

**15 -ാം കേരള നിയമസഭ**

**14 -ാം സമ്മേളനം**

**നക്ഷത്ര ചിഹ്നം ഇല്ലാത്ത ചോദ്യം നം. 2466**

**30-09-2025 - ൽ മറുപടിയ്ക്ക്**

**ബ്ലോക്ക് പഞ്ചായത്തുകളെ ശക്തിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതിന് നടപടി**

ചോദ്യം		ഉത്തരം	
ഡോ. മാത്യു കുഴൽനാടൻ		ശ്രീ എം.ബി. രാജേഷ് (തദ്ദേശ സ്വയംഭരണ - എക്സൈസ് - പാർലമെന്ററികാരു വകുപ്പ് മന്ത്രി)	
(എ)	കേരള പഞ്ചായത്ത് രാജ് നിയമത്തിന്റെ അടിസ്ഥാനത്തിൽ പ്രാദേശിക വികസനത്തിൽ ബ്ലോക്ക് പഞ്ചായത്തുകളുടെ പങ്ക് വ്യക്തമാക്കുമോ;	(എ)	ഭരണഘടനയുടെ അനുച്ഛേദം 243 (ബി) പ്രകാരം മദ്ധ്യതല പഞ്ചായത്ത് സംവിധാനം കേരളത്തിൽ അനിവാര്യമായതിനാൽ, പ്രാദേശിക വികസനത്തിൽ നിർണ്ണായക പങ്ക് വഹിക്കാൻ കഴിയുംവിധം ജില്ലാ പഞ്ചായത്തിനും ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്തുകൾക്കും ഇടയിൽ അനുയോജ്യമായ ചുമതലകൾ ബ്ലോക്ക് പഞ്ചായത്തുകൾക്ക് നിശ്ചയിച്ചു നൽകുക എന്ന സമീപനമാണ് കേരളം സ്വീകരിച്ചത്. അതനുസരിച്ച് അധികാര വികേന്ദ്രീകരണ കമ്മിറ്റിയുടെ (സെൻ കമ്മിറ്റിയുടെ) ശുപാർശ പ്രകാരം 1999 ൽ കേരള പഞ്ചായത്ത് രാജ് നിയമത്തിന്റെ 3, 4, 5 പട്ടികകൾ ഭേദഗതി ചെയ്ത് ത്രിതല പഞ്ചായത്തുകളുടെ ചുമതലകൾ പുനർനിർവ്വചിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. ബ്ലോക്ക് തലത്തിൽ സർക്കാർ - സർക്കാരിതര സാങ്കേതിക വൈദഗ്ദ്ധ്യം ഉപയോഗപ്പെടുത്തുക, ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്തുകൾക്ക് സാങ്കേതിക സഹായം നൽകുക, ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്തുകളുടെ പദ്ധതികൾ കണക്കിലെടുത്ത് ഫോർവേർഡ്, ബാക്ക് വേർഡ് ലിങ്കേജ് നൽകുക എന്നിവയിൽ ബ്ലോക്ക് പഞ്ചായത്തുകൾ പ്രധാന പങ്ക് വഹിക്കുന്നു. ഈ പൊതു ചുമതലകൾക്ക് അനുസൃതമായാണ് മേഖലാ ചുമതലകൾ നിശ്ചയിച്ചിട്ടുള്ളത്. ബ്ലോക്ക് പഞ്ചായത്തുകളെ ഏൽപ്പിച്ചിട്ടുള്ള ചുമതലകൾ നിറവേറ്റുന്നതിന് പര്യാപ്തമാകും വിധം പദ്ധതി ആസൂത്രണ മാർഗരേഖ, സബ്സിഡി മാർഗരേഖ എന്നിവയിലൂടെ മാർഗനിർദ്ദേശങ്ങൾ നൽകുകയും ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട്.
(ബി)	ത്രിതല പഞ്ചായത്ത് സംവിധാനത്തിൽ ബ്ലോക്ക് പഞ്ചായത്തുകളുടെ പ്രസക്തി വ്യക്തമാക്കുമോ;	(ബി)	1994 ലെ കേരള പഞ്ചായത്ത് രാജ് ആക്ടിലെ നാലാം പട്ടികയിലെ പൊതു ചുമതലകളിൽ വിവക്ഷിച്ചിട്ടുള്ള പ്രകാരം സർക്കാരിതര സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളുടെ സാങ്കേതിക വൈദഗ്ദ്ധ്യം ഉപയോഗപ്പെടുത്തി ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്തുകൾക്ക് സാങ്കേതിക സഹായം

