I n 2009 Village, Longhe in Kolhapur district in Maharashtra witnessed an incident of extreme stigma and discrimination against a person living with HIV. An Anganwadi worker was removed from her job when her HIV status was known. The incident caught nationwide attention. In 2011, the Gram Sabha in the Kodoli village of the same district passed a resolution stating that the village will never discriminate with anyone who is HIV positive.

The above two incidents signify a big change - the not so acceptable ‘HIV’ becomes everyone’s concern in a year’s time in the same district albeit in a different village. Kodoli, once a nondescript village, is now a role model for everyone who wants to learn how to educate on and normalize HIV and take steps to reduce the stigma and discrimination with the HIV positive community. The moving force behind this change is the Gram Sabha of Kodoli.

“We were aware that in a nearby village an incident had happened wherein everyone opposed a woman who was found to be HIV positive. We feared that someday this would happen even in our village and the village would earn a bad name. We wanted to prevent it,” says sarpanch Manisha Gavde of Kodoli. Inspired by a street play on the incident staged by a team of volunteers from a local social work college, the Gram Sabha decided to take steps in order to ensure that no one in the village looks down upon the HIV positive community.

**Gram Sabha takes the lead:**
In January 2011, members of the Students Volunteer Forum set up by the SIBER College of Social Work in Kolhapur with support from the Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR), a Delhi based NGO visited the Kodoli village for HIV awareness activities. They also met the sarpanch and the rest of the Gram Sabha members and deliberated on the growing issue of HIV in the rural context. The Gram Sabha members felt that the information was important and it should reach to each and every person in the village. Deputy sarpanch, Ashok Bhonsle states that, “the villagers knew about the routes of HIV transmission, but did not consider themselves equally at risk when it came to HIV. We felt that it was necessary to break the myth that “we are safe”.

The gram sevak A.Y. Kadam states, “We never felt that it is equally important to inform even women and the youths in the village on HIV. After the students spoke to us, we realized that we were committing a mistake by ignoring HIV education.” Thus started a weeklong awareness drive, spearheaded by Gram Sabha with the support of the Students Volunteer Forum. It kicked off on 17th January 2011 and continued till 23rd January. The awareness drive was evident in Kodoli with the festive display of IEC materials, performance of skits and street theatre and corner meetings with women and youth. What created an instant engagement was the underlining of the fact that all of us are equally vulnerable and at risk.

However, the change in attitude was brought about through a street play on the pain and agony of the woman who was ostracized by the villagers of an adjacent village. Says sarpanch Manisha Gavde, “We had heard about the Longhe incident but when it was enacted, it actually made us experience the pain and agony the woman and her family went through and we felt ashamed and guilty for we also harboured the same feelings against HIV positive people.” It was with this feeling that the Kodoli Gram Sabha decided to educate its entire population of 50000 villagers so that they should change their attitude to people living with HIV. To make their stand clear, the villagers decided to adopt a “no discrimination” policy which would clearly spell out that nobody in the village gets discriminated on the basis of her/his HIV status. A resolution to this effect was passed on 26th January 2011.

“That is the day when we honour our Constitution and once again remind ourselves that we believe in the principles of equality and justice. We pledged on that day not to stigmatize and discriminate against PLHIV to ensure that we do not ever deviate from what we have committed ourselves to,” states Deputy Sarpanch Daji Bhonsle.

The resolution included a pledge and an undertaking to consistently get educated on HIV, inform and educate others, encourage everyone (and in particular women) to access health services including HIV prevention services, encourage and give platform to youths and women to discuss issues of health, sex education and HIV and not tolerating any kind of discrimination with PLHIVs and ensuring that an enabling environment is created whereby the PLHIVs can freely access and exercise their rights.

