

**Report of the Committee
on
Staffing Pattern
&
Infrastructure Requirements
Of
Panchayati Raj Institutions in
Assam**

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S. K. Purkayastha

Chapter – 1

Introduction

- 1.1 By Notification No. PDA 115/2009/22 dated 19th April, 2010 Govt. of Assam issued an Order constituting a one-man Committee to study the structure and requirements of the Zilla Parishads set-up in Assam and also the requirements of the office of the Commissioner, Panchayat and Rural Development, Assam, and offices of the Block Development Officers and District Rural Development Agencies in Assam. A copy of the Notification is placed at Annexe-1

- 1.2 This was in the context of the devolution of fund, functions and functionaries to the PRIs which have increased / shall increase the activities of the PRIs manifold. It was observed that the physical and HR Infrastructure of the PRIs and also those of the Block Development Offices, Zilla Parishad, District Rural Development Agencies and the Commissionerate of Panchayat and Rural Development would require strengthening.

1.3 The terms of the reference of the Committee, as notified, are given below :

- (i) To examine and propose the physical infrastructure required for GPs, APs, ZPs, DRDAs, Sixth Schedule Areas and Commissionerate of Panchayat and Rural Development.
- (ii) To suggest for own staffing pattern of PRIs including entry qualification for each category looking into devolution of powers. To suggest for promotional avenues of the PRIs employees. Recommendations of the Third Assam State Finance Commission and the staffing pattern proposed by the SIRD may be consulted.
- (iii) To suggest procedures / rules to be framed by Govt. for transfer / placement of Officers / Staff of transferred department to PRIs including DRDAs.

1.4 Subsequently, by letter no. PDA/115/2009/58 dated 8th September, 2010 it was intimated by Panchayat and Rural Development Department that along with the recommendations regarding the staffing pattern of PRIs their pay-scales should also be suggested. A copy of the letter is placed at Annexe – II.

- 1.5 Following the issue of the Order mentioned above, a preliminary meeting was held with the Principal Secretary to Govt. of Assam, Panchayat and Rural Development, Commissioner Panchayat and Rural Development and their officers on 29th May, 2010. At this meeting the areas which should be studied were clarified.
- 1.6 In pursuance of the Notification of 19th April, 2010, and the clarifications obtained in the meeting held on 29th May, 2010, the Committee undertook a study was undertaken of the physical infrastructure and the personnel requirements of the Gaon Panchayats, Anchalik Panchayats, Zilla Parishads and the Commissionerate of Panchayat & Rural Development.
- 1.7 In connection with the study the provisions of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994, the Rules framed thereunder and the notifications issued etc. were examined. In addition, the relevant literature was gone through. Visits were also made to some of the Districts to get a better appreciation of the issues at the ground level.

Chapter – 2

Panchayati Raj Legislations in Assam

2.1 Following the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution of India, the Assam Legislative Assembly passed the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994. It provides for a 3-tier structure for the Panchayati Raj Institutions viz. Gaon Panchayats at the village level, Anchalik Panchayats at the intermediate level and Zilla Parishads at the district level.

2.2 The Assam Panchayat Act, 1994 is the successor to a number of earlier legislations relating to Panchayati Raj Institutions. Some of these are indicated below :

- The Assam Local Self-Government Act, 1915, by which the Chief Commissioner was empowered to constitute a village authority in each village, with some members being elected and others being nominated.
- The Rural Self-Government Act, 1926, which provided that every village should have a village authority, consisting of not more than nine members elected on the basis of adult franchise

for a term of three years, including election of a President from among the members.

- The Assam Rural Panchayat Act, 1948, which provided for village panchayats and rural panchayats. The President, Vice President and the members of the primary panchayats were to be elected for a term of three years on the basis of adult suffrage. The rural panchayats were constituted with one representative from each of the primary panchayats within its area and the members of the rural panchayats had to elect a President and Vice President amongst themselves for a period of three years. After the Constitution of India came into force in 1950 the autonomous hill districts were exempted from the provisions of the Assam Rural Panchayat Act.
- Following the report of the Balwantrai Mehta Committee, a 3-tier system of panchayats was introduced under the Assam Panchayat Act, 1959. This act provided for the Gaon Panchayat at the base level, Anchalik Panchayat at the intermediate level and Mahkuma Parishad at the Sub-divisional level.
- The Assam Panchayati Raj Act, 1972, abolished the intermediate level of Anchalik Panchayat and introduced a 2-tier system consisting of the Gaon Panchayat at the village level and the Mahkuma Parishad at the Sub-divisional level.

- The Assam Panchayati Raj Act, 1986, re-introduced the 3-tier system of Gaon Panchayat at the village level having a population ranging between 6000 and 8000, Anchalik Panchayat at the intermediate level, covering the area covered by a Block and Mahkuma Parishad at the apex level, covering the area of a Subdivision.

Source : Third Assam State Finance Commission Report Vol-1, Paragraphs 2.7 to 2.14

- 2.3 The history of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Assam, spans more than 80 years. Physical infrastructure and staff, created for earlier Panchayat bodies, have devolved on the new Panchayati Raj Institutions which have come into being following the enactment of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994.
- 2.4 The Mohkuma Parishad buildings of that period and their staff now serve the Zilla Parishads. Similarly, the Block Offices along with their Officers and staff are available to the new Anchalik Panchayats. The old Gaon Panchayat Offices, where they exist, are being used by the present Gaon Panchayats. However, these are clearly insufficient for meeting the requirements of the new bodies, and especially in the context of the devolution of funds and functions which is to take place.
- 2.5 In so far as the staff is concerned, it can be gauged to some extent from the fact that staffing pattern for Mohkuma Parishads, Anchalik Panchayats and Gaon Panchayats had been fixed from

time to time. An example of this can be seen in letter no. PDA 198/73 dated 15th March, 1974 which indicated tentatively the staffing pattern of Mohkuma Parishads / Gaon Panchayats is placed at Annexe 3.

Chapter – 3

Field Visits to the Districts and to Kerala

Visits to Districts

- 3.1 At the end of March, 2005, there were 2489 Gaon Panchayats, 219 Anchalik Panchayats and 23 Zilla Parishads in the Plains Districts of Assam. In addition there are 21 DRDAs in these Districts. Following the formation of Bodoland, the number of Gaon Panchayats, Anchalik Panchayats and Zilla Parishads have come down to 2202, 185 and 20 respectively. A detailed survey of all these 2400 offices approximately would not have been within a reasonable period of time. It was, therefore, decided to visit some of the Districts to get a feel of the problems faced by the PRI offices in respect of accommodation and other infrastructure requirements, as also their staffing problems. Pursuant to this decision, the Districts of Morigaon, Nowgong, Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Darrang, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Sibsagar and Jorhat were visited and discussions were held with the officers from the Zilla Parishads, Anchalik Panchayats and Gaon Panchayats locally. In addition the Districts of Karbi Anglong and Udalguri, which are in the Sixth Schedule Areas, were visited and discussions were held with the concerned officers.

