

The 73rd Amendment Act

The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act was passed in 1992 and it came into effect on 24 April 1993. The Act empowered state governments to take the necessary steps that would lead to the formalisation of the gram panchayats and help them operate as units of self-governance. This is an important part of the UPSC syllabus polity and governance segment.

What was the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act?

- Village panchayats existed in India long before the act was passed in 1992, but the system had inherent weaknesses like the inability to be a people's government responsive to their needs. This was due to a variety of factors like a lack of financial resources, no regular elections and inadequate representation of the weaker sections like scheduled castes/tribes and women.
- The Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution of India lays down in Article 40 that the government shall facilitate the establishment and smooth functioning of the gram panchayats.
- In order to address these issues and strengthen the local self-governments in India, the central government brought about the 73rd Amendment Act in 1992. The act was passed in both houses and entered into force from 24th April 1993.
- This Act added a new chapter into the Constitution called 'Part IX: The Panchayats'.
- The chief features of the act are mentioned below:
 - This Act made the Panchayati Raj institutions in the country constitutional bodies.
 - Under Article 243-B, it has become compulsory for every state to establish panchayats in their territories.
 - Article 243-G makes it mandatory for the state governments to devolve powers, responsibilities and authority to the panchayats.
 - The gram panchayats have a fixed tenure of 5 years.
 - State election commissions have been provided with the mechanism to conduct independent elections to the village panchayats.
 - Article 243-D gives provisions for the due representation of women and SC/STs.
 - The State Finance Commission should also evaluate the financial position of the panchayats every five years.

Result of the 73rd Amendment

- The passing of the 73rd Amendment has improved local self-government in the country vastly.
- In order to celebrate this and further give impetus to the institutions, the central government in 2010 decided to observe 24th April every year as **National Panchayati Raj Day**.

- Today, the formalised Panchayati raj functions in three levels namely, the Gram Panchayat (at the village level), the Mandal Parishad/Panchayat Samiti/Block Samiti (at the Block level), and the Zila Parishad (at the district level).