To go beyond just rhetoric, a village HIV Committee was formed. Sarpanch Manisha explains, “to take this forward, we have formed a core committee of 10 women called the Sakhi Manch (forum of friends). Besides education on HIV, this committee will also act as a crisis support group for the HIV positive women in the village.” Armed with this education, the Sakhi Manch is now visiting households and talking to the women about HIV. “What is emerging as a challenge now are the men in the village. It is difficult to speak to them,” states Babita, an Anganwadi worker. But the women’s group has a strategy to even reach out to them. The village thus, became the first village in the State to take such a novel step. The initiative was largely reported and lauded in the media.
**ANDHRA PRADESH**

**Villagers from six hamlets oppose project:** Villagers from six hamlets-Kumari, Kupti, Gajili, Gandhari, Malkalpad and Rayapur-of the Kumari gram panchayat in Neredigonda mandal on 9 January staged a dharma in front of the Collectorate seeking cancellation of survey on a proposed mini hydel-cum-irrigation project across the Kadem river. The protesters had earlier passed a resolution against the proposal to construct a multi-purpose project on the river. Officials of the Irrigation Department had recently conducted a preliminary survey for the project. The villagers fear inundation of their habitations owing to the project. The submersion could result in loss of 5,000 acres of cultivable land, they maintained in their representation.

**BIHAR**

**Mukhiya shot dead in Banka:** A mukhiya of Lauria gram panchayat Duhlad Shah was shot dead and one of his friends injured by unidentified armed criminals on Jhajha road near Darshania village under Belhar police station at Banka on 9 December. Police said the mukhiya was on way to Jhajha on a motorcycle along with his two friends when nearly 12 criminals intercepted his motorcycle and fired indiscriminately at him. The mukhiya was killed on the spot. Reason behind the incident was yet to be ascertained.

**GUJARAT**

**Samras panchayat contrary to democratic principles:** The sarpanches, majority of whom are women, registered their strong protest against Samras Panchayat. The government is luring villagers by declaring village panchayat as samras, which divides the villagers. Why are the panchayats having sarpanch, elected by the democratic system, not being given incentives as is being given to samras panchayat, asked Rukshmani Chaudhary, a sarpanch from a village in Mangrol Taluka in Surat. She said that samras panchayat does not allow leadership to grow in backward and tribal areas as only influential people get to decide who will become the sarpanch. Any opposition is curbed in the name of obstructing development of the village. She said that samras panchayat is not in the best interest of democracy.

**HARYANA**

**Land worth crores restored to panchayat:** The Gurgaon district administration has restored 165 acres of panchayat land worth crores to Nainwal gram panchayat near IMT Manesar. This land was fraudulently converted into Shamlat Deh allegedly by the then revenue officials to benefit private shareholders and land-grabbers. The Gurgaon deputy commissioner, P C Meena, has ensured not only possession of this
land to the gram panchayat but also the ownership or title which had been transferred in individuals’ names. As per records, the panchayati land of village Nainwal was changed into Shamlat Deh by the then revenue officials in December 2004. This was then illegally distributed among private shareholders without the relevant order from any competent court. The then sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) of Gurgaon, who was also allegedly involved in the case, has already been dismissed by the state government.

**JAMMU AND KASHMIR**

Omar for involving panchayats in formulation of annual plan: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said that a strategy was required to involve panchayats in the formulation of next year’s annual plan so that funds were earmarked accordingly for works at panchayat, block and district levels. Administrative secretaries concerned were directed to sensitize their offices at lower levels to involve panchayats in the formulation of next financial year’s Annual Plan (2012-2013), officials said. The Chief Minister asked the district development commissioners to monitor and ascertain the status of devolution of powers to the panchayats. He took stock of the implementation of the government order regarding transfer of services from 14 state departments to panchayats at a high-level meeting at Jammu on 8 December 2011.

**KARNATAKA**

Karnataka government to set up libraries in panchayats: In an effort to help propagation of knowledge among rural people, the State government plans to set up well-equipped libraries at gram panchayats in the State, said Minister for Mass Education and Public Libraries Revu Naik Belamagi in Mysore on 16 December.