		<p>ലഭ്യമാക്കുകയും ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്തുകളെയും ജില്ലാപഞ്ചായത്തിനെയും കോർത്തിണക്കി വലിയ വികസന-ക്ഷേമ ക്യാമ്പയിനുകൾ സംഘടിപ്പിച്ച് പ്രാദേശിക വികസനം ഉറപ്പ് വരുത്തുവാൻ കഴിയും എന്നതാണ് ബ്ലോക്ക് പഞ്ചായത്തുകളുടെ പ്രസക്തി. ബ്ലോക്ക് പഞ്ചായത്തുകൾ കേന്ദ്രീകരിച്ച് സംരംഭകത്വ വികസനത്തിനായി പ്രവർത്തിച്ചു വരുന്ന സംരംഭകത്വ തൊഴിൽ വികസന ഇൻഫർമേഷൻ സെന്റർ, ജോബ് സ്റ്റേഷൻ, സുസ്ഥിര വികസന ലക്ഷ്യങ്ങൾ നേടുന്നതിന് ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്തുകൾക്കുള്ള സഹായ സംവിധാനമായ ബ്ലോക്ക് പഞ്ചായത്ത് റിസോഴ്സ് സെന്ററുകൾ, കുടുംബശ്രീയുടെ ബ്ലോക്ക് കോർഡിനേറ്റർമാർ തുടങ്ങിയ സംവിധാനങ്ങൾ ബ്ലോക്ക് പഞ്ചായത്തുകളുടെ പ്രസക്തി വെളിവാക്കുന്നവയാണ്.</p>
(സി)	<p>ബ്ലോക്ക് പഞ്ചായത്തുകളുടെ ധന സ്രോതസ്സ് ഏതൊക്കെയാണെന്ന് വ്യക്തമാക്കുമോ;</p>	(സി) <p>കേന്ദ്ര - സംസ്ഥാന ധനകാര്യ കമ്മീഷനുകളുടെ ശുപാർശ പ്രകാരം കൈമാറുന്ന ഉപാധിരഹിത ഫണ്ടുകൾ [വികസന ഫണ്ട്, മെയിന്റനൻസ് ഫണ്ട്, ജനറൽ പർപ്പസ് ഫണ്ട്, കേന്ദ്രാവിഷ്കൃത/ സംസ്ഥാനാവിഷ്കൃത പദ്ധതികളുടെ നടത്തിപ്പിനുള്ള ഫണ്ടുകൾ, സംയുക്ത പ്രോജക്ടുകൾക്കായി മറ്റ് തദ്ദേശഭരണ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളിൽ നിന്നും ലഭിക്കുന്ന ഫണ്ട്, ടെണ്ടർ ഫോമുകൾ, നിരത ദ്രവ്യം എന്നിവ ഉൾപ്പെടെയുള്ള സ്രോതസ്സുകളിൽ നിന്നുള്ള നികുതിയേതര വരുമാനം, ആസ്തികളിൽ നിന്നുള്ള വരുമാനം, 1963 ലെ കേരള ലോക്കൽ അതോറിട്ടിസ് ലോൺ ആക്ട് പ്രകാരം എടുക്കുന്ന വായ്പ എന്നിവയാണ് ബ്ലോക്ക് പഞ്ചായത്തുകളുടെ മുഖ്യ ധന സ്രോതസ്സുകൾ.</p>
(ഡി)	<p>2020-25 കാലഘട്ടത്തിൽ ബ്ലോക്ക് പഞ്ചായത്തുകൾ വിവിധ മേഖലകളിൽ നടത്തിയിട്ടുള്ള മാതൃക പദ്ധതികൾ വിശദമാക്കുമോ;</p>	(ഡി) <p>സാമൂഹികാരോഗ്യ കേന്ദ്രങ്ങൾ ഉൾപ്പെടെ കൈമാറിക്കിട്ടിയ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങളുടെ പരിപാലനത്തിനും വികസനത്തിനുമുള്ള പ്രോജക്ടുകൾ, ഗ്രൂപ്പ് അധിഷ്ഠിത പ്രോജക്ടുകൾ, ഗ്രാമ പഞ്ചായത്തുകളുടെ ആസ്തി രജിസ്റ്ററിൽ ഉൾപ്പെട്ട 6 മീറ്ററിൽ കുറയാത്ത റോഡുകളുടെ മെച്ചപ്പെടുത്തൽ, തുടങ്ങിയവ ബ്ലോക്ക് പഞ്ചായത്തുകൾ നടപ്പാക്കി വരുന്ന പ്രോജക്ടുകളിൽ പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ടവയാണ്. ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്തുകളുടെ നിയന്ത്രണത്തിലുള്ള എൽ.പി / യു.പി സ്കൂളുകളുടെ പശ്ചാത്തല വികസന പ്രവൃത്തികൾ ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്തുകളുടെ അനുവാദത്തോടെ നിർവഹിക്കുന്നതിനും ബ്ലോക്ക് പഞ്ചായത്തുകൾക്ക് സാധിക്കുന്നതാണ്.</p>
(ഇ)	<p>ബ്ലോക്ക് പഞ്ചായത്തുകളെ ശക്തിപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതിന് ആവശ്യമായ പഠനങ്ങൾ നടത്തിയിട്ടുണ്ടോ;</p>	(ഇ) <p>വികേന്ദ്രീകൃതാസൂത്രണവും വികസനവും സംബന്ധിച്ച വിലയിരുത്തൽ നടത്തുന്നതിനായി 2007 ൽ സംസ്ഥാന സർക്കാർ നിയോഗിച്ച ഡോ. എം.എ.</p>

ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ വിശദമാക്കാമോ; ടി റിപ്പോർട്ടുകളുടെ പകർപ്പുകൾ നൽകുമോ?

ഉമ്മൻ കമ്മിറ്റി, ബ്ലോക്ക് പഞ്ചായത്തുകളുടെ പ്രവർത്തനം വിലയിരുത്തിയിട്ടുണ്ട്. കമ്മിറ്റി 2009 ൽ സമർപ്പിച്ച റിപ്പോർട്ടിന്റെ അധ്യായം 9 ഉള്ളടക്കം ചെയ്യുന്നു.

സെക്ഷൻ ഓഫീസർ

## Chapter 9

# Revisiting the Role of Block Panchayats

**9.0** Historically the block panchayats in Kerala is a new institution created as part of the implementation of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional amendment. As per Article 243 B of the Constitution: (1) *'there shall be constituted in every state, Panchayats at the village, intermediate and district levels in accordance with the provisions of this part'*. (2) *Notwithstanding anything in clause (1), Panchayats at the intermediate level may not be constituted in a state having a population not exceeding twenty lakhs.* Kerala State had through the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 constituted Gram Panchayat, Block Panchayat and District Panchayat. The Kerala Panchayat Raj Act defines the roles and responsibilities of the three-tier Panchayati Raj system. The Schedules regarding responsibilities appended to the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act 1994 were further modified by Act 13 of 1999 with effect from 24-3-1999. Although Block Panchayat is an institution created by the Constitution, of late there is a strong opinion against the continuation of the BP. The Sixth Report of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission on Local Governance went to the extent of saying: "Clearly a mandatory intermediate tier panchayat would be redundant in Kerala" (p.29). The TOR of this Committee assigned long before this Report want the committee to examine the role of the Block Panchayats. Based on the studies and discussions we had with many people who work with Block level Panchayats and within the Panchayati Raj system, we have examined the relevance of Block Panchayat as the 'intermediate' level government in rural Kerala.

