

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

**(2020-2021)**

**12**

**SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA**

**MINISTRY OF PANCHAYATI RAJ**

*[Action taken on the Observations/recommendations contained in Sixth Report on  
'Demands for Grants (2020-21) pertaining to Ministry of Panchayati Raj.]*

**TWELFTH REPORT**



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT**

**NEW DELHI**

# TWELFTH REPORT

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

(2020-2021)

(SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA)

### MINISTRY OF PANCHAYATI RAJ

*[Action taken on the Observations/recommendations contained in Sixth Report on 'Demands for Grants (2020-21) pertaining to Ministry of Panchayati Raj.]*

Presented to Lok Sabha on 12.02.2021

Laid in Rajya Sabha on 12.02.2021



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT

NEW DELHI

*February, 2021/ Magha, 1942 (Saka)*

CRD No 166

*Price : Rs.*

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Published under Rule 382 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha (\_\_\_\_ Edition) and  
Printed by \_\_\_\_\_.

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**COMPOSITION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
(2020-2021)**

**Shri Prataprao Jadhav -- Chairperson**

**MEMBERS  
Lok Sabha**

2. Shri Sisir Kumar Adhikari
3. Shri C. N. Annadurai
4. Shri A.K.P Chinraj
5. Shri Rajveer Diler
6. Shri Vijay Kumar Dubey
7. Shri Sukhbir Singh Jaunapurua
8. Dr. Mohammad Jawed
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10. Shri Nalin Kumar Kateel
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13. Shri B.Y. Raghavendra
14. Shri Talari Rangaiah
15. Smt. Gitaben Vajesingbhai Rathva
16. Smt. Mala Rajya Laxmi Shah
17. Shri Vivek Narayan Shejwalkar
18. Shri Brijbhushan Sharan Singh
19. Shri K. Sudhakaran
20. Dr. Alok Kumar Suman
21. Shri Shyam Singh Yadav

**Rajya Sabha**

22. Shri Manas Ranjan Bhunia
23. Shri Shamsheer Singh Dullo
24. Shri Iranna Kadadi
25. Dr. Wanweiroy Kharlukhi
26. Shri Sujeet Kumar
27. Shri Nazir Ahmed Laway
28. Shri K. P. Munusamy
29. Shri Naranbhai J. Rathwa
30. Shri Ram Shakal
31. Shri Ajay Pratap Singh

- |    |                     |   |                     |
|----|---------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1. | Shri D. R. Shekhar  | - | Joint Secretary     |
| 2. | Shri S. Chatterjee  | - | Director            |
| 3. | Smt. Emma C. Barwa  | - | Additional Director |
| 4. | Shri Nagendra Suman | - | Under Secretary     |

## INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Rural Development (2020-2021) having been authorised by the Committee to present the Report on their behalf, present the 12<sup>th</sup> Report on the action taken by the Government on the recommendations contained in the Sixth Report of the Standing Committee on Rural Development (17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants (2020-21) of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.

2. The Sixth Report was presented to the Lok Sabha on 03.03.2020 and was laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha on the same date. Replies of the Government to all the recommendations contained in the Report were received on 29.05.2020.

3. The Report was considered and adopted by the Committee at their sitting held on 27.10.2020.

4. An analysis of the action taken by the Government on the recommendations contained in the Sixth Report (17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha) of the Committee is given in **Appendix-II**.

NEW DELHI;  
10 February, 2021  
21 Magha, 1942 (Saka)

PRATAPRAO JADHAV  
*Chairperson,*  
Standing Committee on Rural Development

## CHAPTER I

### REPORT

This Report of the Standing Committee on Rural Development (2019-20) deals with the action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in their Second Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2020-21) pertaining to Ministry of Panchayati Raj'.

2. The Sixth Report was presented to Lok Sabha on 03 March, 2020 and was laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha on the same date. The Report contained 10 Observations/Recommendations.

3. Action Taken Notes in respect of all the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Report have been received from the Government. These have been examined and categorized as follows:-

(i) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government: Serial Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10

Total:08

**Chapter-II**

(ii) Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of replies of the Government : Serial No. NIL

Total : 00

**Chapter-III**

(iii) Observation/Recommendation in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee : Serial Nos. 5 & 9

Total:02

**Chapter-IV**

(iv) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which final replies of the Government are still awaited: Serial No. NIL

Total:NIL

**Chapter-V**

4. The Committee desire that Final Action Taken Notes on the Observations/ recommendations contained in Chapter I of this Report may be furnished to the Committee within three months of the presentation of this Report.

5. The Committee will now deal with action taken by the Government on some of their Observations/Recommendations that require reiteration or merit comments.

**(Recommendation Serial No. 5, Para 2.6)**

**Mission Mode Project on e-Panchayat**

6. The Committee observe that e-Panchayat is one of the Mission Mode Projects (MMP) under Digital India Programme. e-Panchayat seeks to transform the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) making them more transparent, accountable and effective as organs of Decentralized Self-Governing Institutions. The Committee, however, take a serious note of the fact that 83,761 Gram Panchayats which constitutes 32.49% of the total number of Gram Panchayats are without Computers. Furthermore, available computers are lying idle in many of the Gram Panchayats in the absence of internet or power connectivity. The Committee though endorse that Rs.20 crore allocated for the current fiscal year for several new initiatives incorporating enhancements and development works including training, the idea of e-Panchayats envisioned, is impossible to achieve in the absence of Computers, trained manpower, internet and power connectivity. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that all Gram Panchayats of the States/UTs may be equipped with adequate number of computers, trained manpower, internet connectivity and un-interrupted power supply so as to enable them to achieve objective of mission mode projects under Digital India programme to transform functioning of Panchayati Raj Institution.