**KERALA**

Gram Sabhas must play key role in revitalizing society-Chandy: Inaugurating the State level
The Sivaganga district administration has awarded the Tamarakki south panchayat of Tamil Nadu for successfully overcoming the social evil of untouchability. The Rs 2 lakh award will be used for the infrastructure development of the village. There are 527 families as of today in this village in the Sivaganga union. Out of these, 124 families belong to adi-dravidar community while the rest are non-dalits and living in perfect harmony, according to a survey. Unlike many villages in this vicinity where untouchability is still very prevalent, all communities enjoy equal rights here. For the award, the district administration carried out inspections to ensure if adi-dravidars are treated equally in hotels and teashops, where untouchability can be very prevalent through the ‘double tumbler’ system, if any. Equal worshipping rights at village temples, collection of water in taps and water bodies and renting of houses to different castes without discrimination are the major points taken into consideration to see if a village qualifies for the award. A Ayyanar, the panchayat president, who is into his successful fourth term after administering the village for the past 20 years said that untouchability had never existed in their village to the best of his knowledge. He insisted that they saw all people as equals before god and all communities participate in the village festival and offer prayers simultaneously. Also, on any family occasion invitations are extended to the entire village where everyone participates in the preparations. “If at someone is not invited, it may be due to a family feud or simple quarrel and never a caste-based issue,” said Rajathi, a villager.

N Elappan, a villager says that it is heartening to see the harmony among the dalits and non-dalits in their village. “We call each other ‘mama’ and ‘machan’, something that you will never see adi-dravidar’s addressing the other communities in many villages,” he said. He adds that teashops are places where they have daily gatherings and that their relationships have also helped to strengthen the ties among school children. Subbramani, another villager says that he is confident that their village is an example for others. “When a need arises, the non-dalits are always ready to extend a helping hand and even rent their homes to us,” he said. The panchayat president days that their strong ties within the village go with them to the grave because they have only one cemetery to bury or cremate their dead, beyond caste and creed. Ayyanar received the cash award from the Sivaganga district collector V Rajaraman on 13 December. This cash award would be utilised for providing infrastructure facilities like drinking water taps, streetlights and renovation of school buildings.
project will move forward. We have also said in our memorandum that the Corporation must be given help to save its assets and ensure the security of the employees," she said. The Corporation is of the opinion that sanitation is a state issue and must be handled by the state government since the local body lacks funds and facilities.

**MADHYA PRADESH**

**New scheme for village panchayats’ development:** Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan launched Panch Parmeshwar Yojana, a multi-purpose scheme, aiming for infrastructure development in more than 23,010 village panchayats across the state in Bhopal. Under the scheme, funds for various development schemes will be provided to the village panchayats concerned in lump sum so that the grass root level democratic institutions could initiate works in the wake of availability of funds. As per an official spokesman, initiative has been taken to provide consolidated funds to panchayats through an Integrated Action Plan. Now, the GPs will get consolidated funds on the basis of population during financial year. Under the scheme, a consolidated fund of ₹5 lakh will be made available to gram panchayats with up to two thousand population, ₹8 lakh to gram panchayats with two thousand to five thousand population, ₹10 lakh to gram panchayats with five thousand to ten thousand population and ₹15 lakh to the gram panchayats with over ten thousand population.

**Panchayat tax comes as a shock for 66 colonies:** Some 66 colonies around airport outside the existing Indore municipal corporation limits, were served building tax notices by GPs. Around 2,500 families living in these colonies have been asked to pay building tax at a rate of ₹1.15 per square foot. Zilla panchayat chief executive officer Gopal confirmed the move saying that the villages on the city outskirts have changed from rural to suburban areas and panchayats are well within right to levy cess.