## 9.1 The Statutory Picture

**9.1.1** The State Legislature has defined the role of the Block Level Panchayats in the decentralised planning and development process through Schedule 4 of the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act 1999. These are intended to enable the Block Panchayats from overstepping into the functions of the gram panchayats, and to help them to build linkages with both the Gram Panchayats below and the District Panchayats above. The functions of the Block Panchayat (BP) are grouped under (a) General functions and (b) Sector-wise functions. The sectoral responsibilities are more specific, but it is the general responsibilities that truly reflect the rationale of the State Legislature in creating Block Panchayats. They are:

- (1) Utilise governmental and non-governmental technical expertise at block level;
- (2) Provide technical assistance to Gram Panchayats; and
- (3) Prepare schemes taking into consideration the schemes of Gram Panchayats in order to avoid duplication and to provide backward, and forward linkages.

These three guidelines generally provide the base for working of the BP. The specific sectoral functions assigned to the BPs are indicated under Schedule 4 (b). The responsibilities mentioned under 4(b)

relate to 14 sectors ranging from agriculture to calamity relief and cooperation. By and large care has been taken to avoid duplication with the functional responsibilities of Gram Panchayats in these 14 sectors.

**9.1.2** It is seen that even without direct intervention in individual assistance programmes, BPs can expand the three general guidelines under 4 (a) and provide meaningful linkages with the direct interventions in the project implementation of Gram Panchayats and District Panchayats. The sectoral programmes listed under 4(b) mostly relate to projects which normally transcend the boundaries of a Gram Panchayat or those which can be implemented for the benefit of more than one Gram Panchayat or those which relate to activities which require more technical expertise in the nature of providing guidelines for many smaller units of Local Self Governments (LSGs).

## **9.2 Towards understanding Block Panchayats**

**9.2.1** In order to understand the functioning of the BPs we made visits to a few blocks besides holding discussions with concerned functionaries. The block panchayat association submitted a memorandum. Besides that we held several rounds of discussions with the main functionaries of their Association. The presentation in this chapter is based on the evidences we have from various sources and the inferences we arrived at. The Committee studied a few block panchayats and discussed the affairs of the BPs with the elected members and officers of the BPs, notably with the Vadakara, Iritty, Pampakkuda and Koothuparamba Block Panchayats. In addition, the Committee had prolonged discussions with the President and members of the Block Panchayat Association. The Committee also commissioned a few experts to carry out case studies in a few selected Gram Panchayats, Block Panchayats, District Panchayats and Municipalities. These studies and discussions helped in understanding the past experiences, frustrations and problems faced by the BP functionaries and the future they envisioned. These were of great help in formulating our views.

**9.2.2 Vadakara BP** complained about the very limited tasks assigned to them and the limited funds available at their disposal. The resources of the BP which were of the order of about Rs.45-50 lakhs rose to 80-85 lakhs when central project assistances are also added. **It was made clear that the Block Panchayat set up and the Block Development Officer's unit were functioning independently. The BP Plans do not include funds received from the Rural Development Commission under the Central Government sponsored projects. Members of the BP were not involved in the projects implemented under the directions of Block Panchayat Secretary in his capacity as BDO. Non effectiveness of the Standing Committees and the existence of many Working Groups were a few of the issues seen to be worrying the members.**

**9.2.2.1** The Block Panchayat plans and Gram Panchayat plans were formulated independently of each other with very little integration. Quite often individual beneficiary schemes were

directed towards the same set of recipients. Obviously it is unnecessary for BPs to duplicate the same programmes at the same scale that Gram Panchayats handled. Vadakara BP made a vigorous plea for own resources. They argued that the BP should have the right to raise revenue from all buildings, markets or other constructions they have made. **What the Vadakara BP told us is worth reporting.** "We know we are weak and irrelevant. A Block is to be seen as a development entity. Members usually see development from a ward or electoral perspective. We in Vadakara never see projects or plan from a narrow ward perspective. The coconut development scheme of the block was for the whole block. We are happy to say that there is good working relationship with the implementing officers. Even so we are aware of the fact that some officers are neither in the block nor in the village" [From the notes of the Committee Chairman).

**9.2.3 Koothuparamba BP** wondered whether under the present manner of functioning BPs are necessary at all. The BP queried on the relevance of BPs in the context of Kerala. From our lead questions it was clear that the members failed to distinguish between the role and functions of a Gram Panchayat from that of a Block. The BP seems to consider itself as a higher tier above Gram Panchayat with a hierarchical relation.

**9.2.4 Iritty BP** which comprises seven gram panchayats in the Kannur district proudly narrated their achievements notably the employment generated for 87 women through the training programmes organized by them and the construction of Rural Community Health Centre. It is important to mention the following statements of the President of Iritty BP made before the committee.

- The limited and routine operations of the BP is due to the paucity of funds
- New initiatives in formulating schemes appropriate to local needs do not find acceptance by the public or the DPC.
- Transferred institutions continue to work as before owing allegiance to their respective parental departments. BPs are practically sidelined.
- Convergence of various funds for comprehensive block level development does not happen. Departmentalism is the enemy of progress.