3.2 In the Districts of Nowgong and Morigaon, it was mentioned that the Gaon Panchayat Offices are the weakest link in the implementation chain for flagship schemes. In this context, the need for Junior Engineers in the Gaon Panchayat Offices was stressed. It was also pointed out that there is an issue of seniority between the JEs and the GP Secretaries, the latter being non-gazetted Class III category. In the Blocks it was said that the CD staff are not being utilized for RD work and similarly RD staff are not being used for CD work. As a result, optimum utilization of the staff in position cannot be made by the BDOs. Regarding utilization of staff by the Gaon Panchayats, it was mentioned that the Tax Collectors are being utilized for verification of job-card applications and for issuing them. The need for more data-entry operators was mentioned. However, the issue which was repeatedly stressed was that vacancies against sanctioned posts are not being filled up and this is causing severe strains at all levels. In addition, the need for Night Chowkidars in GP Offices and Block Offices was also mentioned. Regarding infrastructure matters, it was mentioned that the issues are getting resolved with new buildings being constructed for the Gaon Panchayat Offices. However, it was pointed out that no provision has been made in them for record rooms, store rooms, godowns etc.; The need for separate toilet facilities for women employees and women Panchayat Members was also mentioned. Nowgong Zilla Parishad is currently accommodated in an old Assam-Type Building which is extremely congested and lacking in facilities for meeting halls

etc. Chief Planning Officer and Chief Accounts Officer are still to be appointed by the State Government and even a Finance and Accounts Officer is not available.

- 3.3 In Barpeta District, the Committee was informed that the Zilla Parishad Building is old and is in need of major repairs. In addition, there is a requirement of a Panchayat Bhawan where members and staff of the Gaon Panchayats and Anchalik Panchayats can stay during their visit to the Zilla Parishad Office. It was mentioned that the DRDA does not have a building of its own and is currently operating from a building constructed for training of SHGs. Of the 129 Gaon Panchayats in the District, it was stated that Offices in respects of 10% of them are still to be constructed. In those GPs where Office Building have been constructed additional space will be needed for computer facility along with furniture. It was mentioned that more than 200 revenue villages in the District are located in the Char Areas or adjacent riverine tracts and rural electrification has not taken place in those villages. To enable the GP Offices located in those areas to work on computers, they would need to tap solar energy or even use DG Sets. It was mentioned that Gomaphulbari Development Block Office has been completed eroded and would have to be reconstructed. Similarly, Pakabetbari Block Office is running from hired accommodation whilst Chakchaka Development Block Office is running from the Circle Office at Barnagar. All three Blocks would need to construct their own buildings. It was also mentioned that the existing Blocks require additional space for

training halls. In addition to buildings the need for internet connection at all Block Head Quarters was stressed. The problems faced by the officers in carrying out their duties in the rural areas were highlighted and the need for at least one Pool Vehicle at each Block Headquarters was reiterated. Regarding staff issues, it was suggested that GP Secretaries should be declared as Gazetted Officers and they should be assisted by Accountants, Tax Collectors, Computer Operators and at least two Junior Engineers. It was acknowledged that at the AP level, the staff situation was better. However, there is a need for Computer Operators and also the number of Junior Engineers should be increased. At the Zilla Parishad level, they are continuing with the staff strength of five which they took over from the Mohakuma Parishad. Since the Zilla Parishad has to oversee the implementation of a number of Central and State Schemes and also the implementation of the District Development Plan, there is need for more competent Officers and Staff . The need was expressed for one Deputy CEO from the ACS, two Planning Officers and one Finance & Accounts Officer. In addition for the technical wing, there is need for one Executive Engineer, one Asst. Executive Engineer, one Asst. Engineer and three or four Junior Engineers. Similarly, the DRDA indicated that one post of APO (Technical), which is lying vacant, needs to be filled. In addition, there is need for a post of Project Officer in the DRDA. The problems faced by the PRIs in making payments to beneficiaries through Banks and Post Offices was mentioned, especially the fact that because of the small number of bank branches and lack of staff therein, payments by banks get delayed and usually take anything between a fortnight

to a month. Another issue which was mentioned related to the Extra-Departmental work which the Blocks and the Gaon Panchayat staff have to perform. In this context, mention was made of the involvement of the Block staff in NRC updation, flood relief work etc. It was also pointed out that the Gaon Panchayat Offices and Block Development Offices are subjected to audit by AG, Local Audit, Internal Audit of Deputy Commissioner and this is in addition to audit by a Chartered Accountant. To ensure that they can satisfy the various audit agencies regarding expenditure under different heads, there is need for good Accounts-knowing staff in all these Offices. It was also mentioned that a part of Manikpur Development Block falls within BTC area and the Junior Engineers of the Block have extra work in respect of the VCDCs of the BTC area. Manikpur Development Block has a large area of 10 Bighas adjacent to the National Highway and this needs to be fenced to prevent encroachments.

- 3.4 In Dibrugarh, the Committee was informed that the Chief Executive Officer is the only Officer available in the Zilla Parishad and he is functioning with the help of an Asst. Technical Project Officer borrowed from DRDA and two Junior Engineers borrowed from other Departments. The clerical staff in the office consists of three UDAs , three LDAs and three Grade IV staff. It was mentioned that to function effectively the Zilla Parishad needs a Planning Section headed by a Planning Officer, a Monitoring Cell, a Computer Section with technical personnel

who can manage MIS, Computer Assistants etc. and a Technical Wing consisting of one Executive Engineer, one Asst. Engineer and a few Junior Engineers. Also two posts of Drivers are required for the two vehicles owned by the Zilla Parishad. In addition mention was made of the need for an Establishment Cell and for a Training Cell. In discussions with the BDOs of Dibrugarh District, it was noted that in a large number of GPs, there are no Secretaries and therefore these are being run either by giving dual charge to other GP Secretaries or by deputing EOs (Panchayat) or Senior Gram Sevaks from the Block office. The BDOs also drew attention to their functions under NREGA and pointed out the necessity of providing an Additional Program Officer to assist them. They also drew attention to the need for mobility if they are to discharge their functions properly and stressed the need for providing at least one vehicle per Block. They also suggested that there should be at least one Junior Engineer in each GP and one APO (Tech) in each Block. They also pointed to the need for filling posts of Peons and Chowkidars in the Blocks. The lack of service rules and promotion channels for BDOs and JEs was mentioned. It was also pointed out that in the Gaon Panchayat Offices there is need for providing quarters for the Grade IV / Chowkidar. They also drew attention to the inadequate funds which are made available for contingencies, and, that too, at infrequent intervals. The problem about payment of Fixed Traveling Allowance (FTA) was also mentioned and that after receiving FTA for two months payments have been stopped. Attention was also drawn to the role of the EO (Panchayat) in the changed setup and the need to re-define his role with clarity.

3.5 In Tinsukia, the Zilla Parishad drew attention to the meagre staff with which work has to be undertaken. It was pointed out that there is no Head Assistant, no Accountant and four posts of LDAs are lying vacant. In so far as technical staff are concerned, there are only three Junior Engineers but there is no APO (Tech). It was stated that after retirement of the earlier incumbents, the resultant vacancies have not been filled up, causing shortage of staff. Attention was also invited to the need for a Planning Cell in the Zilla Parishad Office and it was suggested that the Planning Cell in DCs Office should be transferred to the Zilla Parishad. In so far as the Gaon Panchayat Secretaries are concerned, only 67 are in position and 11 other Gaon Panchayat Offices are being run by 3 EOs (Credit) and 8 Gram Sevaks. Regarding Zilla Parishad Office Building, it was stated that it was constructed in 1975 and is in poor condition. There is also no provision for Quarters for the CEO and other Officers of the Zilla Parishad.

3.6 Similar problems were mentioned by the Project Director, DRDA, Tinsukia. He mentioned that there was no Executive Engineer and that posts of APO(Tech), APO (Credit), APO (Agriculture), APO (Monitoring), and 2 posts of Accountants are lying vacant. The DRDA has an Assam-type building for its office and that construction has been started for a residential training-centre, a part of which will be used for office purposes. He expressed the

view that it would be beneficial for rural development if DRDA is merged with Zilla Parishad.