**MAHARASHTRA**

**Sarpanch accused of siphoning off ₹20 lakh:** Former gram panchayat member Rajendraasingh Rathod, has alleged that the Gondia sarpanch Madhukar Patle, gram sewak and GP secretary Pindkepar, with the help of bogus rubber stamps have misappropriated over ₹20 lakh in various projects from 2008 to 10. In his complaint to the district collector he alleged that sarpanch and GP secretary had prepared faulty documents with fake signatures and rubber stamps and have misappropriated ₹20.58 lakh in four major projects. Rathod has submitted relevant documents as evidence. Deputy chief executive officer of Gondia ZP Sable said that an inquiry has been ordered into the allegations. “A three-member panel consisting of PD Nirwan, extension officer of Gondia, Pande, executive officer of Gondia and Chaure executive officer of Goregaon have been asked to probe into the case and submit a report soon,” Sable said.

**ODISHA**

**5-phase panchayat polls:** The three-tier panchayat elections will be held over five phases beginning February 11. The State Election Commission (SEC) on 24 December notified the polls to be held on February 11, 13, 15, 17 and 19. With the announcement of the schedule, the model code of conduct has come into effect and will remain in force till February 19. The ongoing flood reconstruction and damage repair works will continue but no new projects can be taken up.

State Election Commissioner Ajit Kumar Tripathy said. As per the notification, election will be held to all gram panchayats (GPs) except Dhinkia GP and 23 wards since their tenure is yet to be over. Election will be held for panchayat samiti and ZP members. Similarly, sarpanch elections for seven GPs are not notified as directed by the Orissa High Court. Officially, the results will be announced on February 21 (for sarpanch and ward member) and February 22 (for panchayat samiti and zilla parishad member). Indirect elections for naib sarpanch, block chairman and ZP chairman will be held on March 10, 11 and 13 respectively. During the five-phase polls, close to 2.44 crore voters will elect 854 zilla parishad members, 6,228 sarpanches, 6,231 panchayat samiti members and 87,528 ward members. Fifty percent of the posts are reserved for women.

**11 villages threaten to boycott panchayat polls:** Residents of at least 11 villages of Charangul panchayat

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**Awards for Outstanding Women Panchayat Leaders**

The Institute of Social Sciences calls for nominations from the Outstanding Women Panchayat Leaders. The award was instituted in 1999 to recognise the women panchayat leaders who have excelled in public life and whose tireless work has made a difference to their panchayats. The awards comprise plaques, certificates and cash which will be presented during the Women’s Political Empowerment Day Celebrations in Delhi on 24 April 2012. The last date for submission of nominations is 31st March 2012. For details contact: Dr. Bidyut Mohanty, Institute of Social Sciences.
in Koraput district's Semiliguda block have threatened to boycott the forthcoming rural polls, demanding inclusion of the panchayat under Damanjodi police station jurisdiction, among others. At present, the panchayat is under the jurisdiction of Sunabeda police station jurisdiction. According to the villagers, they face much difficulty in reaching Sunabeda police station as they have to cover a distance of about 20 km. On the other hand, the Damanjodi police station is at a distance of about 200 meters from the panchayat headquarters. The villagers also alleged that though it is almost 12 years that Charangul got the status of a panchayat but the office of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) meant for the panchayat is situated at Sunabeda.

Panchayat samiti president arrested on charge of aiding Maoists: Panchayat samiti Chairman of Daringbadi block in Kendhamal district, Junesh Pradhan was arrested by the police on 9 January for his alleged involvement in the Maoist triggered landmine blast that killed three policemen near Badarpanga village on Kotgarh-Srirampur road on January 5. There was strong evidence against Junesh regarding his involvement in the Maoist induced landmine blast and strong links with the Leftist extremists. Cases have been filed against him in the Kotgarh police station.

**PUNJAB**

Gram panchayat for boycotting assembly polls: Around 2,000 residents of Dhuhad village panchayat of Patiala district have announced boycott of forthcoming assembly elections and to refrain from voting in protest against the government’s failure to provide basic amenities in the village. Gram panchayat held a meeting on 16 evening, and its members passed a resolution to the effect. Over 60 years after independence, we are still awaiting a primary health centre for residents and animals in the village, a high school and other basic amenities, they said.

