

AIR Spotlight - New Energy and Extension to Panchayats and Co-operative Societies

AIR Spotlight is an insightful program featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in the [IAS exam](#) preparation. In this article, the discussion is on New Energy and Extension to Panchayats and Co-operative Societies.

Context:

Good governance requires respect for human rights, the rule of law, strengthening democracy, promoting transparency and capacity in public administration. Panchayati Raj is a system and process of good governance. Villages have always been the basic administrative units in India since ancient times; this article analyzes the various new initiatives and extension activities to Panchayats and Co-operative Societies.

Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI)

- The Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) is a rural local self-government system in India.
- Local self-government is the management of local affairs by local bodies elected by the local population.
- Gram Sabha is the main body of the Panchayati Raj system. It is a village assembly made up of all registered voters in the Panchayat area.
- The members of all levels of the Panchayati Raj are directly elected and the presidents of the middle and district levels are indirectly elected.
- Panchayati Raj establishes a local village administration that plays an important role in the development of villages, especially in areas such as primary education, health, agricultural development, development of women and children, and participation of women in local government, etc.

Know more about [Panchayati Raj](#) in the linked article.

Other Government Initiatives

SVAMITVA Scheme

- The full form of SVAMITVA is village survey and mapping with improvised technology in village areas.
- It is a scheme for mapping land parcels in inhabited rural areas using drone technology and a continuously operating reference station (CORS).

- The main objective of the scheme is to provide an integrated solution for real estate validation for rural India.
- SVAMITVA property maps are provided to homeowners by government agencies to demarcate rural Abadi - Areas to be used. This will help homeowners own their homes in inhabited areas and use them as assets for loans or other financial requirements.
- Mapping of areas with drones will be progressive in all villages for a period of 4 years, beginning in 2020 and ending in 2024.
- Currently, the regulation only applies to 6 states: Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand.
- The program is funded by the central government.

Know more about the [SVAMITVA Scheme](#) in the linked article.

e-Gram Swaraj Portal

- e-Gram Swaraj Portal is a new initiative of the Panchayati Raj Ministry.
- It will provide a single interface for Gram Panchayats to prepare and implement their Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDs).
- The main aim of the portal is to improve transparency and strengthen e-governance in Panchayati Raj (PRI) institutions across the country through decentralized planning, progress reporting, and work-based accounting.
- It will also help build the credibility of the panchayats, which would lead to a greater transfer of funds to the PRIs.
- PRIA Soft (Panchayati Raj Institutional Accounting Software) is the online payment module used by Gram Panchayats to make online payments to vendors and service providers.
- These efforts are also consistent with those of the [Digital India](#) Program, which aims to transform India into a digitally empowered knowledge society and economy.

Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Anna Yojana

- Prime Minister Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana was announced during the COVID19 pandemic for a period of three months and ended on June 30.
- The program covered 80 million ration cardholders. Each household received 5 kg of feed grains (rice or wheat) and 1 kg of legumes (Channa only) free of charge.
- It was envisaged under the scheme that the Government of India would not allow anyone, especially a poor family, to suffer from the unavailability of food crops due to interruptions in the three months.
- 80 crore individuals that are about two-thirds of the Indian population would fall under this system and each of them would receive double their current entitlement for the next three months.

District Development Councils (DDC)

- The Union government paved the way for the establishment of District Development Councils (DDC) by amending the Panchayati Raj Act of Jammu and Kashmir 1989. Members of the district development council are directly elected by voters in the territory of the Union.
- The DDCs will be an administrative unit at J&K, this will include a DDC and a District Planning Committee (DPC).
- The structure of the district planning and development bodies in each district is superseded by the district development council. Each DDC has 14 directly elected members. The 20 J&K districts would have 280 directly elected members.
- The DDCs will serve for a five-year term, and will be involved in the preparation and approval of district plans and capital expenditures.
- These are the first elections in J&K after the state split into two union territories and [Article 370](#) was repealed in 2019.
- The holding of the elections amid the COVID19 pandemic and security concerns was praiseworthy. The DDC elections will be a step towards strengthening democracy in the region.

Way forward

- The need of the moment is to achieve a comprehensive change in the lives of the villagers by improving their socioeconomic and health status through effective connections through communities, governments, and other development organizations.
 - People's demands for sustainable decentralization and advocacy must focus on a decentralization agenda. The framework needs to be further developed to meet the demand for decentralization.
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