3.7 BDO, Guijan Development Block, also referred to the acute shortage of staff, and especially the vacancies in the posts of Extension Officers (Credit),(Panchayat), and(Women and Children). Posts of Peons are also vacant and a night chowkidar is required. It was mentioned that this Block was bifurcated from Itakhuli Block in 1992. In the Block campus there is no residential accommodation for the BDO. Currently there is also no meeting hall in the Block. The other Block Development Officers also dwelt on the shortage of Officers and staff. They also mentioned that the Block Buildings were in need of renovation and that there was need for vehicles in all the Blocks. Some of the Gaon Panchayat Secretaries added that they were not receiving any fund for meeting office expenditure and that in the absence of any cleaning attendant they themselves have to do the sweeping and dusting of the office. They also mentioned that dual charge of 2 GPs creates difficulties, especially because of the work pressure created by NREGA.

3.8 In Sibsagar District, attention of the Committee was drawn to the poor condition of rural roads in some parts of the District and the consequent communication difficulties faced by the Gaon Panchayat staff. In particular mention was made of Laokhowa Development Block under which 4 GPs are more than 35 Km. from the Block Head Quarters, with the last 3 Km. of road being

practically unusable. The PWD Bridge at the entry point is in a dilapidated condition. Attention was also drawn to frequent power failures which create difficulties all round. Mention was also made that the number of computers available is inadequate and that there is no Broadband connection for those computers which have been installed. 4 GP Office Buildings also have no electricity connection. The space for meeting of the Anchalik Panchayat is inadequate and there is lack of water supply and toilet facilities. BDO, Demow, said that some of the GPs on the Northern side of the Block are close to the Brahmaputra River and get cut off during the monsoons. On the other hand, some of the areas toward the South do not have good road communication. Whilst electricity connection is available, the supply is often erratic. The Anchalik Panchayat Building was constructed in the 1950s and is now in very poor condition. Reconstruction would be necessary with larger space for the Anchalik Panchayat members. The GP Buildings have come up, but these are small and there is lack of boundary fencing. BDO, Sonari Block, added that the main road to the Block has been eroded and it is difficult to enter the office during the monsoons. The shifting of the Block Headquarters may, therefore, be necessary but this is being opposed by the local public. The Block still has no electricity connection. Under this Block, 11 GPs have Buildings of their own, constructed in 1990. Expansion of these buildings have been taken in hand. In Paschim Abhaypur Block, out of 6 GPs, 5 have buildings. However, they are without boundary-fencing and 4 of them do not have electricity. They lack meeting halls, Chowkidar sheds and Computer facilities. Similarly, Sapekhati Development

Block has buildings which were constructed in 1958 and are now beyond renovation. These would need to be reconstructed. Out of 15 GPs, 14 have buildings; however, 3 of them are without electricity. The Block Headquarters is 75 Km. from the District Headquarters and it is a severe strain to attend meetings at the Zilla Parishad Office because of the lack of any vehicle in the Block. In so far as Amguri Development Block is concerned, it has no buildings of its own and operates from the barracks of the Circle Office. The Block has not been allotted any land and therefore, construction of Block Headquarters is not feasible at this stage. Nazira Block, on the other hand, reported that the old Block building has been repaired and there is enough space. However, construction of the hall with SGRY funds remains half-done and needs to be completed. In so far as the Gaon Panchayat Offices are concerned, all of them have their own buildings and have electricity connections. However, they need additional space for holding meetings etc. and also provision of water supply. It was mentioned that uploading of data for MIS is being done from the office of the Sub-divisional Officer. Regarding staff matters, the Chief Executive Officer, Sibsagar Zilla Parishad, informed that posts of 42 GP Secretaries, 74 Tax Collectors and 86 Chowkidars are lying vacant. What is more, Computer Assistants are not available and no one is available for micro planning. There is also shortage of technical personnel. All proposals above Rs. 5 Lacs have to be sent to the Joint Director (Tech) in Guwahati from the level of 2 Junior Engineers, who are overburdened. There is also no Finance and Accounts Officer and there is shortage of Accountants. In so far as the Gaon Panchayats are concerned,

there are vacancies at all levels including that of Secretaries. In so far as the Buildings constructed in 1990 are concerned, it was stated that these are required to be extended to provide space for meetings of GPs, SHGs etc. Moreover, training space is required and separate rooms are also required for Junior Engineers. There is shortage of furniture. There is also need for car parking-cum-cycle stand in the GP office campus. Apart from this, landline telephone connections are required for these offices. Some GP Secretaries also drew attention to the need for a computer room and the requirement of storage space in the GP office. They also pressed for regular payment of salary and also payment of traveling allowance. It was suggested that facility should be provided to the Gaon Panchayat staff to purchase two-wheelers / motor bikes with loans from Public Sector Banks, and Government should consider subsidizing the interest element.

- 3.9 In the District of Jorhat, the Chief Executive Officer mentioned that the Zilla Parishad Office is functioning from the 2nd Floor of Unnanyan Building. However, there is need for more space for conference hall and other office requirements and this could be done by adding another two floors in the Building. There is a need for providing quarters for Zilla Parishad Officers and also provision has to be made for vehicles. She mentioned that the Zilla Parishad work would have to be carried out by setting up 3 new Cells viz. Technical Cell with an Executive Engineer and Junior Engineers, a Planning Cell with a Chief Planning Officer and Assistants and a Monitoring and Evaluation Cell. The

Accounts wing is also to be setup with a Chief Accounts Officer and other Accounts Staff. As regards DRDA it was informed that it has office space of about 3000 sq. ft.; however, there is need for additional space. The need for strengthening the Technical Cell was also mentioned. Regarding the Blocks and Gaon Panchayats it was noted that there were number of vacant posts at the level of Extension Officers, UDAs, LDAs, Senior GSs, Peons and Chowkidars. In so far as buildings are concerned, some of the Block Buildings are in need of renovation/reconstruction. There is also need for generators and vehicles in the Blocks. There were also requests for computer facilities with trained staff, as also for GRSs in all GPs and also permission to use the services of 'mates' for NREGA work. The need for mobility for GP Secretaries was stressed and suggestion was made for providing them with motorcycles.

Visits to Kerala

- 3.10 As desired by the State Government a team of officers headed by the Commissioner, Panchayat and Rural Development, went to Kerala for a three-day study tour. The visit involved briefings at the Kerala Institute of Local Authorities (KILA), Thrissur and also visits to adjoining Gaon Panchayats and Blocks. The strategies adopted by Kerala Government to breathe life into the PRIs was the main theme of the discussion.

3.11 In course of the discussions at KILA and with the Principal Secretary, Panchayat & Rural Development, at Thiruvanthapuram, insights were given relating to the setting in which the PRIs work, their infrastructure and staffing. Brief particulars of these insights are given below:-

- (i) Grama Panchayats in Kerala have an average population of thirty thousand and function in a rural-urban continuum. In this 'rurban' setting good houses, good roads and other infrastructure are to be found in the rural areas of Kerala and there is very little difference between urban and rural areas, except perhaps that life in the rural areas is more pleasant. In Kerala most parts have continuous human habitations and there is little to distinguish between urban and rural areas.
- (ii) Collection of house tax and other imposts is not a difficult task for the Grama Panchayats since the house-owners themselves are usually eager to make payment and collect their receipts.
- (iii) The two main taxes collected by the Grama Panchayats are the House tax and the Professional tax. Since there are a number of professional people residing or working for gain in the rural areas, the collections on account of House tax and Professional tax is quite significant.

