panchayati Raj;

III) Based on the two principles stated above, State Governments may review the extant legislation to determine the legislative and other steps which remain to be taken to ensure that the `powers` and `functions` mentioned in Article 243A of the Constitution are adequately incorporated in the State legislation. In particular, the following points may be examined :-

(i) The need for constituting Sabhas below the Gram level (such as Gram Sansad, Upa-Gram Sabha or Ward Sabha, by whatever

name called) with the aim of ensuring that the adult population in each ward is given the opportunity of conveying to the Gram Sabha their views on issues coming up for consideration as also holding the elected Ward representative responsible to the adult population in each Ward;

(ii) The periodicity of meetings of Gram Sabhas and Ward Sabhas;

(iii) Provision for full and satisfactory consultation with special or disadvantaged categories of the population, such as women, SC/ST, landless labourer etc;

(iv) Provision for Mahila Sabha meetings, comprising all the adult women of a Ward/Gram Panchayat area, to deliberate upon and decide the modalities of expressing their views in the Gram/Ward Sabhas;

(v) Endowing the Gram/Ward Sabha with meaningful empowerment through such measures as :

(a) Right/entitlement to all the information required for the Gram/Ward Sabhas to contribute to transparent and good governance, as well as to make the elected Panchayat truly answerable to the Gram/Ward Sabha;

(b) Approve before implementation commences, plans and programmes (including budgets) for economic development and social justice prepared by the Gram Panchayat;

(c) Authorize the issuance of utilization certificates of funds allocated for the plans, projects or programmes of the Panchayat;

(d) Identification of beneficiaries.

(vi) Such social audit measures may also be appropriately institutionalized at the Block and District level.