**9.2.4.1** During the long interactive sessions, one suggestion that emerged on a consensus basis was that it is possible at the BP level to organize a planning data/resource bank and to develop a records library, so that the BP members and others understand the processes better and guide the Gram Panchayats effectively in Plan formulation and implementation. Table 9.1 gives the major projects implemented by the Iritty Block panchayat during the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> five year plans. They cover a wide range. But the rate of utilization of funds is very poor.

**Table 9.1**  
**Major Projects implemented by Iritty Block Panchayat**

Sl.No	Sector	Projects
1	Industry	Hatchery, 1997-2002
		Mini Dairy Unit, 2001-02 Women Industrial Complex, 2002-07 Mini Industrial Estate Subsidy for women micro enterprise Industrial Training Centre
2	Education	Kitchen & Toilet facilities for schools Teacher Training Camp & camp for students
3	ST Development	Houses and land for ST, House repairs Construction of toilets and wells Hostel building, assistance to procuring furniture & TV to recreation clubs Distribution of goats, training for self employment Assistance for hospital treatment, home for the aged & handicapped
4	Agriculture	Lift Irrigation Project at Pattanur Provided farm machinery to <i>Padasekhara Samithis</i>
In the Production Sector, 19 projects were proposed in the 10 <sup>th</sup> Five year Plan period and completion rate of projects is only 36.80 percent (success rate in the 9 <sup>th</sup> Plan was 28.90%).		
In the Infrastructure Sector, 9 projects were proposed and the completion rate is 55 percent (during 9 <sup>th</sup> Plan 17 projects were proposed with completion rate of 11.76%)		
In the Service Sector, 43 projects were proposed during the 10 <sup>th</sup> Plan period with completion rate of 41.80 percent (64 projects with 23% completion in the 9 <sup>th</sup> Plan)		

**9.2.4.2** In the year 2006-07 Iritty Block Panchayat had received Rs.192.87 lakhs as grants from Government and had also earned Rs.1.27 lakhs as non-tax revenue. The BP spent Rs.19.72 lakhs on Productive Sector, Rs.17.74 lakhs on Infrastructure Sector and Rs.67.53 lakhs on social service sector. The rate of utilization was only 55 per cent.

**9.2.4.3** In the year 2006-07, the BP had 14 projects in Productive Sector (including 2 in WCP) and 5 spill over projects. Out of this 19, they could complete only 7 (including one in WCP) and they dropped 3 projects. Iritty BP did not have any new Projects during 2006-07 in the Infrastructure Sector, although they had 4 spill over projects. But they could complete only one project. The BP had during the same year 31 new projects (including 2 each in SC and WCP) and 11 spill over projects in the services sector. They could complete 21 projects in the general category, 4 in SC and 1 in WCP categories. Eight projects were dropped. The project scenario shows a strong preference for projects in the social service sector. A few reasons for this are noted below:

- Social Service Sector projects are small in nature and easily implementable without much planning and effort

- Since many of the projects in the sector are single household beneficiary oriented, the elected members have more direct contact with the beneficiaries and they gain political mileage out of such direct dealing with beneficiaries
- Since the individual projects are small in size and more in number, such projects are more feasible to be divided ward-wise within the Block satisfying more elected members

**9.2.4.4 In our discussions at Iritty as elsewhere it was clear that there was a predominance of beneficiary and service sector schemes and a tendency to replicate schemes which otherwise could have been implemented by Gram Panchayats. The role of BP envisaged as an intermediate level Panchayat and as a facilitator is rarely reflected in the BP projects.**

**9.2.5 Pampakkuda BP** We did not visit the Pampakkuda block. But on the basis of the plan implementation data, the study in the Ernakulam district we worked out certain averages and ratios. They are reported in Table 9.2

**Table 9.2**  
**Projects implemented by Pampakkuda Block Panchayats during the 10<sup>th</sup> Plan**

No.	Sector	Details	Performance during the 10 <sup>th</sup> Plan
1	Production	Average number of projects per year	13
		Average financial outlay per project	Rs.1,50,700
		Completion Rate of projects	42.50%
2	Infrastructure	Average number of projects per year	13
		Average financial outlay per project	Rs.2,12,900
		Completion rate of projects	63.20%
3	Service Sector	Average number of projects per year	21
		Average financial outlay per project	Rs.2,17,800
		Completion rate of projects	74.20%

**9.2.5.1** The BP had a total revenue of Rs.174.41 lakhs as grants and other receipts in the year 2006-07 and they spent Rs.19.94 lakhs on Productive Sector projects, Rs.15.51 lakhs on Infrastructure projects and Rs.41.68 lakhs on projects in the Social Services sector. The rate of spending was only 44 per cent. By any reckoning this is a poor record. In the year 2006-07 Pampakkuda Block Panchayat had taken 9 projects (including one under WCP) in the Productive Sector. One project was carried over from the previous year. They could complete 7 projects (including one under WCP). However the BP could take only two projects (one general and one SC/ST) under Infrastructure Sector and 2 projects were carried over from the previous year. Out of these 4 projects they could complete 3 projects. Under the Service Sector the BP had proposed 19 projects during 2006-07 (6 under SC/ST and one under WCP). One SC project was carried over from the previous year. The BP could complete 14 projects.



**9.2.5.2** The Pampakkuda Block Panchayat secretary held the view (in a presentation before the Chairperson) that with over 1400 projects spread over 8 gram panchayats to be managed, the staff strength at the block level is inadequate. A rationalisation of the staff pattern of the block functionaries through work study was suggested.

**9.2.5.3** From the two case studies of plan grants and expenditure we have presented above it is seen that more emphasis is on projects coming under the social service sector and that Productive sector did not receive focused attention at the Block Panchayat levels. The rate of utilization of funds is also poor.