- (iv) Most Grama Panchayats take steps to collect solid waste and arrange for its disposal. Also they are responsible for street lights and water-supply to households. Services provided by the Grama Panchayats is seen as a quid pro quo for the House tax levied.
- (v) The Grama Panchayat offices have 8 to 10 Assistants to attend to members of the public who come to the office for paying their taxes, registration of births or deaths, certificates for various purposes etc.
- (vi) Three members of the staff form the Taxation Unit which is responsible for collection of the taxes etc.
- (vii) The Grama Panchayat buildings are large RCC buildings with enough working space for the Assistants, waiting space for the public, and office space for the Grama Panchayat Officer and the elected body. Some of these buildings are double-storied, with part of the ground floor being rented out for commercial purposes.

3.12 Whilst making recommendations for infrastructure requirements and human resources for PRIs in Assam, these insights from Kerala have been kept in mind. It has been noted that the Gaon Panchayats in Assam have much smaller populations, covering 6,000 to 10,000 usually, and that in overwhelming number of cases they are located in rural areas where the impact of

urbanization is not to be felt. The population is also mainly agricultural and the number of professional people is extremely small.

- 3.13 It was also noted that the Grama Panchayats in Assam have not succeeded in any worthwhile measure to collect House Tax. Whilst one problem has been the reluctance of the elected Gaon Panchayat Members to endorse collection of taxes, the other problem has been the refusal of the public to pay taxes on the ground that they do not receive any direct service from the Gaon Panchayat. A small beginning could have been made by the Gaon Panchayats if they could provide piped water-supply to households in their jurisdiction and could collect water-rates. Section 25(2)(c) of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994, in fact empowers the Gaon Panchayats to levy water-rate where arrangement for supply of water for drinking is made by the Gaon Panchayat within its jurisdiction. Section 19 VIII (3) in fact authorizes the Gaon Panchayats to maintain rural water-supply schemes. However, since devolution from PHE Department has not taken place, no action in this direction has been taken so far.

Chapter – 4

Staffing pattern for PRIs

- 4.1 Minimum man-power of requisite quality and experience that is required to enable a unit of administration to become functional should be the aim of a properly framed staffing pattern. Obviously the staffing pattern has to take into account not only external functions of the unit, but also its internal functions. In other words, the functions which have to be taken into account are not only those which are required to be performed pursuant to Acts and Rules and in the discharge of duties to the public at large by the administrative unit, but also various other functions, mainly of an administrative and financial nature, which are for maintaining its internal health. Where there are 3-tiers of institutions the hierarchy of functions have also to be taken into account and the staffing pattern worked out accordingly. The need for checks and balances within the administrative unit is also an aspect which has to be kept in mind considering the staff strength. The objective of ensuring efficiency, economy and effectiveness of the unit would, however, act as the overarching principle for the staffing pattern.

- 4.2 The Assam Panchayat (Administrative) Rules, 2002 has laid down the staffing pattern for Grade III and Grade IV staff of the GPs, APs and ZPs. The staffing pattern as laid down in the said Rules is indicated below in a tabular form:

Designation of Posts	Zilla Parishad (no. of posts)	Anchalik Panchayat (no. of posts)	Gaon Panchayat (no. of posts)
Grade III			
Head Assistant	1	-	-
Upper Div. Assistant	2	1	-
Lower Div. Assistant	4	2	-
Accountant	1	-	-
Junior Engineer	1	-	-
Tax Collector	2	2	1*
Secretary, Gaon Panchayat	-	-	1
Grade IV			
Peon	4	2	1**
Chowkidar	2	1	-
Total	17	8	3

*in the case of Gaon Panchayat the post is of Tax Collector-cum-Road Moherar

**in the case of Gaon Panchayat the post is of Peon-cum-Chowkidar

- 4.3 In addition to the staffing pattern for Grade III and IV staff, provided by the aforesaid Administrative Rules, the Assam Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, has also provided for a Chief Executive Officer, a Chief Planning Officer, and a Chief Finance Officer for

each Zilla Parishad and for an Executive Officer for each Anchalik Panchayat.

4.4 A comparison of the functions to be discharged by the different tiers of the Panchayat bodies and the staffing pattern laid down do not show that the issue of minimum core staff strength to make them operational was kept in mind. The worst situation is to be seen in the case of Gaon Panchayats, which have a sanctioned staff strength of three, with only the Secretary Gaon Panchayat being responsible for all official work. As mentioned in an earlier Chapter in most Gaon Panchayats even the full strength of three is not to be found. The view that the Gaon Panchayat is the weakest link in the chain for implementation of various Flagship Programmes obviously arises from the low staff strength fixed by the Assam Panchayat (Administrative) Rules, 2002.

4.5 On the matter of the Staffing Pattern fixed by the Assam Panchayat (Administrative) Rules, the Third Assam State Finance Commission (TASFC) has made a number of observations. The Commission has observed at Para 4.35 of its report that “It now appears that the staffing pattern envisaged at that point of time could hardly capture the functional canvas of PRIs in its entirety. Apart from entrusted subjects and activities, the single largest components of expenditure of PRIs relate to various centrally sponsored schemes and programmes like SGSY, SGRY, IAY, IWDP/Hariali, NREGS etc. The current level of financial allocation against these schemes, including State share, runs to the

neighborhood of Rs. 3000 Crores per year. Again this is supplemented by Plan and Non-Plan budgetary allocation for Rural Development, including grants-in-aid recommended by successive CFCs. As per assessment made by Director SIRD annual allocation of fund under different programs is likely to vary between Rs. 10 to 15 Crores for each AP and Rs. 1 Crore to Rs. 2 Crores for each GP.”

- 4.6 The TASFC has, therefore, observed at Para 4.36 that “In the above background, the staff in position or even the staff admissible as per laid down norms for different tiers of PRIs seems to be utterly inadequate to cope with multiplicity of functions. As of now, each GP is managed single handedly by a Secretary. There is no supporting accounts or clerical staff. It is equally true in respect of all tiers of PRIs. Keeping in view, the work load of PRIs at all levels the need for additional manpower is indispensable. “
- 4.7 The TASFC has further observed that inadequacy of staff not only stands in the way of efficient performance of functions but also retards collection of revenue from taxes and duties allocated to PRIs. It has therefore recommended that the staffing pattern now in vogue needs suitable modification in conformity with expanding activities.

4.8 At the instance of the TASFC the issue of staffing pattern of PRIs was examined by the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD). In its recommendations to the TASFC, SIRD had suggested the following additional requirement of officers and staffs for the Zilla Parishad, Anchalik Panchayat and Gaon Panchayat offices.

Additional staff proposed by SIRD

Designation of Posts	Zilla Parishad (no. of posts)	Anchalik Panchayat (no. of posts)	Gaon Panchayat (no. of posts)
Officers			
Deputy Chief Executive Officer	3	-	-
Executive Engineer	1	-	-
Assistant Engineer	1	1	-
Junior Engineer	2	-	2
Agriculture / Horticulture Officer	1	1	-
Animal Husbandry / Dairy Officer	1	1	-
Fishery Officer	1	1	-
Industry Officer	1	1	-
Accountant	-	-	1
Office Assistant	-	-	1
Village level Extension Workers	-	-	2
Chowkidar / Peon	-	-	2
Total	11	5	8

Along with the posts already sanctioned under the staffing pattern by the Assam Panchayat (Administrative) Rules, 2002 the officers and staff as suggested by SIRD totals 28, 13 and 11 for the ZP, AP and GP levels.