7. The Ministry in their Action Taken Reply have stated as under:-

“Under the flagship scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA); the Ministry supports States/UTs on a limited scale for provision of computer, UPS and printer under the component of e-enablement of Panchayats wherein computer hardware cannot be accessed through other schemes.

For ensuring internet connectivity, the Ministry would like to submit that the Mission Mode on e-Panchayat is dependent on the roll-out of BharatNet which seeks to connect all the Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the country. The Ministry is in touch with the Department of Telecommunication for rolling out internet connectivity to the

remaining GPs. At present, there are 1.5 lakh GPs where the Optical Fiber Cables (OFC) are laid of which 1.38 lakh GPs which are OFC connected with equipment installed. Further, to ensure all the Government services are accessible to the rural populace, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) exists between MoPR and CSC e-Governance Services Ltd to encourage cooperation between Common Service Centres (CSCs) and Gram Panchayats for the creation of Digital Panchayats. Ministry has sanctioned 1821 in 2018-19 and 13127 in 2019-2020 co-location of CSCs in Panchayat Bhawans to States/UTs.

Ministry on the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2020 has launched eGram Swaraj – a Simplified Work Based Accounting Application for Panchayati Raj. This application is envisaged to bring in transparency in the decentralised planning, progress reporting and work-based accounting. Trainings have been provided to State(s) on the Application. In the current COVID-19 scenario, several online training sessions have been organized by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj on eGram Swaraj.”

**(O.M. No. H-11013 (25)/3/2020-Parl. Dated: 27May, 2020)**

### **COMMENTS OF THE COMMITTEE**

**8. The Committee in their earlier recommendation had stated that all Gram Panchayats of the States/UT should be equipped with adequate number of computers, trained manpower, internet connectivity and uninterrupted power supply so as to enable them to achieve objective of mission mode projects under Digital India programme to transform functioning of Panchayati Raj Institution. In this regard, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj in their Action Taken Reply have stated that Mission Mode on e-Panchayat is dependent on the roll-out of BharatNet which seeks to connect all the Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the country. Also, at present, there are 1.5 lakh GPs where the Optical Fiber Cables (OFC) are laid out of which 1.38 lakh GPs are OFC connected with the equipment installed. Further, to ensure all the Government services are accessible to the rural populace, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been undertaken between MoPR and Common service centre(CSC) e-Governance Services Ltd to encourage cooperation between CSCs and Gram Panchayats for the creation of Digital Panchayats. Also, the**

Ministry has sanctioned 1821 in 2018-19 and 13127 in 2019-2020 co-location of CSCs in Panchayat Bhawans to States/UTs. However, the Committee are unhappy to observe that the progress on providing optical fiber connectivity and opening of Common Service Centres (CSCs) in rural areas is quite slow and not much progress has been made in this regard. The Committee, therefore, feel that more steps are needed to be taken to encourage cooperation between Common Service Centres (CSCs) and Gram Panchayats for the creation of Digital Panchayat sand also to lay down Optical Fiber Cables(OFCs) in the rural areas.The Committee strongly reiterates that the Ministry should adopt a holistic and efficient approach of converting all gram panchayats into e-panchayats. The Committee also recommends that the Ministry should take necessary steps to encourage State/UTs to take more efforts to convert all Gram Panchayats in the country into Digital Panchayats. The Committee also places emphasis on assured availability of trained manpower, internet connectivity and continuous power supply for smooth functioning of the Digital Panchayats. The Committee, further observed that the Ministry on the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2020 had launched 'eGram Swaraj – a Simplified Work Based Accounting Application' for Panchayati Raj. This application is envisaged to bring in transparency in the decentralized planning, progress reporting and work-based accounting. Further, in the current COVID-19 scenario, several online training sessions have been organized by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj on eGram Swaraj. The Committee, therefore, earnestly hope that eGram Swaraj accounting application will be adopted by all the Gram Panchayats in the country at the earliest for better serving of the rural populace of the country.

## **(Recommendation Serial No. 9, Para 2.9)**

### **Action Research and Research Studies**

9. The Committee note that since launch of the re-structured RGSA, eight studies on various aspects of the scheme have been initiated. The areas of study include, Economic development and income generation through Panchayats, Impact Assessment of training of PRIs, Gender responsive initiatives for PRIs and their impact, Public feedback on role and effectiveness of Gram Sabha and role of Gram Panchayats in marketing of rural produce in Mizoram, Utilisation and impact evaluation of Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC) Grants to Gram Panchayats etc. Of these, study on “Economic Development and Income Generation through Panchayats in Rural Areas” has been completed. Draft Reports on “Impact Assessment of Training of PRIs” and “Time and Work Study for PRI functionaries in India” have been submitted and are under examination. Draft Reports on the remaining five studies are due for submission in March 2020. Furthermore, the Ministry is in the process of conducting a fresh study to identify new sources of revenue for the Panchayats i.e., “To Assess the availability of resources for creating the assets and initiatives taken for generating various own sources of revenue” proposed to be conducted by National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), New Delhi. The Committee are satisfied with the efforts undertaken by the Ministry to assess the impact of the restructured scheme on the PRIs and the rural populace. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry continue their efforts to objectively analyze the effectiveness of the schemes. They should earnestly incorporate the findings of the Study Report on the aspect of economic development and income generation through Panchayats in Rural Areas and simultaneously expedite examination of the two Draft Reports which cover important aspects of “Training of PRIs” and “Time and Work Study for PRI functionaries”. The Committee may be informed in brief about the outcome of the studies and effective suggestions/feedback given to the Government for improvement.