**9.2.6** From the elaborate discussions with the various Block Panchayats and from the studies conducted by the Committee, certain general observations that occurred to us are reported below:

- (1) The distinction between the working of Gram Panchayats and the Block Panchayats is not clearly understood by the Panchayat level functionaries at all the three tiers. Block Panchayats generally try to replicate the functions of Gram Panchayats.**
- (2) There is clearly two different functional groups at the Block Panchayat level – the Block Panchayat as the intermediate level of the Panchayat Raj system and the official level community development block. Though the BDO is the Secretary of the Block Panchayat integration of the functional roles and convergence of development programmes at area level do not happen. The elected members of the BP are not aware of the central Government assisted development programmes being implemented through the BDO. The BP programmes do not integrate their development activities with the CD programmes which are implemented and monitored by the Rural Development Department. We firmly recommend that this fragmented approach should end. The schizophrenic role of the BDO should also end.**
- (3) The three cardinal roles of the BP mentioned in Schedule 4 (a) of the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act 1994 (as amended in 1999) relate to the utilization of technical expertise, making available technical assistance to Gram Panchayats and developing backward and forward linkages in formulation of schemes. These roles have been observed in their breach.**
- (4) Block Panchayats could not contribute substantially to the productive sectors, in spite of the fact that Schedule 4 (b) of the Panchayat Raj Act assigns duties with regard to agriculture, animal husbandry, milk production, small scale industries and energy to Block Panchayats. Perhaps the reason could be that BP could not conceive of non conventional schemes in the above areas.**
- (5) The elected members of BPs generally feel that they do not command the respect that a member of Gram Panchayat enjoys with the local populace. They expressed that their functional role is rarely understood.**
- (6) The BPs felt that the limited resource allocation is a constraint. Some even favoured granting taxation rights to Block Panchayats. Many have not thought of innovative approaches for resource mobilization. However few like Kodakara Block Panchayat tried to combine their Plan Funds with MP and MLA LAD funds and other resources**

**that can be raised through financial institutions. This shows the potential. If there is a will, the way is open.**

**9.2.7** It is with this background that the Members of the Committee met the members of the Block Panchayat Association. The office bearers of Association after an introductory meeting with the Committee returned after a month for a second round of discussions, and after holding several rounds of internal meetings amongst their members submitted a 'Memorandum' to the Committee.

### **9.3 Discussions with the Block Panchayat Association**

**9.3.1** In the first round of discussions held on 11.04.08 the Block Panchayat Association representatives expressed only very limited views. The salient features are outlined below:

- The functional responsibilities assigned to the BPs are not adequate.
- Block Panchayats can contribute better in the area of small scale industrial development
- It should be possible for BPs to act more effectively in matters relating to waste management
- The Secretary of the Block Panchayat has a dual role since he/she also functions as the Block Development Officer. The services of the official are only partly available as Block Panchayat Secretary, since as BDO he is traditionally working as an implementing officer under the Rural Development Department. State level decisions are required to integrate Rural Development Commissionerate with Panchayat Raj system.
- It is necessary to redefine the role and functions of the Block Panchayats – it is also necessary to review the staff strength of the Block Panchayats
- The present conflicts between the development projects taken up by Block Panchayats and Gram Panchayats need to be resolved
- Perhaps there is need to prepare sub regional plans at Block level
- The present quality of Budget preparation at the block level is poor. Budgets do not act as development policy and regulatory mechanism. BPs have not received adequate training in budget preparation
- Absence of any monitoring mechanism

**9.3.2** We may supplement this from the salient issues raised in their memorandum. For analytical purposes we have grouped them under the following heads.

#### **(a) Restructuring of the Organisation**

- (i) The Secretary of the Block Panchayat continues to function also as the Block Development Officer. The development programmes implemented through the BDO, as an officer of the Rural Development Department are not consulted with BP and these programmes are not integrated with BP programmes. The BP Plan does not include rural development schemes implemented through the line department. It is necessary to terminate the post of BDO, who should act fully as Block Panchayat Secretary.
- (ii) The officers of the offices/departments/institutions transferred to Block Panchayat should become ex-officio Secretaries of the BP.

- (iii) The programmes implemented through these transferred institutions should be integrated with BP programmes and plans.
- (iv) The staff structure of the BP should be reorganized and the staff suitably trained and empowered.

**(b) Planning**

- (i) It is necessary to organise a Planning Data Bank at the Block level, collecting details from the Panchayat level.
- (ii) A Planning Cell should be constituted at the Block level. The Block level TAG can act as the Secretariat of the Planning Cell.
- (iii) Quality of Block level Planning should be improved
- (iv) Several agencies carryout various surveys and studies at the block level. But these are not compiled, documented or made available for other purposes or for the benefit of the blocks. In spite of such surveys comprehensive planning data at Panchayat or Block levels are not available. It is necessary to carry out comprehensive survey of all households within the state with all necessary details. This should be updated at regular intervals. These should be available at the Gram Panchayat level and kept in the Block level Data Bank. Similarly at every five years, data on water resources including ponds, paddy fields, natural resources, religious buildings, voluntary organizations, government land etc. should be collected and documented.
- (v) BPs should be strengthened to provide guidance and assistance to Gram Panchayats in Plan preparation and project scoping
- (vi) Multiyear projects of the BPs should be given preference
- (vii) Projects worth 150 per cent of the annual allocation should be approved. However in the last year of the five year plan period, these can be adjusted against the total fund availability for the five years

**(c) Specific additional Projects which can be assigned to Block Panchayats**

- (i) Implementation and monitoring of all centrally sponsored schemes
- (ii) RLEGP – implementation and monitoring
- (iii) MP LAD and MLA LAD projects
- (iv) Flood relief projects
- (v) Water resources conservation
- (vi) Social Forestry programmes
- (vii) Panchayat roads of 8m width (roads of less than 8m width to be maintained by GPs) – and permit BPs to utilize maintenance fund for road maintenance
- (viii) Mobilisation of funds at Block level to constitute a disaster mitigation fund

**(d) District Plan**

- (i) The present method of preparation of District Plan is a wasteful exercise.