After examination, TASFC recommended the staffing pattern given below:-

Zilla Parishad

Sl.No.	Designation	No. of Posts
1.	Chief Executive Officer	1
2.	Dy. CEO (Admn)	1
3.	Dy. CEO (Planning)	1
4.	Accounts Officer	1
5.	Planning Officer	1
6.	Ex Engineer	1
7.	Asstt. Engineer	1
8.	Junior Engineer	2
9.	Section Officer (Agri. A.H. Fishery & Industry)	4
10.	Accounts & Office Staff	8
11.	Tax Collector	2
12.	Driver	1
13.	Grade IV	6
	Total	30

Anchalik Panchayat

Sl.No.	Designation	No. of Posts
1.	Executive Officer	1
2.	Asstt. Engineer	1
3.	Extension Officers (Agri, Horticulture, A.H., Fishery & Industry)	5
4.	Junior Engineer	3

5.	Sr. Accountant	1
6.	Office Staff	3
7.	Tax Collector	2
8.	Computer Operator	1
9.	Grade IV	3
	Total	20

Gaon Panchayat

Sl.No.	Designation	No. of Posts
1.	Secretary	1
2.	Junior Engineer	2
3.	Accountant	1
4.	Office Asstt.	1
5.	Tax Collector	1
6.	Grade IV	2
	Total	8

Chapter – 5

Staffing pattern and pay-scales

5.1 The staffing pattern, as laid down in the Assam Panchayat (Administrative) Rules, is obviously inadequate for handling the work-load which the PRIs are now having to shoulder arising from the implementation of various Flagship Programmes. The recommendations of the TASFC in this regard are therefore extremely important.

5.2 Whilst keeping these recommendations in mind, it is necessary to also take note of the following facts :

- The Gaon Panchayats in Assam, which usually have populations ranging between 6,000 to 10,000, cover areas of approximately 5 to 10 sq. kms. in the plains of Assam. The Gaon Panchayats , as units of administration, have therefore areas and populations small enough to permit the carrying on of “detailed” administration and development.
- Whilst Gaon Panchayat offices will be required to render service to the public in accordance with the provisions of the

Assam Panchayat Act and Rules framed thereunder; in addition they will also have to implement Programmes and Schemes in accordance with the directions of the State Government and the Central Government.

- In the present period when a premium is placed on efficiency, economy and effective delivery of services the Gaon Panchayat offices have to be planned as modern offices and for this purpose full computerization and re-engineering of work processes should be undertaken;
- In staffing the Gaon Panchayat offices it will be necessary, therefore, to ensure that only computer-literate individuals are appointed as members of the staff; the staff recruited earlier would have to be enabled to acquire computer skills;
- With the large devolution of powers to the Panchayati Raj Institutions, the staff would have to develop good knowledge of the laws connected with each item of work, and for this purpose higher educational qualifications would have to be insisted upon at the time of recruitment itself; all members of the ministerial staff should be graduates.
- The staffing pattern would also have to ensure proper supervision and maintenance of discipline amongst the members of the staff, and for this purpose requisite

supervisory posts would have to be included in the staffing pattern

- The staffing pattern would also have to take into account the need for providing promotion to the members of the staff at appropriate stages of their careers, and promotion channels would have to be provided for this purpose.
- The Gaon Panchayat offices, if properly staffed, trained and modernized, can become the “front offices” of Government in the rural areas.

5.3 Currently, the Gaon Panchayat offices are mainly involved in implementation of Central Sector Schemes such as NREGA, SGRY etc. This involves not only preparation of projects, but also their implementation and sending reports to higher levels. Identification of BPL families, processing of applications for job-cards, issue of job-cards, payment for work done etc. are other functions which the Gaon Panchayat offices are having to carry out. Whilst under the sanctioned staffing pattern, as provided in the Assam Panchayat (Administrative) Rules, 2002 the Gaon Panchayat office has a staff strength of 3 including a Secretary, a Tax Collector-cum-Road Moharer, and a Peon-cum-Chowkidar, in fact, the working strength is usually only 1. The Tax Collectors-cum-Road Moharers had been recruited long back and those who are still in service are mostly old and infirm. Their over-all numbers is also a fraction of the total number of GPs.

Similarly, only in a few Gaon Panchayat offices Peons-cum-Chowkidars have been recruited. Consequently the Gaon Panchayat offices have been functioning more like “outposts” of the Blocks rather than as fully functional offices with requisite autonomy.

5.4 Since the Gaon Panchayat Secretary is usually single-handed and is also required to visit sites in the field and also the Anachalik Panchayat and the Zilla Parishad offices, the Gaon Panchayat offices often remain closed. According to reports it is not unusual to find nearly half of the GP offices closed each day. It has been stated by Gaon Panchayat Secretaries that since they have to work alone, they have no option but to close their offices during field visits. During such visits they carry their office letter-pads and office seals in their bags, along with whatever other papers are required. Apparently members of the public remonstrate against this practice. However, the Gaon Panchayat Secretaries have no option but to “work out of their bags”. This is a ground level situation, which is deplorable, and has to be set right quickly.

5.5 The Secretary of the Gaon Panchayat is the king-pin of the Gaon Panchayat set up. He functions as the Secretary to the elected body and in that capacity has to deal with the representatives of the people. At the same time he has to respond to the Block Office and the Zilla Parishad and take steps to get various schemes prepared, approved, sanctioned and implemented. He has also to

respond to various individual petitioners regarding matters which fall within the domain of the Gaon Panchayat. In attending to all these he will also have to act as the Team Leader for the Gaon Panchayat staff, guiding them, supervising them and ensuring peak performance from them all the time. It is necessary that the Secretary Gaon Panchayat has the requisite educational qualifications and experience level to be able to provide leadership to his team which will comprise mainly of newly recruited graduates with computer skills. From the data available it is seen that 1707 Commerce Graduates were recruited in 1994-95 as Gaon Panchayat Secretaries, and of them 1453 are still functioning in that capacity. There are another 223 Gaon Panchayat Secretaries who are graduates from streams other than Commerce. There are also 221 Gaon Panchayat Secretaries who are under-graduates. The Secretaries, most of whom have already put in more than 15 years of service, need to be placed at a higher level in the hierarchy of the staff in the Gaon Panchayat office. It is recommended accordingly that the Secretaries who are graduates be placed in PB-2 (Rs. 5,200 – Rs. 20,200) with a Grade Pay of Rs. 2,800. Those GP Secretaries who are under-graduates may be placed in PB-2 (Rs. 5,200 to Rs. 20,200) with a Grade Pay of Rs. 2,600. To distinguish the GP Secretaries in the Grade Pay of Rs. 2,800 from those who will be in the Grade Pay of Rs. 2,600, the former may be designated as ‘Secretary (Special Grade)’ or ,alternatively, as ‘Secretary (Grade – I)’.

