

GS II

SYLLABUS: DEVOLUTION OF POWERS AND FINANCES TO LOCAL LEVELS; CHALLENGES THEREIN.

LOCAL BODIES

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 6.

News: "Local Power."

Importance of Panchayat System in India:

- **Grassroots Democracy:** 73rd Amendment Act (1992) gives citizens direct access to governance. As of 2020, there are around 2.6 lakh gram panchayats—Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR).
- **Accountability and responsibility:** India holds elections every five years, electing over 3 million Panchayat representatives. Of these, approximately 1.3 million are women (MoPR data).
 - **Social Audits:** Eg. MGNREGA mandates social audits at the Gram Sabha level, reinforcing accountability.
- **Women's Empowerment:** 73rd CAA mandates at least one-third reservation for women in Panchayats. Several States voluntarily increased this quota to 50%.
- **State Election Commission:** appointed by State govt. responsible for Panchayat Raj Elections.
- **Appointing State Finance Commission:** by State govt. (once in 5 yrs) to examine financial position of local bodies & distribution of revenues b/w state & of local Govt & b/w local govt. & urban local govt.
- **Implementation of Govt. Schemes:** Panchayats serve as nodal points for flagship programs like MGNREGA, Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY-Gramin), etc.
- **Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDP):** Introduced in 2015, GPDP emphasizes participatory planning, thereby allowing Panchayats to shape and execute projects aligned with local priorities.

Sources of Funding for Panchayats:

- **Grants from State Govt & Finance commission:** 15th Finance Commission has allocated significant grants to Panchayats.
- **Local Taxes and Levies:**
 - Property Tax and Building Fees, Market fees (Haats, weekly markets etc), water cess, sanitation charges etc.
- **Public Private partnership:** Certain Panchayats in Karnataka have collaborated with private players to reduce the need for large upfront public investment in rural water supply projects—NITI Aayog Case studies.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Funding.**
- **Philanthropic Organisations:** NGOs, trusts etc may offer grants for education, healthcare, etc.
- **International Funding and aid:** Organisations like the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, or UN agencies occasionally fund rural development projects Eg. World Bank funding road project in rural Odisha.

Challenges with functioning of Panchayats:

- **Functions:**
 - **Corruption and resource constraints** in schemes implementation.
 - **Absence of updated computer systems**, uninterrupted Internet connection etc.

P.T.O

- **SHGs, NGOs competing elected gram sabha** in addressing local challenges creating rift between elected and non elected bodies.
- **Frequent postpone of elections** Eg. In *Suresh Mahajan vs State of Madhya Pradesh*, the Supreme Court ruled that the delimitation of wards can't be a valid reason for the State Election Commission to fail to notify the elections.
- **Funds:**
 - Delay in formation of State finance commission.
 - Only 0.6% of GDP allocated to panchayats—Budget 2024.
 - Their total revenue own revenues less than 50% & allocated funds are delayed & rising dependence on State & Central govt. grants—IIHS report.
- **Functionaries:**
 - **Poor attendance** of Women representatives.
 - **Skill gap:** with elected representatives and bureaucrats.
 - **Overlap functions:** Sarpanch and Secretary.
 - **Voluntary nature of provisions to transfer from 11th schedule:** Eg. Reservations, Devolution of powers, Financial powers etc.
 - **State neglecting Gram sabha role:** Eg: Tamil Nadu failed to consult the gram sabha on the 8-line Highway and the Hydrocarbon project.
 - **Governmental indifference:** Conflict b/w elected opposition & ruling party at State level.

Recommendations: Venugopal Committee 2018.

- **Poor attendance:** Quorum should be fixed by State govt.
- **Transfer of subjects:** Ministry should pursue States to devolve subjects to LBs.
- **Funds:** State govt. should pay interest on delays. Stop funds to local bodies whose accounts are not audited.
- **Capacity Building:** Center & State should support for better GPDPs & service quality.
- **Support staff:** severe lack of support staff affecting the service delivery (Eg: Data entry operators, secretary etc).
- **Roles:** of Sarpanch, panchs, secretary should be clearly defined.
- **Best Practices:** Rajasthan in 2023 empowered its panchayats to take up livelihood programmes like poverty alleviation, Education, health etc.