10. The Ministry in their Action Taken Reply have stated as under:-

“The Ministry is in the process of examination of these two reports. The Hon’ble Committee will be informed about the outcome of the studies after finalization of the actionable points emerged from the findings of these studies.”

**(O.M. No. H-11013 (25)/3/2020-Parl. Dated: 27 May, 2020)**

### **COMMENTS OF THE COMMITTEE**

11. The Committee during examination of Demands for Grants(2020-21) of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj had observed that of the 08 studies initiated since launching of the re-structured Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA), 01 was completed, drafts of 02 studies were under examination and drafts on 05 remaining studies were to be submitted in March 2020. Further, a separate study to identify new sources of revenue was proposed to be conducted by National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), Delhi. The Committee, therefore, had recommended that the Ministry should continue their efforts to objectively analyze the effectiveness of the schemes. They should earnestly incorporate the findings of the study report on the aspect of economic development and income generation through Panchayats in Rural Areas and simultaneously expedite examination of the two Draft Reports which cover important aspects of “Training of PRIs” and “Time and Work Study for PRI functionaries’. In this regard, the Ministry in their action taken replies have merely intimated that examination of the two reports has not yet been completed and outcome of the other studies shall be communicated after finalization of the actionable points emerging from the findings of these studies. Further, neither details of the completed study nor information on the other studies under different stages has been shared leading to an assumption of a status quo despite lapse of around six months period since submission of material for examination of the Demands for Grants (2020-21). The Committee, therefore, taking strong exception on the approach adopted by the Ministry on an important head of “Action Research and Research Studies”, reiterate that completion of all the pending studies may be expedited without extensions and earnest efforts should be made to incorporate the

**findings of the completed Studies. The Committee may be informed about the outcome of the studies and effective suggestions/feedback given to the Government for improvement.**

## CHAPTER II

### RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

#### Recommendation (Serial No. 1 & 2)

#### **Demands for Grants for 2020-21**

Demands for Grants for 2020-21 The Committee note that the detailed Demands for Grants (2019-20) of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj under demand No. 71 were laid in Lok Sabha on 04 February 2020. The total allocation for Ministry of Panchayati Raj is Rs.900.94 crore for 2020-21 (BE), out of which Rs.867.73 crore is for schemes and Rs.33.21 crore for non-scheme (Secretariat Service). The overall allocation to the Ministry of 2020-21 (BE) is about 3.39% higher than the allocation of 2019-20 (BE). The Committee have examined in detail the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj for the year 2020-21. The Observations/Recommendations of the Committee are detailed in succeeding paragraphs.

#### **Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)**

The Committee note that the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has been implementing a restructured Centrally Sponsored scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) from 2018-19 and the major portion of the allocation is earmarked for this scheme. The scope under the restructured RGSA has increased manifold. The scheme now includes institutions of Rural Local Government in Non- Part IX areas where Panchayats do not exist in addition to all Part IX areas. Apart from training of stakeholders of District, Block and Village Panchayat etc, handholding for Academic Institutions for GPDP formulation and assistance for development of Panchayat Learning Centres have been newly incorporated. Three new activities have been also been incorporated which include collaboration with Academic Institutions, Administrative and Financial Data Analysis and Gap Funding for micro projects. In this regard, the Committee observe that the meager increase of 5.7% and 3.7% in the allocation from 2018-19 onwards does not commensurate with the manifold increase in the scope and functions of the restructured RGSA. The Committee further note with concern that the allocation at RE stage during 2018-19 which stood at Rs.622.41 crore was reduced to Rs.432.96 crore during 2019-20 resulting in a decline of 30.44%. This warrants immediate intervention of the Ministry to

accomplish the objectives envisaged by the Government. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that Ministry of Panchayati Raj should insist on higher allocation of funds and devise a roadmap for proper utilization of funds so that there is no scope of under utilization thereby enhancing the implementation process. The Committee, also desire that the Ministry revisit their approach and devise ways and means to plug in loop-holes so that allocated budget is pragmatically utilized and no scope is left for reduction of budget at RE stage.

### **Reply of the Government**

Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) was launched in 2018-19 with the primary aim of strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with main thrust on convergence with Mission Antyodaya and emphasis on strengthening PRIs in 117 Aspirational Districts. There are several components of this scheme and the most important component is the Capacity Building & Training (CB&T) of Elected Representatives (ERs) Panchayat Functionaries (PFs) and other stakeholders of PRIs across the country. During the year 2018-19, the BE allocation for RGSA was to the tune of Rs.720.80 crore and RE allocation was to the tune of Rs.622.41 crore. Total expenditure in 2018-19 was to the tune of Rs.598.27 crore. For the Financial year 2019-20 provision in BE was Rs.762.34 crore. Since the effort of the Ministry has always been to put its best for the optimum utilization of funds, therefore, for the Financial year 2019-20, the Annual Action Plans (AAPs), received from States/UTs under RGSA for 2019-20 were critically appraised and got approved by the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) of RGSA in February 2019 itself to provide States/UTs full year for implementing the approved activities from the very beginning of April 2019. States were requested to formulate a well structured calendar of activities for implementing their AAPs to avoid rush of expenditure towards the close of Financial year 2019-20. Expenditure in 2019-20, which was low in initial quarter due to unspent balance of previous year available with States/UTs, picked up after constant follow up with them *inter alia* requesting them for liquidating their unspent balance etc. In view of this, funds to the tune of Rs.406.22 crore were released to States/UTs till December 2019 which included Rs.258.33 crore releases in October and November 2019. Keeping in view the trend of expenditure and the likely demand from States, it was expected that the BE provision of 2019-20 would be fully utilized and, therefore, the Ministry of Finance was requested to maintain BE allocation in the RE 2019-20 also. However, perhaps the allocation was reduced to Rs.432.96 crore at RE Level taking into account the expenditure till second quarter.