- 5.6 The Secretary of the Gaon Panchayat will need proper assistance in carrying out different functions of the Gaon Panchayat Office. In particular, there are three sets of functions for which assistance would be required. These are (a) Collection of Taxes (b) Maintenance of Accounts (c) Preparation and implementation of Schemes.
- 5.7 The Secretary of the Gaon Panchayat, will, by virtue of his seniority, lead the team of office-workers, providing them with requisite guidance where necessary. He will, however, have to spend part of his time interacting with officers and staff of other Departments and in meeting members of the public, in the office as well as in the field. He will, therefore, not find it possible to oversee the work of the office staff throughout the day. A post of Supervisory Assistant is therefore found necessary for ensuring proper supervision of the office staff and also for ensuring that all members of the public are attended to by the staff members concerned with courtesy and speed. The Supervisory Assistant will also be responsible for preparation of tax demand each year, for issue of notices and for collection of Panchayat dues. In this he will be assisted by one of the Junior Assistants and a Peon-cum-Notice Server. These three members of the staff will form the Tax-Collection Unit of the Gaon Panchayat.
- 5.8 One Junior Assistant will function as Accounts Assistant. It will be his duty to ensure that the accounts work of the Gaon

Panchayat office is always up-to-date and that all papers relating to accounts are maintained properly and presented before audit.

- 5.9 One Junior Assistant will be responsible for uploading data concerning different schemes under implementation in the Gaon Panchayat area and for other correspondence work.
- 5.10 One of the Junior Assistants will also attend to the members of the public visiting the Gaon Panchayat Office, provide them with the information required, assist them with their applications and provide them with Birth Certificates, Death Certificates, Income Certificates etc.as may devolve on the Gaon Panchayat.
- 5.11 The Junior Assistants are envisaged as individuals who will also function as Data Entry Operators. They will, therefore, have to be computer savvy. They will have to work on the office computers and complete their day's work each day, leaving no arrears of work for the next day. They should also not be office assistants per se who remain restricted to the office only. They are also expected to visit work-sites in the field, and also meet villagers under the direction of the Secretary, Gaon Panchayat.. They are to function as 'problem solvers' in the field and hence the necessity to empower them to take decisions.
- 5.12 It is recognized that the office staff will have to visit the villages within the Gaon Panchayat area for different official purposes and

may also have to visit the Block Head-quarter periodically. It will, however, be the duty of the Secretary, Gaon Panchayat and the Supervisory Assistant to ensure that the Gaon Panchayat office remains open, without fail, during the notified office-hours and there is always a responsible employee in the office to deal with visitors, telephone calls etc.

5.13 It has been noted that the Gaon Panchayats are facing difficulties in securing the presence of the limited number of JEs in the Block Head-quarters and this is affecting the implementation of IAY Housing Projects. There is also a need for properly designing and implementing schemes taken up under NREGA. At present some temporary arrangements have been authorized by Government for securing services of Accredited Engineers. In this context it is recommended that each Gaon Panchayat should have a JE to attend to all technical matters.

5.14 After consideration of all aspects, the following staffing pattern for Gaon Panchayat Offices is recommended :

Designation of Posts	Pay-Scale	Grade Pay	No. of Posts
Secretary, Gaon Panchayat (Special Grade / Grade-I) / Secretary Gaon Panchayat	PB-2 Rs. 5200 – 20200	Rs. 2,800 Rs. 2,600	1
Supervisory Assistant	PB-2 Rs. 5200 – 20200	Rs. 2,400	1
Junior Assistants	PB-2	Rs. 2,100	3

	Rs. 5200 – 20200		
Junior Engineer	PB-2 Rs. 5200 – 20200	Rs.2,800	1
Chowkidar/Peon/Jarikarak	PB-1 Rs. 4560-- 15000	Rs.1,300	2
		Total	8

Notes :

- The post of Road Mohorer-cum-Tax Collector should be phased out after the present incumbents retire.
- For cleaning of office premises including toilets the services of a Cleaner may be retained on contractual basis.

The staffing pattern for Gaon Panchayat Offices tries to meet the need for a properly functional office.

Anchalik Panchayat

5.15 The Anchalik Panchayats, which have boundaries co-terminus with the Block boundaries, are in a relatively happier position regarding adequacy of staff.

5.16 The Block Development Officer is also Executive Officer of the Anchalik Panchayat. He is also the Programme Officer for the NREGS in the Anchalik Panchayat area. This is a unique position from which the Officer not only functions as an Officer of the

Middle Tier of the Panchayats, but also spear-heads the developmental efforts over large rural tracts. There are 185 Blocks in the Plains areas of Assam and there are another 22 Blocks in the Sixth Schedule Areas.

- 5.17 The report of the Assam Pay Commission 2008 has pointed out that the post of 'Block Development Officer is a pivotal position in the development organization'. The importance of this post can be to some extent gauged from the general functions of the Anchalik Panchayat as laid down in Section 49 of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994. These cover the preparation of Annual Plans in respect of Schemes entrusted to it and also those assigned to it by the Government or Zilla Parishad, consideration and consolidation of the Annual Plans of all Gaon Panchayats under the Anchalik Panchayats, preparation of annual budget, performing of such functions and executing such works as may be entrusted to it by the Government or the Zilla Parishad, to assist the Government in relief operations in natural calamities etc. Apart from this it is also involved with work in agriculture, land improvement, soil conservation, minor irrigation, water management, water shed development, animal husbandry, fisheries etc. It is also required to plan and supervise implementation of poverty alleviation programs and schemes and providing guidance therefore. In all these functions, it has to comply with the directions of the State Government and the Zilla Parishad, on the one hand, and on the other it has to oversee the implementation of various programs and schemes by the Gaon

Panchayats. This is apart from implementing schemes and projects in respect of matters entrusted to it by the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994. The Block Development Officer has to provide leadership to the officers and staff in the Block and also act as the friend, philosopher and guide to the Gaon Panchayat Secretaries and other staff of the Gaon Panchayats. In fact, the success or failure of many of the projects and programs depend on the leadership qualities and vigour displayed by the Block Development Officer.

- 5.18 Presently about 60 Blocks are headed by Officers from the Assam Civil Service and they draw their salaries according to the pay-scales provided for the said Service. In these 60 odd blocks the Officers of the ACS are paid salary in Pay Band 4 (Rs. 12,000 to 40,000) together with Grade Pay of Rs. 5,400. The BDOs belonging to the Panchayat and RD, however, have been given a pay-scale in Pay Band 3 (Rs. 8,000 to 35,000) with a Grade Pay of Rs. 4,700. Where the same duties are being performed it stands to reason that the salary should be at par. Given the important nature of the role which the BDO has to play it is necessary that the pay-scale for the post of Block Development Officer should be the same, irrespective of whether the Officer holding the post is from the P&RD or from the ACS (Junior Scale). It is recommended accordingly that the post of BDO should be placed in Pay Band 4 (Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 40,000). The Grade Pay for the BDO from P&RD should accordingly be fixed in Pay Band 4 (Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 40,000) with Grade Pay of Rs. 5,400.

5.19 The Assam Pay Commission Report 2009 has observed that there are a number of posts of Extension Officers in the Blocks in different Pay Scales. It has recommended that the Extension Officers should be regrouped into two groups keeping in view their present recruitment patterns and responsibilities. It has recommended that the post of EO (Panchayat) and EO (Women and Children) be clubbed as Junior Extension Officer and placed in Pay Band 2 with Grade Pay of Rs. 2,800. Similarly, the post of EO (Credit) and EO (Fisheries) should be placed in Pay Band 3 with Grade Pay of Rs. 4,300, It has, however, observed that the existing EO (Fisheries) should be placed in new Pay Band as per their existing pay-scale. It has also recommended that the entry qualification of all Extension Officers shall be graduation and the posts of Senior Extension Officers shall be filled up by promotion from the Cadre of Junior Extension Officers. The Assam Pay Commission has however, observed that the post of EO (Fisheries) is rather anomalous in the present setup and there is no need of a Cadre of Specialized Extension Officers in the Block setup. Apart from suggesting that there should be no fresh recruitment in the Cadre of EO (Fisheries), it has also suggested that the P&RD Department and Fisheries Department should explore the possibilities of integrating EO (Fisheries) in the Fisheries Department.