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PYQs

GS II 2018: What Assess the importance of Panchayat system in India as a part of local govt. Apart from government grants, what sources the Panchayats can look out for financing developmental projects.

GS II 2017: "The local self-government system in India has not proved to be effective instrument of governance". Critically examine the statement and give your views to improve the situation.

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DISASTER MANAGEMENT

PRE-CONTEXT

DISASTER RESPONSE FUNDS

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 8.

News: "Centre allows Kerala to use SDRF funds for Wayanad rehabilitation."

State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF):

- It is the **primary fund available with State Governments** for responses to **notified disasters**.
- SDRF constituted under of the **Disaster Management Act, 2005**.
- **The Central Government contributes 75% of SDRF allocation** for general category States/UTs and 90% for special category States/UTs.
- The annual Central contribution is released in two equal instalments as per the **recommendation of the Finance Commission**.
- **SDRF shall be used only** for meeting the expenditure for providing **immediate relief to the victims**.
- **Notified Disaster (s) covered under SDRF:** Cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloudburst, pest attack, frost and cold waves.
 - **A State Govt. may use up to 10 percent of the funds** under SDRF for providing immediate relief to the victims of natural disasters that they consider to be 'disasters' within the **local context** in the State and **which are not included in the notified list of disasters of the Ministry of Home Affairs**.

The National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF):

- Constituted under **Disaster Management Act, 2005**, supplements SDRF of a State, in case of a disaster of severe nature, provided adequate funds are not available in SDRF.
- The **entire contribution to NDRF comes from the Central Govt**.
- **Additional source of funding to NDRF, grants from any person or institution** for the purpose of disaster management in the NDRF.

National Disaster Mitigation Fund (NDMF) & State Disaster Mitigation Fund (SDMF):

- **Recommended by 15th Finance Commission**.
- The Government has allocated funds **exclusively for disaster risk mitigation** at both the national and state levels for the first time.
 - Central Govt has allocated Rs. 13,000 crore for the NDMF and Rs. 32,000 crore for SDMF for the period 2021-22 to 2025-26.
- **Central Govt. contributes 75% for all States** (90% for North-Eastern and Himalayan States) as Centre share in SDMF.

National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF) and State Disaster Risk Management Fund (SDRMF):

- As 15th Finance Commission has recommended the creation of funds for disaster mitigation along with disaster response, which will **now together be called National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF)** and State Disaster Risk Management Funds (SDRMF).
- **NDRMF will consist of NDRF & NDMF, and similarly SDRMF will consist of SDRF and SDMF**.

Note: Role of Finance Commission: Allocation of disaster related funds i.e SDRF and NDRF.

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CULTURE

PRE-CONTEXT

GI TAGS

THE HINDU, PG.NO: 4.

News: "President's invite for 'At Home' to honour crafts from South."

GI Tags in News:

- **Pochampally Ikat on a pencil pouch: Telangana**.
 - It is known for its distinct geometric patterns and bold colours.
- **Etikoppaka Toys: Andhra Pradesh**.
 - The softwood and lacquer toys valued for the use of Natural dyes and themes depicting everyday life.
- **Kalamkari on bamboo: Andhra Pradesh**.
 - Kalamkari Motifs, pen drawn with natural dyes.
- **Kanchipuram silk as a pouch: TamilNadu**.
 - Handloom silk, world renown for its richness and elegance.
 - Kanchipuram sarees, woven from pure mulberry silk, are found in myriad colours. These sarees have borders and pallu in a contrasting colour with heavy gold weaving.

Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act, 1999:

- India enacted **GI Goods Act, 1999** in order to **comply with the obligations to WTO**.
- Act oversees the **registration and protection** of GI products.
- Act calls for establishment of the **Geographical Indications Registry**.
- Duration of protection for GI products is **10 years** but can be renewed indefinitely.
- **Only the authorised users or those residing in the geographical territory are allowed to use the popular product name**.
- **Violation of GI rights attracts civil and criminal penalties**.
- **GI registration is overseen by** the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (**DPIIT**) **under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.

Other:

- Under **Paris Convention** for the **Protection of Industrial Property**, Geographical Indications are covered as an element of IPRs.
- They are also covered under Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (**TRIPS Agreement of WTO**).

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Thank you!