- (ii) DPO (District Planning Officer) should be made responsible for District Plan preparation. Seminars should be conducted at the level of Gram Panchayats and Municipalities and subject experts and people should be consulted. These should be compiled and processed based on seminars at Block Panchayat levels. The draft District Plan so prepared should be discussed with MPs and MLAs from the district, invited experts, District level officers and the District Panchayat President and finalized.

**(e) Capacity Building**

- (i) All training programmes under Decentralised Planning should be coordinated by KILA (Kerala Institute of Local Administration). If training is imparted by any other agency, the training modules should be as designed in consultation with KILA.
- (ii) The quality of training received so far needs considerable improvement.
- (iii) It should be possible for KILA to organize training programmes at different locations, especially since women members of the LSGs are not able to travel far and stay away from home longer for participation in training at KILA. Training can be organized at Block Panchayat level.

## **9.4 Our Remarks and Response**

**9.4.1** Certain views expressed by the Block level functionaries, which are corroborated in the studies carried out by the Committee are very disturbing. Perhaps this is not expected when the State created the 'intermediate level' Panchayat in the three tier Panchayati Raj system. We are not inclined to subscribe to the view that the intermediate tier is redundant in Kerala as the ARC and several other agencies consider. We treat it as a given constitutional entity. We evaluated the working of Block Panchayats, to see how far they have done justice to the three basic responsibilities mandated under Schedule 4 (a) of the Panchayat Raj Act.

- **Utilisation of government and non-government technical expertise**

**9.4.1.1** Such utilization of technical expertise is required to prepare Block level Development vision and development strategy for the Block, preparation of project priorities, compilation of planning data and sectoral planning reviews and making available such planning data to the Gram Panchayats, providing training to Gram Panchayat etc. No attempt has been made by Block Panchayats to carry out this mandate. Even identification of non-governmental expert pool available within the local level was not undertaken.

- **Provide technical assistance to Gram Panchayats**

**9.4.1.2** Gram Panchayats require technical assistance in obtaining planning data, identifying of innovative projects to solve the felt needs within the Panchayat area, in the preparation of project briefs for the various projects, in the preparation of schemes and Five year and Annual Plans, providing technical aid in watershed planning, in training their functionaries in various aspects of administration

including budgeting and financial management and development administration. The Gram Panchayats also need external technical pool to help them in the above tasks. The Block Panchayats have failed in this task. Panchayats with a weak organizational capability was not able to provide any of the above technical assistance or guidance to the GPs.

- **Prepare schemes taking into consideration the schemes of Gram Panchayats in order to avoid duplication and to provide backward and forward linkages**

**9.4.1.3** This third responsibility of BP puts in a nutshell a few cardinal principles in the formation of BPs. BP should study the proposals of GPs within its jurisdiction. BP should formulate their own schemes which should never be a replication or duplications of GP schemes. While BP schemes should relate to GP schemes they should not be a duplication, which means that BP should consider only schemes and projects which transcend the capacity and/or transcend the jurisdictional area of GPs. At the same time BP schemes should provide backward linkages with GP development schemes. Projects of BP should also provide forward linkages with the schemes of the District Panchayats. Perhaps, innovative concepts are required to identify such schemes. BP should be aware of what is happening at GP below and at the DP level above. They also should have command over expertise and planning data and must have a broader vision of the development needs of the block and the district. Unfortunately this has not happened. Clause (1) and Clause (2) under the 4<sup>th</sup> Schedule are related to Clause (3). Technically BP should work on a higher plane with a broader development perspective than what is available at GP level. The State apparently failed to train and equip BP accordingly.

**9.4.2** Another lacuna was the absence of District Development Plans which could have guided the BPs. There was also no attempt at Block level to prepare Block development Plans. During the early seventies, under the Ford Foundation aid sponsored by GOI, Kerala attempted to prepare Block Development Plans as pilot projects. The concept adopted was based on the so-called growth centre approach. But the attempt was aborted, since growth pole and growth centre theory came under attack in India and outside. Kerala did not follow up on this initiative to continue to prepare Block Development Plans.

**9.4.3** It is this contextual background and the recognition in many circles to consider BP as yet another Gram Panchayat, but with bigger area of jurisdiction, that made at least a section of the population to think 'whether we need BP in the context of Kerala'. **But situations warrant otherwise to give a fair trial to this institution before entertaining the question of doing away with it.**

## **9.5 Recommendations**

### **9.5.1 Need of the intermediate tier in the Panchayat Raj System**

**9.5.1.1** Need of the intermediate tier in the Panchayat Raj System in a state like Kerala is being debated in many a forum. In many other states in India the average population size of Gram Panchayats is 2000 to 5000. (However, Assam has 10783, Bihar 8773 and West Bengal 17218) Gram Panchayat

in Kerala has an average population of 23789 (highest among Indian States). Perhaps this is one factor that has prompted to make introspection as to the need for another intermediate tier of Panchayat between the gram level and district level. The average population at the district level in Kerala is 16.83 lakhs. The average population size of Block Panchayat is noted as 1,55,095. [See GOI (2007), ARC Sixth Report]