For 2020-21 there is a slight increase in the budgetary provision for the scheme, which is to the tune of Rs.790.53 crore. This increase is obviously taking into account the projected requirements of fund for activities in 2020-21 as well as for the activities that were

meant to be undertaken/completed in 2019-20. During 2020-21 also the main focus will be on the activities related to CB&T of RGSA which is to evolve as a sophisticated customized resource for graduated CB&T for PRIs and their stakeholders. Digital literacy of these stakeholders will also be a prominent element of CB&T. Activities related to CB&T are specifically aimed to, mobilise, educate and transform Ward Members or Panchs into Sectoral resource persons with a clear role and transform them into agents of change *inter alia* for planning, implementing and monitoring of the schemes of States, Centre etc. States/UTs will clearly incorporate the proposal for CB&T of Ward Members/Sectoral Resource Persons in their AAPs for 2020-21. Besides, for CB&T there will be continued emphasis on SHG-PRI Convergence and their joint training.

In this context, it is worthwhile to mention that despite the adverse prevailing situation in the country due to COVID-19 pandemic, the AAP of 10 states for 2020-21 have been approved in April, 2020 and it is expected that AAPs of remaining states will be approved by the end of May, 2020. States have been categorically advised to release their matching share, liquidate unspent balances and submit the requisite documents viz Utilization Certificate etc. for release of funds to the maximum extent. The States have also been advised to prioritise activities and realign strategy in the changed scenario and ensure that the approved activities are implemented by optimum utilisation of funds. In view of the prevailing situation and also maximum coverage and outreach, the States have been asked to observe social distancing in all CB&T programs and promote distance learning mode for trainings as far as possible. The States have also been asked to submit the Quarterly Progress Reports to monitor progress of implementation. Through this multipronged approach, it is expected that allocated funds will be fully utilized. Further in case, it is felt that additional funds will be required for certain other requisite/ urgent activities under any component of RGSA, efforts will be made to obtain the same at the time of RE 2020-21 or through Supplementary Demand.

**O.M. No. H-11013 (25)/3/2020-Parl. Dated: 27May, 2020)**

**Recommendation (Serial No. 3)**

**Capacity Building & Training (CB&T)**

The Committee note that Capacity Building & Training (CB&T) being an important and complex task involving various Panchayat Functionaries viz. Panchayat Development Officers, Secretaries, Accountants, water pump operators etc., Departmental Officials that work with Panchayats, Gram Sabha or citizens including Elected Representatives, etc. requires utmost attention of the Ministry. The Ministry needs to invigorate the process further and accordingly guide the States/UTs, to reach out to the remotest part of the Country so that the benefits reach to all the far-flung Panchayati Raj Institutions for

enabling them to deliver on basic services in an efficient manner. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that the Ministry of Panchayati Raj should take steps for effective capacity building of PRIs in the country especially in the poor and backward regions of the country. The Committee also hope that the Ministry of Panchayati Raj would make judicious and full utilization of the enhanced budgetary allocation of Rs.790.53 crore in the current financial year and train maximum number of different stake-holders of Panchayats and Panchayati Raj Institutions.

### **Reply of the Government**

One of the primary aims of the schemes of Ministry of Panchayati Raj is strengthening the PRIs and other stakeholders through their CB&T. In this context, the RGSA has been contributing immensely towards this aim of the Ministry. RGSA had been formulated with the intention of strengthening PRIs for achieving SDGs with main thrust on convergence with Mission Antyodaya and emphasis on strengthening PRIs in 117 Aspirational Districts which cover broadly the Panchayats in poor and backward regions of the country. The necessity of effective CB&T of PRIs and their stakeholders is obviously essential for achieving the aims. As already submitted, the scheme of RGSA is to evolve as a sophisticated, customized resource for graduated CB&T for all the stakeholders, as mentioned in the above recommendation of the committee, including those belonging to Panchayats in poor and backward regions of the country. As already submitted above for CB&T, the scheme of RGSA intends to mobilise, educate and transform Ward Members or Panchs into Sectoral Resource Persons with a clear role and thus greater influence to transform them into agents of change. Besides activities under RGSA related to CB&T, will also focus on digital literacy of PRIs and their stakeholders, SHG-PRIs Convergence through joint training, need based training for formulation of Gram Panchayat Development Plans and their implementation. It will, thus be seen that the intensive and comprehensive CB&T envisaged under RGSA as indicated above will make PRIs and their stakeholders contribute immensely to the all round change in the rural areas, including for economic development, throughout the country by way of planning, implementation and monitoring of schemes of Centre and States including in the poor and backward regions of the country.

As regards utilization of allocated budget, as brought out above, the AAP of 10 States for 2020-21 have been approved in April,2020 and it is expected that AAPs of remaining States will be approved by the end of May, 2020 despite the adverse prevailing situation in the country due COVID-19 pandemic. The States have been categorically advised to release their matching share, liquidate unspent balances and submit the requisite documents viz UCs etc. for release of funds to the maximum extent. The States have also been advised to prioritise their activities and realign their strategy in the changed scenario and ensure that the approved activities are implemented by optimum

utilisation of funds. In view of the prevailing situation and also maximum coverage and outreach, the States have been asked to promote distance learning mode for trainings etc. The States have also been asked to submit the Quarterly Progress Reports so that the progress of implementation in the States/UTs is monitored intensively. Through this multipronged approach, it is expected that allocated funds will be optimally utilized.