**TAMIL NADU**

Panchayat president fights to stop village firecracker industry: Alarmed by the high number of maimed people in their village, a Veerakal panchayat in Athoor union of Dindigul district passed a resolution on 26 December against the functioning of fireworks units in its limits. About 50 people in this village, who have lost either one or two limbs due to accidents caused by fireworks, are a common sight on the streets. About two decades ago, two manufacturers decided to bank on the availability of cheap labour and start their own fireworks units in the village. Lured by the success of these manufacturers, locals started their own units in their homes, making the village a high-risk one. Many accidents occurred since then. “The authorities and police have certain arrangements with the manufacturers, which makes it difficult to initiate action,” said the panchayat president.

**UTTAR PRADESH**

SC stays HC deadline for panchayat polls: The Supreme Court on 13 December stayed an Allahabad High Court order directing Uttar Pradesh government to issue a notification for panchayat bodies' elections in the state before December 19. A three-judge bench of justices Altamas Kabir, S S Nijjar and J Chalameshwar granted two more months to the state government to complete the formalities and extended the time limit to February 11 next year. The apex court passed the order on an appeal filed by the state challenging the December 5 direction of the Allahabad High Court which had, in a hard hitting judgement, asked the State Election Commission to approach the Governor if the state government failed to comply with its direction. Solicitor General Rohinton Nariman appeared for UP government to assail the High Court order and pleaded that the state be given at least 60 to complete the formalities. The High Court had directed the state to “complete all necessary formalities by working round the clock within a period of ten days or maximum by December 18”. The High Court had warned that “in case no notification is issued, the state election commission shall send a report to the Governor of UP who may proceed to uphold the constitution in accordance with law.” Challenging the order, the state government moved the Supreme Court contending the High Court has gone too far in issuing the mandamus to do everything within a period of 10 days ignoring the request of the state for grant of 45 days’ time required to complete the process of ward-wise reservation.

**WEST BENGAL**

Rural name and shame plan: The Bengal government will “expose” non-performer panchayats and the parties that run them and consider the option of blocking funds to the laggards. In the audit to be carried out by the panchayat department, the names of parties running the panchayats, panchayat samitis and zilla parishads will be mentioned. The decisions were taken on 10 January at a meeting between panchayat minister Subrata Mukherjee and the district magistrates from 18 districts. “We have decided to identify the panchayats with zero-performance. The parties running the panchayats will be listed. Even if the reasons behind the non-performance are political, non-performers will be exposed. Performance is the first, second and last criteria. Whether they will continue to receive funds will then be considered,” Mukherjee said after the meeting. The move was apparently initiated after the CPM started criticising the state government over poor performance of the panchayats. The Trinamul Congress-led government has provided work for only 19 days under the Centre’s 100-day job scheme in its seven months in power. The performance report will be crucial for the panchayats in getting funds the next financial year.
NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Contribution of women’s groups for stronger and transparent Panchayati Raj

BHARAT DOGRA

Legislation for women’s reservations in panchayats can ensure that a certain percentage of panchayat posts at various tiers will be definitely occupied by women, but such legislation by itself cannot guarantee the good performance of these elected women. To ensure that these women can effectively play the democratic role assigned to them, several conditions need to be fulfilled. Our experiences reveal that in areas where various social movements have been contributing to women’s empowerment for several years, it is much more likely that the full democratic potential of the reservations for women will be realized at the grassroots level. One area where this linkage between women’s mobilization and strong panchayats can be seen clearly is Kishangarh block of Ajmer district and its neighbouring area. This is also the core work area of Barefoot College (BC) a leading voluntary organisation.