- 5.20 This Committee agrees with the recommendation of the Assam Pay Commission that the present incumbents of the posts of EO (Fisheries) should be transferred and absorbed in the Fisheries Department and recommends accordingly.
- 5.21 It is observed that the work load in the Blocks has changed considerably with the implementation of the Flagship Programmes of the Ministries of Panchayat and of Rural Development. The work is oriented to the programmes and the BDO requires the assistance of the Extension Officers for overseeing the implementation of these programmes. The nature of the functions of the Extension Officers are no longer in the classical mould of Extension Work as first developed for Agricultural Development. It is now more aligned to the various programmes announced by the Central Government and the State Government and therefore, has a larger content of programme-related work. It has to be recognized that the Extension Officers will now have to function more as Additional or Deputy Programme Officers than as Extension Officers *per se*. The functions of individual Extension Officers will, therefore, vary with the Flagship Programmes / Other Programmes which the Blocks will have to implement and their designations will therefore, vary accordingly. Keeping in view the nature of workload and responsibilities of the Extension Officers the Committee recommends that the posts of Extension Officers should be upgraded and regrouped into two groups viz, Senior Extension Officers and Extension Officers. Keeping in view the nature of the present work load , it is recommended that there

should be two posts of Senior Extension Officers and two posts of Extension Officers with upgraded pay in each Block.

5.22 The Senior Extension Officers may be placed in the Pay-scale 3 (Rs. 8,000 to 35,000) with Grade Pay of Rs. 4,600. The Extension Officers should be placed in Pay Band 3 (Rs. 8,000 to Rs. 35,000) with Grade Pay of Rs. 4,300. If the existing incumbent is an under-graduate, then the individual posts of Extension Officers occupied by them may be operated at a lower level of Rs.5,200 to Rs.20,200 with Grade Pay of Rs. 2,800.

5.23 It is further recommended that after the absorption of the Extension Officers (Fisheries) in the Fishery Department, the resultant vacancies may be utilized in the Blocks. The BDO as Executive Officer of the Anchalik Panchayat has a number of duties to perform in respect of the Gaon Panchayat, including finalizing their budget proposals, consolidating the Annual Plans, taking action on no confidence motion etc. He has also to oversee the functioning of the Gaon Panchayat Offices. In view of the fact that the number of Gaon Panchayat in each Block is usually more than 10 there is need for providing assistance to the BDO in these matters. For this, it would be appropriate to have a post of Panchayat Officer in each Block for assisting the BDO in this regard. The vacant post of EO (Fisheries) in the Pay Band 2 (Rs. 5,200 to Rs. 20,200) with Grade Pay of Rs. 2,800 could be utilized for this purpose.

5.24 The Junior Engineers belonging to Panchayat and Rural Development have been working in their posts for nearly two decades. Whilst their workload has increased significantly and there are reports of these Technical Officers being overloaded, they currently have no scope for promotion. There is need, therefore, to provide some promotion facilities so that the morale of these Officers, who are vital for the implementation of various flagships schemes, can be maintained. It is, therefore, recommended that 1 post of Junior Engineer in each Block be raised, from PB-2 ie. Rs. 5,200 to Rs. 20,200 with grade pay of Rs. 2,800, to Junior Engineer (Senior Grade) in the PB-3 pay scale of Rs. 8,000 to Rs. 35,000 with grade pay of Rs. 4,300. The Technical Wing in the Block Office should also be strengthened by creating a post of Assistant Engineer in the PB 4 payscale of Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 40,000 with Grade Pay of Rs. 5,400.

5.25 In recent times computerization has been introduced in the Block and Gaon Panchayat Offices. Computers have already been installed in most Blocks and also in a number of Gaon Panchayat Offices. It is expected that in course of next one or two years all these offices will have adequate number of computers with facility for on-line uploading of data. Since these offices are in the rural areas where assistance of computer maintenance firms are not likely to be easily available, it would be necessary to provide for a post of MIS Officer in each Block. His duties would not only include overseeing the installation of computers but also to train

the staff concerned on approved software and to provide them with technical assistance whenever required. It is accordingly recommended that a post of MIS Officer be created for each Block in the PB-2 (Rs. 5,200 to Rs. 20,200) with Grade Pay of Rs. 2,800.

- 5.26 Whilst no addition in the strength of the office staff appears necessary, it is felt that the present division of the staff into CD and RD should be done away with and the entire office staff be available for work of the Anchalik Panchayat and any other work entrusted to the Block. In the Commissionerate of Panchayat and Rural Development the staff of the erstwhile Directorates of Community Development and of Rural Development have been combined into one cadre. There is no reason why a similar exercise cannot be undertaken for the staff posted in the Blocks and Zilla Parishad. It is observed however, that the work relating to maintenance of Accounts in the Blocks is of great importance and staff concerned has, therefore, to be sufficiently skilled to discharge these functions. It is recommended that one post of Junior Assistant should be utilized for maintenance of Accounts. In addition there should be a Senior Accountant in PB-2 (Rs. 5,200 to Rs. 20,200) with Grade Pay of Rs. 2,400. There should also be a post of Senior Assistant in the same pay scale.

5.27 In the light of the functions and responsibilities of Anchalik Panchayats, the staffing pattern for the Anchalik Panchayat is indicated below :

Designation of Posts	Pay-Scale	Grade Pay	No. of Posts
Block Development Officer and Executive Officer	PB-4 Rs.12000 – 40000	Rs. 5,400	1
Senior Extension Officer	PB-3 Rs.8000 – 35000	Rs. 4,600	2
Extension Officer	PB-3 Rs.8000 – 35000	Rs. 4,300	2
Panchayat Officer	PB-2 Rs.5200 – 20200	Rs. 2,800	1
Assistant Engineer	PB4 Rs. 12000-40000	Rs. 5,400	1
Junior Engineer (Senior Grade)	PB-3 Rs.8000 – 35000	Rs. 4,300	1
Junior Engineer	PB-2 Rs.5200 – 20200	Rs. 2,800	1
MIS Officer	PB-2 Rs.5200 – 20200	Rs. 2,800	1
Senior Assistant / Senior Accountant	PB-2 Rs.5200 – 20200	Rs. 2,400	2
Junior Assistant	PB-2 Rs.5200 – 20200	Rs. 2,100	3
Senior Gram Sevak / Sevika	PB-2 Rs.5200 – 20200	Rs. 2,200	1
Gram Sevak / Sevika	PB-2 Rs.5200 – 20200	Rs.2,100	2
Driver	PB-2 Rs.5200 – 20200	Rs.1,900	1

Peon / Chowkidar / Jarikarak	PB-1 Rs.4560 – 15000	Rs.1,300	3
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Notes : For cleaning of office premises including toilets the services of a Cleaner may be retained on contractual basis.

Zilla Parishad

5.28 The Zilla Parishad is a new body. However, as mentioned earlier it is a successor to the old Mohkuma Parishad. Most of the staff of the erstwhile Mohkuma Parishads have been taken over by the Zilla Parishads and their services are being utilized. It needs to be mentioned, however, that the ambit of the functions of the Zilla Parishads is larger than that of the Mohkuma Parishads and therefore, the staffing pattern of the Mohkuma Parishads is inadequate for the Zilla Parishads.

