

Two-day National Workshop

On

"Panchayati Raj: An Institution of Local Self Governance"

Under Hon'ble Chief Minister's
Research, Study & Evaluation Incentivised Scheme

Sponsorer

Department of Planning & Development, Government of Bihar

Organised By

Prof G. P. Sinha Centre for Disaster Management & Rural Development, Patna

Associate

Bihar Industries Association, Patna



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Under Hon'ble Chief Minister's Research, Study & Evaluation Incentivised Scheme

“Panchayati Raj: An Institution of Local Self Governance”

CONTEXT

The Planning and Development Department, Government of Bihar under its flagship programme of “**Mukhyamantri Shodh, Adhyayan, Evam Mulyankan Protsahan Yojana**” has sponsored a two-day workshop on “**Panchayati Raj as an institution of local self-governance**” to Prof G. P. Sinha Centre for Disaster Management & Rural Development (GPSCDMRD). This is an enabling role of GPSCDMRD for delivering professional services that offer crucial inputs, insights and academic underpinnings in policy formulation to the Government of Bihar to meet the challenges of Panchayati Raj. The dynamic nature of public policy require critical inputs which are pragmatic, and contain comparative perspectives and analytical views emerging from cross-fertilization of ideas and thoughts from various experiences and experiments across the states. In this realm, the workshop will provide a platform and space with active engagement and context-specific specialization and expertise to voice, discuss and deliberate upon critical issues and address them with new ideas and thoughts. Accordingly, the workshop is being organised from February 22-23, 2014 at Bihar Industries association hall, Sinha Library Road, Patna.

The focus of the workshop is to comprehend the status and special features of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in Bihar, to discuss its critical issues and suggest suitable measures to further strengthen the system so as to make them institution of self-governance as contemplated in the Constitution. This is an important workshop as it will be participated by all stakeholders to deliberate upon identified issues, showcasing success stories, examining result-oriented strategies, priorities of required reforms in Panchayat system and a canvass of alternative options for designing future policy interventions. The participants are policy makers, elected PRI members, senior officials from state level and Panchayats, experts, researchers, etc.

RATIONALE

The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution is a milestone in the country's system of governance. However, the amendment has not been operationalized across the country with the same level of intensity and objectives with which the amendment has been brought about. The amendment essentially provides an enabling environment for creating ‘**institution of local self-governance**’. These institutions in a vast country are necessary where several services are to be delivered at the village level in a cost effective manner. The convergence of such services is an essential requirement for an effective

delivery mechanism. We miss these two aspects in varying levels of degrees across the country. Villages have several problems and in this context it is widely believed that empowering PR Institutions and devolving them with the functions as enjoined by the constitution will be a major step forward in not only deepening the process of democracy in the country but also giving power to the people and enabling them to realize their aspirations of development and growth.

The 73rd Amendment has also another radical parameter, viz., the system of reservation, which has a rotating feature in it. This has enabled lot of representatives to come from weaker sections SCs, STs and other marginalized groups to become Elected Representatives, besides one-third of them being women. Moreover, the basic premise has been to move decision making for local public services closer to the people, increase efficiency, and encourage effective participation and greater private sector contribution, among others.

Now, it is two decades of new dispensation of Panchayats in the country as also in Bihar, it is necessary to take stock of the situation and to examine and analyse the existing scenario, highlighting achievements and finding gaps in the system.

PANCHAYATS IN BIHAR

Bihar is credited with many firsts in the local self-government system. However, it has passed through vicissitudes. The first Bihar Panchayat Raj Act was passed as back in 1947 and the elections were conducted till 1978 and thereafter no election could be held and the old elected body continued for so many years. Nevertheless, it came back to charted path of progress.

The 73rd (Panchayat) and 74th (ULBs) amendments to the Constitution in 1992 envisaged to make Panchayats more stronger, almost on the dream line of Mahatma Gandhi, where Gram Sabha is expected to be driving force of its own destiny. Bihar once again took the lead in passing the conformity Panchayat Act in 1993, as mandated. But election was not held for a long time on some pretext. However, based on the 1993 legislation, Bihar conducted the three-tier elections after a long gap in the year 2001 bringing in a whole new crop of elected members thus, generating much hope in the revival of Panchayat system. The new dispensation under the leadership of Mr Nitish Kumar came in 2005 and Bihar Panchayat Raj Act was further amended in 2006 and 2008 to give a progressive outlook. It provided 50% reservation to women in Panchayats. In fact; about 54% women were elected to Panchayat bodies which have given a fresh impetus to the process of women empowerment. Section-13 of the Bihar Act has made provision for reservation up to 50% from among SC, ST and Backward classes. The Section-170 of BPR Act, 2006 is significant in the sense that all the office bearers, members and employees of Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samiti and Panchayats

have been declared 'Public servant' under the Indian Penal Code, 1860 and answerable to their deeds. Moreover, the Act of 2006 provided for establishment of Gram Kutcheri, again one of the firsts in the country, to enable villagers to solve some of the vexing civil matters within their Panchayat and save them from long process of litigations.

Under section-168 of the 2006 Act, a State Finance Commission has been created which decides modus of distribution of state revenues to all the three-tier of Panchayati raj system. Accordingly, Fifth State Finance Commission has been constituted in January 2014 and it is hoped that its recommendations will further raise the activities of PRIs as the state government is determined to make Panchayats in Bihar-- strengthened, inclusive, responsible and transparent.

OBJECTIVES

Based on the above observations, the workshop will threadbare discuss various issues, broadly it has the following specific objectives:

- To elucidate the status of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Bihar and highlight its achievements after passage of conformity Act;
- To examine devolution of powers, functions, functionaries and funds to Panchayats in the state;
- To appreciate process of empowerment of women and other marginalised section of the society and its impact;
- To delineate role of Panchayats in decentralised planning process and implementation of rural development programmes; and
- To suggest suitable measures to strengthen the system further so as to make them institution of self-governance.

MODALITY

The workshop will have six technical sessions with specific theme. In each thematic session, issues for discussion will be outlined and participants will deliberate upon and come out with specific suggestions. Each session will be chaired by an expert to guide the deliberation and rapporteur will prepare report of each session. The session can be changed in view of the issues emerging during the discussion.

The thematic sessions are –

1. Status and achievement of Panchayati Raj in Bihar.
2. Devolution of power, functions, functionaries and funds.
3. Process of empowerment.

4. Role of Panchayats in decentralised planning process.
5. Realising potentials of Gram Sabha.
6. Panchayats vis-à-vis rural development.

PARTICIPANTS

- State level senior officials
- Chairman / Vice- Chairman / Chairpersons of Standing Committee / Elected Member of Zila Parishad & Panchayat Samiti
- Mukhiya / Dy. Mukhiya / Elected Members of Gram kutcheri
- Officials from Panchayat bodies of district, Panchayat Samiti & Gram Panchayat
- Officials from social sectors at district level.
- Scholars of Panchayati Raj / Rural Development / Developmental Studies
- Experts

VENUE & DATE

Venue: **Bihar Industries Association, Sinha Library Road, Near Bihar School Examination Board, Patna.**

Date: **Saturday 22nd February & Sunday 23rd February 2014.**

Time: **10 AM - 5 PM**

CONTACT

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OUTCOME

At the end of the workshop, the outcome will be adopted by the group as **'observations and recommendations'** of the workshop that will have policy interventions and actionable points. The proceedings of the workshop will be documented along with 'observations and recommendations' of the group. This will be submitted to the Department of Planning & Development, Government of Bihar for consideration.