In various social mobilization campaigns in Rajasthan when people of various voluntary organizations and people’s movements gather, presence of women’s groups of BCs eager sought. These women have made a remarkable, widely recognized contribution to many-sided improvements in their own villages as also to several wider national level movements (such as the movement for the rural employment guarantee and right to information). Due to the strength of these women’s groups, possibility of the emergence of independent women panchayat leaders emerged at an early stage of the reservations. BC activists and women group members started taking the message of women’s reservations to these villages. Women group members, who are mostly from weaker sections, were encouraged to contest elections. Some of them were also elected. They were determined not to play a proxy role and to assert their independence. Sarpanches like Rajendra Kanwar of Khatami Ratni Bai of Rawalata and Sunder Bai of Amarpura became known for their independent and dedicated work in their panchayats. One of the most unfortunate experiences of panchayati raj has been that sarpanches and other panchayat leaders are encouraged by corrupt officials to indulge in corrupt practices. This collusion of corrupt officials and panchayat leaders is responsible for denying development and welfare funds to those who need these the most.

BC and associated women groups were determined to find a different path of honesty and transparency. They arranged trainings for the creation of transparent systems in panchayats and their development activities. Training for the women who manage drought relief and employment programmes were arranged. Perhaps for the first time several women mates were also trained. However there were several difficulties and challenges. Some women panchayat leaders started off well, but were later influenced by family members or powerful villagers to avoid this campaign for transparency. So, some of them did not complete the training for transparency. Despite some setbacks, BC and women’s groups have continued their efforts for strengthening women’s role in panchayats with a special emphasis on creating honest and transparent panchayats.

The BC has been closely involved in the creation of systems of transparent functioning. At first these related to this voluntary organization’s own functioning and later this effort was extended to the creation of transparent systems in drought relief works, rural employment schemes and panchayati Raj.

Meetings of the village community were held to involve them in selection of work and to give them complete information about the budget that is available. All essential records are displayed publicly to ensure that people have access to information. Barefoot managers’ picked up from common villagers (with special emphasis on women) are provided training for managing such projects. Training is also organized for mates regarding work measurement; maintenance of muster rolls and other records etc. Women get priority in the selection for mates. Workers are selected carefully so that those who have greater need for employment can be selected on priority basis. Measurement based wages are given so that workers who have completed the work can go home without having to stay for all 8 hours and have flexibility of working hours to avoid exposure to extreme heat. All works involve some voluntary contribution of free labour (shramdan).

All financial transactions are made through bank accounts. A system based on labour cards and mate cards ensures that all records of employment and wages are in place and tally with each other. Photographs from certain angles of work sites are taken (a) before the work is undertaken (b) when voluntary work is provided (c) when work is in progress and (d) when work is completed. All records of the purchase committee are maintained carefully. A social audit is conducted in which all records (in a simplified, easy to understand format) are presented before the people and any objections or discrepancies raised by villagers are carefully examined. After the completion of the work it is necessary for the community to endorse in writing the completion of the work and its status. The work is then handed over to the community for future maintenance and repair. Barefoot College took up drought relief and employment projects not just to provide relief to distressed people but also to effectively demonstrate how transparent systems can actually work in practice. Some of these practices later proved very helpful when transparent systems were being discussed by the government for implementation at a wider level. The work of Barefoot College established how the concerns of paying proper legal wages can be matched with the concerns for proper asset creation.

At some places there have been complaints that proper legal wages are not paid while at other places there have been complaints that assets have not been created properly under the various employment and/or drought relief schemes. The Barefoot College evolved a system based on the slogan “Nayari Nayari Rate” (combining proper work, measurement and wage). For this slogan to become a reality it was important to measure individual worker’s work properly and promptly. If only a group’s work is measured then those who work very hard suffer due to the lesser work done by those who lag behind. On the other hand the system of individual measurement assured the worker of a fair wage and also enabled him/her to choose their hours of work.