**9.5.1.2 Perhaps this is the same argument for favouring the continuance of the intermediate tier of Panchayat. Between an administrative unit of 20000 population and another of 16 lakhs, there is need for an inter-mediate decision-making level, where development actions which do not come only within the purview of the gram panchayat level can be handled. Perhaps considering the responsibilities given to BPs as per Schedule 4 (a) (1) and (2), an area level at which technical expertise can be identified and pooled would be the Block level.**

**9.5.1.3 Considering the above it is recommended that Kerala may opt to retain the intermediate level Panchayat, but with redefined roles and functions.**

#### **9.5.2 Redefining the roles and functions of Block Panchayat**

**9.5.2.1** As we have repeatedly pointed out above schedule 4 of the KPR Act gives the general functional responsibilities in 4 (a) and the sector wise responsibilities in 4 (b). Fourteen sector-wise responsibilities broken into 27 sub-sectors are also given. We have noted that the Block Panchayats in general failed to do justice to the general responsibilities mandated under 4(a). The members of the BP Association maintain that the BPs can assume these three responsibilities. It seems that these three responsibilities have not been adequately interpreted to the BP functionaries and that the different ways and methods by which they could play these roles have not been exposed to the BP functionaries in the training programmes they received.

The general roles and responsibilities (Schedule 4 (a) of the Act) can be clearly redefined as follows:

- (1) A Planning Data Bank should be set up at the Block Panchayat level. The Block can become a resource centre for planning exercises at the lower level Panchayats and for regional planning exercises at the higher level.**

*Explanatory Note: Planning data Bank can be set up by collection and collation of all secondary data pertaining to the district and to the lower area level which are produced by the State level Departments, Parastatal agencies, other autonomous organizations like the University, Colleges or other organizations or individuals. In addition the surveys carried out on any specific subject or sector by different organizations, researchers etc. may be collected and placed in the data bank. These available data may be bound, documented and numbered and made available in a planning library. This data bank should be available for the Gram Panchayats for planning work, for understanding of any subject (like waste management, energy management or rain water harvesting etc.) and also to be used by the District Planning exercise at the higher level. This recommendation is complementary to the recommendations of Chapter 10.*

- (2) Technical Manpower Resource Bank should be identified and pooled at the Block Panchayat level. Both the Block Panchayat and the Gram Panchayat can bank on**



these experts and technical professionals for general planning, subject planning, project planning and similar other tasks.

*Explanatory Note: This technical pool would work with the Block Panchayat to carry out subject studies and prepare sector-wise policy plans at the Block Panchayat level (like drafting regional agricultural development policy, water resources management policy, environment conservation strategies, watershed management techniques policy on sustainable health practices etc.) In addition, this technical pool can also help the Block Panchayats in preparing comprehensive long range Development Plans as Sub – Regional Plans at the Block level. The Gram Panchayats within the Block can draw advice from this technical pool for planning at the Gram Panchayat level. The experts in the pool can be used for training programmes on various subjects organized at the Block Panchayat level. The State Government has now extended Building Rules for all Panchayat areas. Plans have to be prepared for all building activities by licenced supervisors, engineers and architects. Such licenced experts, if not available at the Gram Panchayat level, they may be licenced and at the BP level so that all the Gram Panchayats within the Block can make use of their services.*

- (3) Block Panchayats may provide technical advice and assistance to the Gram Panchayats in Plan preparation, identification of individual priority projects, in specific subject studies like water shed management, on block level resources etc.
- (4) Block Panchayats shall cause preparation of Sub Regional Plans for the long range development of the areas within the Block. Such Block Development Plan shall follow 'Strategic Planning Approach' with development of Vision and Strategies. Such block level sub regional plans should be formulated within the framework of District Plans [See Chapter 11].
- (5) There shall be a planning cell at the block level with the Block Panchayat President as Chairman and one Standing Committee Chairman as Vice Chairman. This Standing Committee Chairman shall be nominated / designated as the Standing Committee Chairman - Planning.
- (6) The Block Panchayat with advice from the Planning Cell shall identify development projects within the block and prioritise them. Such identified projects which come under the purview of the Gram Panchayats shall be made known to them. Those major projects which come under the purview of the District Panchayat, due to the size of the project (due to its nature of transcending the boundaries of the Block Panchayat and benefiting a very large area within the district) may be brought to the notice of the District Panchayat.
- (7) The Block Panchayat may carry out subject studies on subjects which affect/benefit more than one Gram Panchayat area. (on such subjects like water shed development policy, irrigation, conservation of natural resources eco-tourism and /or heritage, health, education etc.)

**9.5.2.2** The Sectoral responsibilities mentioned under 4 (b) of the Schedule of the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act 1994 (amended in 1999) shall be clearly spelt out to avoid overlapping with the functions of the Gram Panchayats. Projects or actions initiated / implemented by GPs shall not be replicated at the Block Panchayat level.

- (1) BPs shall not plan and implement any project oriented towards individual beneficiaries. All centrally sponsored and MP, MLALAD Schemes, that are not beneficiary oriented should be implanted by BPs.
- (2) BPs shall generally consider only those projects which transcend the boundaries of one Gram Panchayat area and benefit more than one GP area/population.
- (3) BPs shall give more importance for Productive Sectors – focus should be to act as a facilitator.
- (4) We redefine the Block Schedule as noted below:

(a) **Agriculture:**

- Preparation of Agricultural Development Plan with long term development Strategy for the Block and defining the role of the constituent Gram Panchayats
- Organise required training facilities/programmes to the agriculturists and officers
- Organise agricultural fairs with the intention of propagating new methods of cultivation, making available markets for agricultural implements, seeds, fertilizers & pesticides, opening out markets for agricultural produces and for encouraging cultivator – scientist dialogues
- Identification of agricultural financing resources and lending institutions and arranging credit schemes

(b) **Animal Husbandry and Dairying**

- Establish and run regional veterinary polyclinics and artificial insemination centres
- Conduct expert advisory workshops on various aspects of animal husbandry, animal welfare etc.
- Organise cattle & poultry shows.