**O.M. No. H-11013 (25)/3/2020-Parl. Dated: 27May, 2020)**

**Recommendation (Serial No. 4)**

**Shortage of Panchayat Bhavans**

The Committee during the course of evidence note with concern about the huge shortage of Panchayat Bhavans in the Country. The Secretary, MoPR while clarifying on the issue, pointed out that around 59,657 Gram Panchayats were without Panchayat Bhavans. Fifty percent of such Gram Panchayats were in Uttar Pradesh. The Committee were distressed to find that 23.13% of Gram Panchayats are still without Panchayat Bhavans.

The Committee were further apprised that the capacity of funding under RGSA to States Governments for infrastructure is limited. However, the funds could be utilized through convergence under MGNREGA as construction of Gram Panchayat Bhawans has been notified as one of the permissible activities under MGNREGA. The Ministry, in this regard, is also exploring the idea of funding from the revenue from minerals in consultation with the Ministry of Mines. The Committee has therefore, time and again directed the Ministry to devise a time bound plan to achieve the goal in a holistic manner. The Committee also recommend that the guidelines on the subject may be updated to include other sources of revenue for development of assets relating to infrastructure and State Governments may be advised to ensure that each Gram Panchayat should necessarily have its own Panchayat Bhawan. The Committee hope that the Ministry will earnestly strive for achieving goal of Panchayat Bhawans in all Gram Panchayats of the Country.

**Reply of the Government**

Ministry of Panchayati Raj is sincerely seized of the issue of shortages of Gram Panchayat Bhawans (GPBs) which are essentially required for Gram Panchayats to enable them discharge their mandated duties efficiently, particularly the effective delivery of services to the people in the respective areas of PRIs. Concern about this shortage had been expressed at various fora also. Since the construction of GPBs is primarily the

responsibility of States/UTs, it has been repeatedly stressed upon them for according priority to provide Gram Panchayats their own building. However, efforts to varying degrees had been made by this Ministry also under its various schemes to provide assistance to States/UTs for construction of GPBs. It is stated that under the CSS of RGSA being implemented by this Ministry since 2018-19, 4400 GPBs have been sanctioned to State/UTs against projected target of 4500 under the scheme. However, in view of the large requirement of GPBs and recommendation of the Committee, Secretary Ministry of Panchayati Raj on 03-02-2020 requested Chief Secretaries of States/UTs to ensure the construction of GPBs for GPs without their own building. They were requested to take up this task on priority in a phased manner by converging funds/resources under MGNREGS with other schemes of concerned States/UTs so as to saturate the gap by end of 2022. Further, the Hon'ble Minister of Panchayati Raj wrote to the Chief Ministers of 10 states namely Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Punjab, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Uttrakhand and Governor of UT of Jammu and Kashmir, which are having acute gap in respect of GP buildings, on 14-02-2020 to take effective steps to ensure saturation of all GPs with GPBs by 2022.

Further, in view of the observations/recommendations of the Committee vis-à-vis the shortage of Panchayat Bhawans in the Country, Ministry of Panchayati Raj has made sincere efforts by submitting a proposal to the Secretary, Fifteenth Finance Commission followed by DO letter at the level of Secretary, MoPR. The Fifteenth Finance Commission is likely to submit its report for its award for 2021-26 by the end of this financial year and based on the recommendations of the Fifteenth Finance Commission, in this regard, Ministry will initiate further action towards creation of the Gram Panchayat Bhawans.

**O.M. No. H-11013 (25)/3/2020-Parl. Dated: 27May, 2020)**

#### **Recommendation (Serial No. 6)**

#### **Media and Publicity**

The Committee note that the Media and Publicity Scheme aims at effective communication through the electronic and the print media for advocacy and publicity of the Panchayati Raj programmes that aim to build capacity and enhance the performance of Panchayats at all levels. The initiative of the Ministry to reach out to the Panchayats across the Country through quarterly magazine "Gramoday Sankalp" and other measures to maximize the outreach such as catering to the information-needs of PRIs as well as rural masses through SMS services and social media platforms etc is commendable. The Committee are, however, concerned to note that meagre amount of Rs.8 crore only has been allocated for the current fiscal year 2020-21 for undertaking this role. The, Committee

also feel that the rural populace is still unaware of the facilities available to them under Panchayati Raj Institutions and services available, it is important that they are educated in this regard. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry should seriously consider dissemination of all the relevant information through the electronic and print media as well as through social media, outdoor publicity, newsletter, community radio stations, traditional forms of mass communications such as participation in major fairs & Melas etc. in a more vigorous manner and seek additional funds under this head.

### **Reply of the Government**

It has been earnest endeavour of the Ministry to utilize the allocated funds through better fund management in well thought-out manner. The Ministry will focus on utilizing the allocation of funds in an effective, impactful and judicious manner on carrying out various IEC and awareness generation activities during the financial year (2020–21). Ministry will make their utmost efforts to facilitate adequate awareness among the general rural masses at grassroots level by catering to their information-needs through judicious use of digital media & technology, social media, television, radio, print media and also utilizing all other available traditional and contemporary media.