Some officials argue that the kind of detailed measurement a dedicated organization like BC can provide, cannot be replicated at a national level. The debate can go on but what cannot be denied is that today we need institutions like the BC in many villages, particularly at a time when the rural employment guarantee scheme is emerging as the government’s biggest initiative in rural areas and one of the biggest challenges of Panchayati Raj also.
Rajput villagers unanimously elect tribal woman their sarpanch

Treading a different path, members of Gopalpura gram panchayat in Narmada district, Gujarat have unanimously nominated a Scheduled Tribe woman as their sarpanch and a Scheduled Caste woman as a panchayat member, even as there is no such reservation for the same. The elections to 10,509 village panchayats in the state is slated for December 29. This assumes significance as the decision was taken by the Rajputs who dominate in the village with a population of nearly 4000. For 35-year-old Hansa Jenti Parmar, a Class IX pass out, the chance to be a part of the panchayat is no less than bringing the entire community on the same platform in the village. Besides, the administration of the village, with the sex ratio of 500:498, will be headed by a housewife, Veena Arvind Valvi.

"We are a village where not a single atrocity case has been registered ever. A friendly atmosphere exists here. When the decision of including Veenaben and Hansaben was taken, it did not have any opposition from the male Rajputs of the village," said Ranjanba Gohil, former member of Rajpipla taluka panchayat. Aniruddh Gohil, a villager, said, "The village has seen elections only thrice after Independence as there has always been the selection system rather than election. There are about 290 Rajput families, 125 ST families and 65 SC families (in the village). During a meeting last week, some village elders and women suggested that a chance should be given to the women of SC and ST families as it would bring a lot of harmony among the villagers. The suggestion was readily accepted."

HC declines to stall panchayat election

The Orissa high court on 6 January declined to stall the ensuing panchayat election preparations. The court gave the direction in response to a petition filed by one Balamukund Das of Dunguripalli, challenging the guidelines of the state election commission regarding allocation of reservation and delimitation of constituencies. The petitioner had urged the court to stall the elections scheduled in February. The petitioner cited that at least 27 percent of reservation has been allocated for the other backward class (OBC) category, due to which the quantum of quota for SC, ST and OBC candidates breached the 50 percent limit.

Panchayati Raj Update 2011-12 has been enhanced to

Funds are not earmarked State-wise. Budget provision for PEAIS for each of performing States/UTs based on their rank on a Devolution Index (DI) annually. To make their functioning transparent and efficient. Awards are given to best performing States/UTs based on their rank on a Devolution Index (DI) annually. Funds are not earmarked State-wise. Budget provision for PEAIS for each of the years from 2009-09 to 2010-11 was ₹10.00 core per annum, which, for the year 2011-12 has been enhanced to ₹31.00 crore. Incremental Devolution was introduced in the year 2010-11 only. The Minister of Panchayati Raj V. Kishore Chandra Deo gave this information in the Lok Sabha on 9 December 2011.

Power to panchayats: four states rank high

Panchayati Raj Minister V Kishore Chandra Deo said in the parliament on 16 December that Kerala, Karnataka, Sikkim and West Bengal have made great progress when it comes to devolving powers to panchayats and giving incentive awards. These states have taken various measures to ensure strong Panchayati Raj and effective devolution of funds, functions and functionaries. The states of Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Bihar, Uttarakhand and Puducherry ranked low on devolution front. This information, sourced from an independent study that ranked states on a Devolution Index (DI) for 2010-11. Article 243 G of the Constitution empowers state legislatures to delegate panchayats with such powers and authority that enables them to function as the institution of self government, prepare plans and implement schemes for economic development and social justice. As per Article 243H of the constitution, a state legislature may by law authorise or assign taxes, duties etc to panchayats and provide for grants-in-aid. As the constitution leaves it to states to devolve power to panchayats, states vary in the extent to which they have devolved funds, functions and functionaries (3Fs).

Select Reading

Anupam Hazra: “Provisioning PESA: STILL A long way to go”, Kurukshetra, December 2011

Printed and published by Institute of Social Sciences, 8, Nelson Mandela Road, New Delhi -110 070 and printed at Kalpana Printing House, L-4 Green Park Extn., New Delhi-110 016. E-mail: mypanchayat@gmail.com Editorial Team: Santosh Singh & Shripal Jain