(c) **Minor Irrigation & Conservation of Water Resources**

- Plan and implement small irrigation and lift irrigation schemes, which benefit more than one Gram Panchayat area
- Conservation and development of water resources within the Block and preparing Water Shed Development Plan
- Encourage Rain Water Harvesting (RWH) schemes and organize facilitation centres at regular intervals to enable individuals and Gram Panchayats to benefit from technical expertise and other facilities provided in the centres.
- Promoting responsible tourism

(d) **Fisheries**

- Improve and develop traditional / existing fish landing facilities

(e) **Small Scale Industries**

- Establish mini industrial estates based on feasibility studies
- Prepare feasible project plans for small scale industrial ventures and/or collect model project reports for projects feasible in the Block area
- Train small entrepreneurs to start self help units



(f) Housing

- Encourage formation of housing cooperatives
- Give publicity and organize training programmes for cost effective housing
- Encourage private initiatives to start manufacture of prefabricated building components and to start building materials market

(g) Energy & Electricity

- Develop non conventional energy sources and encourage private sector initiatives for this
- Give publicity to energy conservation measures

(h) Education

- Preparation of education policy for the block highlighting the role of government schools and the improvements required in those schools, review of examination results/ standards in the schools and advise remedial measures to initiate Gram Panchayats to take required actions
- Running of Government I.T.I.s
- Review the situation of pre primary education within the block area and coordinating with the state policies and initiate actions

(i) Public Works

- Take up road projects (excluding NH, MDR and other PWD Roads) which benefit more than one Panchayat area
- Prepare road connectivity/network plan as part of the Block Development Plan and point out roads which need to be prioritized by Gram Panchayats and District Panchayat
- Construction of buildings for institutions transferred from Government.

(j) Public Health and Sanitation

- Run Community Health Centres and Taluk Hospitals which provide preventive and curative health programmes in all streams of medicine
- Establish and arrange to operate Solid Waste Management sites, which benefit more than one Gram Panchayat area, so as to achieve economies of scale
- Establish and arrange to operate Crematoria and Abattoirs which benefit more than one Gram Panchayat area so as to achieve economies of scale
- Establish and maintain regional level Play Grounds, Parks and / or Swimming Pools which benefit more than one Gram Panchayat area so as to avoid every Gram Panchayat to maintain such facilities
- Prepare Health Calendars for the Block Area indicating the possibility of seasonal diseases and contagious diseases and recommending preventive actions to be taken by every constituent Gram Panchayat, the health institutions and the public.
- Running palliative health care centres for the aged in cooperation and/or consultation with GPs

**(k) Social Welfare**

- Run I.C.D.S. programmes.

**(l) Poverty Eradication**

- Plan and implement Employment Guarantee Programmes in association/coordination with Gram Panchayats
- Encourage and train the poor for taking up small micro enterprises as self employment programmes
- Provide wage employment opportunities to the poor

**(m) SC & ST Development**

- Run Pre- Metric hostels
- Encourage cooperative societies among the Schedules Castes and Scheduled Tribes

**(n) Cooperation**

- Encourage cooperative society movement within the Block Panchayat
- Strengthen Cooperative Movement

**9.5.3 *Assigning some revenue responsibilities***

General block functionaries argued for raising non-tax revenue or user charges on select items. We recommend that they may be given the right to collect rent from any building complex or construction they have made. We also recommend that for bigger inter GP projects which require institutional borrowing the BP should act as a coordinator.

**9.6 Capacity Building**

**9.6.1** Compared to the functioning of Gram Panchayats, District Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies, a different kind of role is expected from the Block Panchayats. Provisions of the existing Act and the recommendations made in this Report envisage the Block Panchayats to function mainly as a Planning and Coordinating Agency building required linkages with the Gram Panchayats below and the District Panchayat above. The Block Panchayat would also function as a training centre and a technical expertise bank, which the Gram Panchayats can look up to.

**9.6.2** To enable the BPs to function accordingly, the BP functionaries need to be adequately trained at various levels. Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) has to design specific training modules for the Block Panchayat functionaries.

**9.7 Functional Integration of Block Panchayats with C. D. Block**

**9.7.1** A serious functional duality which is noticed at the block level is that the Block Panchayat and the Community Development (CD) Block function with the same executive functionary as the anchor person (the Block Panchayat Secretary and the Block Development Officer) but with activities and projects which are not functionally and area-wise integrated. The BDO as an officer of the Rural Development Department executes the projects and priorities including Central Government sponsored

schemes and projects, which are channeled through the line department. These projects are implemented in the same block area, but the Block Panchayat functionaries are not involved in the formulation and implementation of these projects. The same officer sitting as Block Panchayat Secretary is responsible for the formulation and implementation of the schemes and projects of the Block Panchayat. The projects under the same sector are formulated and implemented in the same area by two organizations under the same person as the functional executive; however these two actions are related. This appears to be a serious contradiction and a dangerous situation.

**9.7.2** The BP functionaries are not aware of the projects formulated and implemented in their area of jurisdiction perhaps in the same sectors in which the BP is also working. Change in this functional duality and integration of these two roles with dual administrative controls is a challenging task, but needs to be addressed at the State level. This requires a political discussion and decision, but strongly recommended. Unification under the Block Panchayat with the same BP Secretary, without denying him/her of the existing avenues for promotion may be an administrative issue. Similarly, to integrate the Rural Development Department with the Panchayat Raj system, without losing the possibilities for accessing central funds under the sector, may be a planning issue. But functional integration of rural development department and the Block Panchayat aiming at coordinated convergence of schemes and projects at area level is a developmental imperative. Immediate policy initiative is advised.