With an aim to reach out to the rural milieu, the Ministry has intensified its interventions such as making better use of the social media and occasions such as Melas/Fairs/Festivals for IEC activities. In addition, quarterly magazine “Gramoday Sankalp”, which is published in Hindi, English and other Indian languages, will be sent to all Panchayats across the country without any subscription cost. Moreover, all available media avenues will be explored to disseminate the relevant and useful information to the target-segments in a strategic manner and the budgetary constraints will not cause any hindrance as in the proper implementation of Media and Publicity Scheme.

**O.M. No. H-11013 (25)/3/2020-Parl. Dated: 27May, 2020)**

### **Recommendation (Serial No. 7)**

#### **Incentivization of Panchayats**

The Committee observe that "Incentivization of Panchayats" is a great initiative undertaken by the Ministry for incentivizing best performing Panchayats through awards. Awards are conferred under five different categories covering areas i.e. socio-economic development; for adopting child friendly practices; efficiency, transparency and accountability in functioning; Sanitation/civic services/ innovation in revenue generation/social sector performance; Natural Resource management and disaster

management. The Committee also note that the number of GPDP Awards has been increased from 3 across the country to one in each State/UT to encourage GPs to undertake the extremely important task of developing developmental plans with greater diligence and sincerity with effect from National Panchayat Awards 2020. The budget allocation for 2020-21 has been kept at Rs. 47 crore.

The Committee desire that funds allocated for the scheme are optimally and fully utilized for giving boost to the best performing Panchayats in order to encourage others to improve their functioning to be eligible for the awards being given under this scheme. The Committee also feel that information of the category of awards that can be won, may be disseminated to all the Gram Panchayats through newsletters besides advertisements in local dailies to inspire more and more rural local bodies for better performance. The Committee also hope that Ministry of Panchayati Raj would be fair and consistent in choosing the best performing Panchayats in the Country and the winning Panchayats should be highlighted in Media specially among the rural masses so that more and more Panchayats are encouraged to give their best in their functioning.

### **Reply of the Government**

Through Incentivization of Panchayats, a holistic approach has been taken by Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) towards creating an overall system of good governance by which deserving Panchayats/Councils, States and Union Territories (UTs) get recognition while setting a model for others to follow. Conscious efforts are being made towards their strengthening and motivation through awards wherein due recognition is given to the best performers across the country. The awards are conferred on 24<sup>th</sup> of April every year celebrated as National Panchayati Raj Day (NPRD). The award money released for the awardee Panchayats/Councils is to be utilized for public purposes especially livelihood support, assets creation, civic amenities creation & maintenance and bridging the gaps in the funds received from Union/State Governments for various projects. The money so released is monitored through Utilization Certificates received from the concerned State Governments/UT Administrations.

Detailed Questionnaires for Awards have been developed by MoPR on the basis of various criteria/indicators to measure accountability system and transparent functioning of Panchayats. The applications filed by Panchayats under various categories of awards are assessed and evaluated at various levels like Block Level Committee, District Level Committee, State Panchayat Performance Appraisal Committee and State Field Verification Teams. For greater transparency and reducing turnaround time, the

recommendations from States/UTs are being invited online since the Award Year 2016. A National Screening Committee for Panchayat Awards constituted in MoPR makes the final selection of Panchayats for awards.

Taking cognizance of the fact that there are more than 2.6 lakh Panchayats across the country and it is important to highlight the winning Panchayats as role models for others as an inspiration, a broad range of publicity for awards is done across the country at the local and national levels through electronic, print and social media platforms. MoPR makes vigorous efforts through advisories, video conferences, social media etc. for an incremental participation of Panchayats/Councils across the States/UTs. The States/UTs also ensure adequate encouragement, support and publicity through their own advertisements in local newspapers, advisories, follow-ups etc. With the consistent efforts of the MoPR and the cooperation of the States, there has been incremental participation of Panchayats / RLB for the National Panchayat Awards 2020. Online applications for these awards have been received from 55,133 Panchayats across the country under various categories, which is 1.5 times more than that of the previous years.

On 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2020, in view of the prevailing lockdown due to COVID-19, the Hon'ble Prime Minister addressed the Panchayats across the country through live telecast/ webcast on the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day. During the course of his address the Hon'ble Prime Minister congratulated the winners under various categories of Panchayat Awards 2020 and hoped other Panchayats will seek inspiration from them. This address of the Hon'ble Prime Minister has seen a vast audience across the country and served as a motivational force for Panchayats for the future.

**O.M. No. H-11013 (25)/3/2020-Parl. Dated: 27May, 2020)**

#### **Recommendation (Serial No. 8)**

#### **Action Research and Research Studies**

The Committee note that since Panchayati Raj is an ever evolving process wherein new developments take place continuously, it is imperative that Research Studies are undertaken to explore and examine the new developments so as to restructure the Schemes in a more appropriate manner for maximum outreach to the rural populace. The Committee are unsatisfied with the submission that the BE during 2019-20 was reduced to Rs. 0.91 crore at RE stage despite the fact that research studies serve as an important tool to scope, functions, and reach of the important programmes. As mentioned, Panchayati Raj being a continuously evolving process requires regular updates, thereby seeking regular

analysis. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Budget Estimates under this head instead of reducing should have been increased at Revised Estimates stage.

### **Reply of the Government**

The recommendations of the Hon'ble Committee regarding increase of funds for carrying studies are noted. During the year, 2020-21, an amount of Rs. 2.00 crore has been allocated for this purpose.

**O.M. No. H-11013 (25)/3/2020-Parl. Dated: 27May, 2020)**

### **Recommendation (Serial No. 10)**

#### **Monitoring of the Progress made under various Schemes**

The Committee considered the issue of monitoring of the progress made under the schemes and the major works undertaken in the rural areas whose photographs are geo-tagged and uploaded and appreciate the candid acceptance of the fact that the authenticity of the works undertaken cannot be monitored from the geo-tagged photographs so uploaded by the various PRIs of the different State Governments/UTs. The Committee, accept the fact that without physical verification by the Central and State Government functionaries, it is impossible to access the actual progress made in rural areas. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that the Ministry should gear up their machinery in such a manner that extensive surprise field visits are undertaken by both the Centre & State Government functionaries to check the actual progress made under the various ongoing schemes/projects. The data of these surprise field visits may be invariably shared with the Committee along with the action taken notes on the discrepancies found.

### **Reply of the Government**

The Panchayat Raj Institutions are utilizing the Central Finance Commission grants, in addition to the various Central / State Government Scheme based funds, towards creation of various infrastructural assets in rural areas. The Grants are used for the development of the vast rural landscape of the country and at the same time ensuring ease of living of the citizens residing in these areas. In order to assess the works done / being carried out, Ministry of Panchayati Raj had already communicated to the States to take up Social Audit of the works/activities carried out of Finance Commission Grants through convergence with the mandatory MNGREGS Social Audits. Ministry has also prepared guidelines towards conduct of such Social Audits for Fourteenth Finance Commission

Grants' activities/ works and circulated the same to the States. The States will be further asked to schedule surprise visits / inspections by the State Government officials towards physical verification of the works/activities. These efforts would be further supplemented with the regular field visits/inspections by Ministry's officials to the PRIs in the States to check the activities being carried out by them and progress being made in the Rural Areas out of Finance Commissions' Grants etc. Such visits will definitely be useful for assessing the implementation of the mandated works/activities by PRIs and the progress made/being made in the rural areas in executing varied developmental activities.

Further, through the scheme of Incentivization of Panchayats, a holistic approach has been taken by the Ministry towards creating an overall system of good governance whereby utilizing various criteria/indicators to measure accountability system and transparent functioning, deserving Panchayats/States/UTs gets recognition while setting a model for others to follow. To measure the authenticity of progress/information provided by the Panchayats for Awards through online applications/questionnaires, detailed assessment and evaluation including field visits are prescribed at various levels like Block Level Committee, District Level Committee, State Panchayat Performance Appraisal Committee and State Field Verification Teams before the recommendations are forwarded to the Ministry. Thereafter, a National Screening Committee for Panchayat Awards constituted in Ministry makes final selection of Panchayats for awards. Officers/Teams from the Ministry during their visits to the States wherever possible also schedule visits to the awarded Panchayats of that area.

**O.M. No. H-11013 (25)/3/2020-Parl. Dated: 27May, 2020)**

**CHAPTER III**

**RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH THE COMMITTEE DO NOT DESIRE TO PURSUE  
IN VIEW OF REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT**

**NIL**

## CHAPTER IV

### RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE

#### Recommendation (Serial No. 5)

#### Mission Mode Project on e-Panchayat

The Committee observe that e-Panchayat is one of the Mission Mode Projects (MMP) under Digital India Programme. e-Panchayat seeks to transform the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) making them more transparent, accountable and effective as organs of Decentralized Self-Governing Institutions. The Committee, however, take a serious note of the fact that 83,761 Gram Panchayats which constitutes 32.49% of the total number of Gram Panchayats are without Computers. Furthermore, available computers are lying idle in many of the Gram Panchayats in the absence of internet or power connectivity. The Committee though endorse that Rs.20 crore allocated for the current fiscal year for several new initiatives incorporating enhancements and development works including training, the idea of e-Panchayats envisioned, is impossible to achieve in the absence of Computers, trained manpower, internet and power connectivity. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommend that all Gram Panchayats of the States/UTs may be equipped with adequate number of computers, trained manpower, internet connectivity and un-interrupted power supply so as to enable them to achieve objective of mission mode projects under Digital India programme to transform functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

#### Reply of The Government

Under the flagship scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA); the Ministry supports States/UTs on a limited scale for provision of computer, UPS and printer under the component of e-enablement of Panchayats wherein computer hardware cannot be accessed through other schemes.

For ensuring internet connectivity, the Ministry would like to submit that the Mission Mode on e-Panchayat is dependent on the roll-out of BharatNet which seeks to connect all the Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the country. The Ministry is in touch with the Department of Telecommunication for rolling out internet connectivity to the remaining GPs. At present, there are 1.5 lakh GPs where the Optical Fiber Cables (OFC) are laid of which 1.38 lakh GPs which are OFC connected with equipment installed. Further, to ensure all the

Government services are accessible to the rural populace, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) exists between MoPR and CSC e-Governance Services Ltd to encourage cooperation between Common Service Centres (CSCs) and Gram Panchayats for the creation of Digital Panchayats. Ministry has sanctioned 1821 in 2018-19 and 13127 in 2019-2020 co-location of CSCs in Panchayat Bhawans to States/UTs.

Ministry on the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2020 has launched eGram Swaraj – a Simplified Work Based Accounting Application for Panchayati Raj. This application is envisaged to bring in transparency in the decentralised planning, progress reporting and work-based accounting. Trainings have been provided to State(s) on the Application. In the current COVID-19 scenario, several online training sessions have been organized by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj on eGram Swaraj.

**O.M. No. H-11013 (25)/3/2020-Parl. Dated: 27May, 2020)**

**Comments of the Committee**

*(Please see Paragraph No. 8 of Chapter I of the Report)*

**Recommendation (Serial No. 9)**

**Action Research and Research Studies**

The Committee note that since launch of the re-structured RGSA, eight studies on various aspects of the scheme have been initiated. The areas of study include, Economic development and income generation through Panchayats, Impact Assessment of training of PRIs, Gender responsive initiatives for PRIs and their impact, Public feedback on role and effectiveness of Gram Sabha and role of Gram Panchayats in marketing of rural produce in Mizoram, Utilisation and impact evaluation of Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC) Grants to Gram Panchayats etc. Of these, study on “Economic Development and Income Generation through Panchayats in Rural Areas” has been completed. Draft Reports on “Impact Assessment of Training of PRIs” and “Time and Work Study for PRI functionaries in India” have been submitted and are under examination. Draft Reports on the remaining five studies are due for submission in March 2020. Furthermore, the Ministry is in the process of conducting a fresh study to identify new sources of revenue for the Panchayats i.e., “To Assess the availability of resources for creating the assets and initiatives taken for generating various own sources of revenue” proposed to be conducted by National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), New Delhi. The Committee are satisfied with the efforts undertaken by the Ministry to assess the impact of the restructured scheme on the PRIs and the rural populace. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry

continue their efforts to objectively analyze the effectiveness of the schemes. They should earnestly incorporate the findings of the Study Report on the aspect of economic development and income generation through Panchayats in Rural Areas and simultaneously expedite examination of the two Draft Reports which cover important aspects of “Training of PRIs” and “Time and Work Study for PRI functionaries”. The Committee may be informed in brief about the outcome of the studies and effective suggestions/feedback given to the Government for improvement.

### **Reply of The Government**

The Ministry is in the process of examination of these two reports. The Hon'ble Committee will be informed about the outcome of the studies after finalization of the actionable points emerged from the findings of these studies.

**O.M. No. H-11013 (25)/3/2020-Parl. Dated: 27May, 2020)**

### **Comments of the Committee**

*(Please see Paragraph No. 11 of Chapter I of the Report)*

**CHAPTER V**

**RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH FINAL REPLIES OF  
THE GOVERNMENT ARE STILL AWAITED**

**NIL**

**NEW DELHI;  
10 February, 2021  
21 Magha, 1942 (Saka)**

**PRATAPRAO JADHAV  
*Chairperson,*  
Standing Committee on Rural Development**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT (2020-2021)**  
**MINUTES OF THE SECOND SITTING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON**  
**TUESDAY, 27 OCTOBER, 2020**

The Committee sat from 1500 hrs. to 1650 hrs. in Committee Room. 'D,' Ground Floor, Parliament House Annexe (PHA), New Delhi.

**Prataprao Jadhav** -- **Chairperson**

**MEMBERS**

***Lok Sabha***

1. Shri Rajveer Diler
2. Shri Sukhbir Singh Jaunapuria
3. Prof. Rita Bahuguna Joshi
4. Shri Narendra Kumar
5. Shri B. Y. Raghavendra
6. Shri Vivek Narayan Shejwalkar

***Rajya Sabha***

7. Shri Shamsheer Singh Dullo
8. Shri Sujeet Kumar
9. Shri Nazir Ahmed Laway
10. Shri K. P. Munusamy
11. Shri Ram Shakal

**SECRETARIAT**

- |                       |   |                     |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1. Shri D. R. Shekhar | - | Joint Secretary     |
| 2. Shri. A. K. Shah   | - | Director            |
| 3. Smt. Emma C. Barwa | - | Additional Director |

**Ministry of Rural Development (Department of Rural Development)**

- |    |                          |   |  |
|----|--------------------------|---|--|
| 1. | Shri Nagendra Nath Sinha | - | Secretary                                    |
| 2. | Shri Sanjeev Kumar       | - | Additional Secretary &<br>Financial Advisor  |
| 3. | Ms. Alka Upadhyaya       | - | Additional Secretary                         |
| 4. | Dr. Biswajit Banerjee    | - | Joint Secretary/Mission Director,<br>(SPMRM) |
| 5. | Ms. Roop Avtar Kaur      | - | Director (SPMRM)                             |

At the outset, the Chairperson welcomed the Members to the sitting of the Committee convened for consideration and adoption of the XXX Draft Action Taken Reports on Demands for Grants (2020-21) XXX XXX in respect of (i) Ministry of Panchayati Raj (ii) XXX XXX XXX XXX

2. The Committee considered and adopted the Draft Reports without any amendment and authorised the Chairperson to present Reports to the House.

*[Thereafter witnesses were called in]*

- |    |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 3. | XXX | XXX | XXX | XXX | XXX | XXX |
| 4. | XXX | XXX | XXX | XXX | XXX | XXX |
| 5. | XXX | XXX | XXX | XXX | XXX | XXX |

The Committee then adjourned.

A record of verbatim proceedings has been kept.

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XXX Not related to the Draft Report

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## APPENDIX - II

[Vide para 4 of Introduction of Report]

### ANALYSIS OF THE ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE SIXTH REPORT (17<sup>TH</sup> LOK SABHA) OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

I.	Total number of recommendations:	10
II.	Recommendations that have been accepted by the Government :	
	Serial Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10	
	Total:	08
	Percentage:	80 %
III.	Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's replies :	
	Serial No. NIL	
	Total:	00
	Percentage:	00 %
IV.	Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee :	
	Serial Nos. 5 and 9	
	Total:	02
	Percentage:	20 %
V.	Recommendations in respect of which final replies of the Government are still awaited :	
	Serial Nos. NIL	
	Total:	00
	Percentage:	00 %