5.29 The Assam Panchayat (Administrative) Rules, 2002 has laid down staffing pattern for Zilla Parishads as given below in respect of Grade III and Grade IV staff.

	Designation	No. of Posts
Grade III		
i.	Head Assistant	1
ii.	Senior Assistant	2
iii.	Junior Assistant	4
iv.	Accountant	1

v.	Junior Engineer	1
vi.	Tax Collector	2
vii.	Driver	1
Grade IV		
viii.	Peon	4
ix.	Chowkidar	2

5.30 Section 102 of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994, further provides that the Government shall appoint an Officer, not below the rank of the Additional Deputy Commissioner of a District, as Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Parishad. In addition, the Government shall also appoint a Chief Accounts Officer and a Chief Planning Officer for each Zilla Parishad. Further, the Government can post from time to time under each Zilla Parishad such number of other Officers of the State Government as the Government may consider necessary.

5.31 SIRD had advised the State Government in 2007 that certain additional posts were necessary for the Zilla Parishads. The designations and the number of posts, recommended by SIRD, are indicated below :

Designation of Post	No. of Posts
Deputy Chief Executive Officer	3
Executive Engineer	1
Assistant Engineer	1
Junior Engineer	2

5.32 Currently there is extreme shortage of staff even with reference to the staffing pattern notified under the Assam Panchayat (Administrative) Rules. Thus, all posts of Head Assistant, Accountant and Tax Collectors are vacant. Against the requirement of 40 UDAs only 11 are in position. Similarly no Chief Accounts Officer and Chief Planning Officer have been notified as yet. Suggestions have been made that the Planning Officer in the office of the Deputy Commissioner should be transferred to the Zilla Parishad. This has been countered by some Deputy Commissioner saying that they also have responsibilities under the Central Sector Schemes for which the Planning Officer cannot be relieved by them. It was also suggested that the DRDAs should be placed under the Zilla Parishads as that would enable the Zilla Parishads to utilize the staff and officers of the DRDAs and thereby overcome the present manpower shortages. There is a problem, however, in utilizing the staff of DRDAs by the Zilla Parishads as they have their own duties to perform and also being Agency staff they cannot function in the Zilla Parishads.

5.33 Various proposals and counter-proposals have been considered. In so far as the question of providing support to the Chief Executive Officer is concerned, it is felt that he should be supported by two Deputy Chief Executive Officers. One of them would be responsible for the Planning Wing, and if the Government so thinks fit, could also be designated as the Chief Planning Officer. The other Deputy Chief Executive Officer should be responsible

for the Administrative Functions including Establishment work which is likely to be quite heavy. In addition it is recommended to create a post of Assistant CEO in PB 4 (Rs. 12,000 – 40,000) with Grade Pay of Rs. 5,400. The Assistant CEO will act as Staff Officer to the CEO and assist him in all matters relating to the CEOs duties and functions.

- 5.34 It has been proposed in this Report whilst dealing with the staffing pattern for Anchalik Panchayats that the post of Block Development Officer should be upgraded from the PB-3 pay scale of Rs. 8000 to Rs. 35,000 with grade pay of Rs. 4,700 to the PB-4 pay scale of Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 40,000 with grade pay of Rs. 5,400. Earlier the post of Sub-Divisional Planning Officer was treated as promotion post from the level of Block Development Officer. This position should still continue and Officers serving as BDOs should be eligible for promotion to the posts of Planning Officer in the Zilla Parishads. Prior to the last revision of pay-scales BDOs were in the payscale of Rs. 4,210 to Rs.10,375 whilst Sub-Divisional Planning Officers were in the higher pay scale of Rs. 4,390 to Rs. 11,425. During the last pay revision the Sub-Divisional Planning Officer's post was placed in PB-4 i.e. Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 40,000 with grade pay of Rs. 5,400. Since it has now been recommended that the post of BDO should be in the PB-4 pay scale i.e. Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 40,000 with grade pay of Rs. 5,400, it would be necessary to upgrade the post of Sub-Divisional Planning Officer to that of Planning Officer in PB-4 pay scale i.e. Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 40,000 with grade pay of Rs. 5,900. This would

enable experienced BDOs to contribute to the planned development of a District by getting promoted to the posts of Planning Officers in the Zilla Parishads. It is recommended that there should be two posts of Planning Officer in each Zilla Parishad, with one Planning Officer being responsible for consolidation of the District Plan and its implementation, and the other being responsible for Monitoring and Evaluation.

5.35 The staffing pattern which is being recommended for the Zilla Parishads takes into account the functions which the Zilla Parishad Office will have to carry out. Some of these functions are indicated below :

- The staff deployed in the Zilla Parishad, Anachalik Panchayats and the Gaon Panchayats in any particular district will need to be recruited, trained, transferred and posted, given their promotions etc. from a single point in that district. This duty can be discharged effectively only by the Establishment Wing in the Zilla Parishad Office. Ideally the Head Assistant, one Senior Assistant and two Junior Assistants should form a unit for this purpose. The establishment work could be overseen by one of Deputy Chief Executive Officers.
- The Finance and Accounts Wing similarly should consist of one Assistant Accounts Officer, one Senior Accountant, one Accountant and two Junior Accounts Assistants. One of them

should also function as the Cash Assistant. Since the work of this unit should be completely computerized a larger staff strength is not being recommended. The work of this Wing should be overseen by the Chief Accounts Officer, who should be in the rank of Financial Adviser.

- One Senior Assistant and one Junior Assistant should provide support to the Planning Officer in respect of the District Development Plan and other work connected therewith.
- The Zilla Parishad would, conceivably, for quite some time in the future be the main communication point between PRIs and the State Government. It is expected that there would be considerable correspondence and for this it has therefore been proposed there should be two Junior Assistants.
- The PRIs would need to create an internal inspection machinery of their own to ensure that agency functions are carried out properly by the Panchayat bodies under different schemes. The inspection machinery would need to be overseen by one of the Deputy Chief Executive Officers. The inspection machinery would also include the Executive Engineer and the Chief Accounts Officer in respect of matters relating to their expertise.

5.36 Taking all these factors into consideration, the staffing pattern for the Zilla Parishads, including Officers in Grade I and II are indicated below.

Designation of Posts	Pay-Scale	Grade Pay	No. of Posts
Chief Executive Officer	PB-4 Rs.12000 – 40000	Rs. 7,400	1
Deputy Chief Executive Officer	PB-4 Rs.12000 – 40000	Rs. 6,400	2
Assistant Chief Executive Officer	PB-4 Rs.12000 – 40000	Rs. 5,400	1
Planning Officer	PB-4 Rs.12000 – 40000	Rs.5,900	2
MIS Manager	PB-4 Rs.12000 – 40000	Rs.5,900	1
Chief Accounts Officer	PB-4 Rs.12000 – 40000	Rs.6,300	1
Executive Engineer	PB-4 Rs.12000 – 40000	Rs.6,300	1
Asst. Executive Engineer	PB-4 Rs.12000 – 40000	Rs.5,900	1
Junior Engineer (Senior Grade)	PB-3 Rs.8000 – 35000	Rs.4,300	2
Asst. Accounts Officer	PB-2 Rs.5200 – 20200	Rs.2,800	1
MIS Officer	PB-2 Rs.5200 – 20200	Rs.2,800	1
Head Assistant	PB-2 Rs.5200 – 20200	Rs.2,600	1

Senior Assistants / Senior Accountant	PB-2 Rs.5200 – 20200	Rs. 2,400	2
Junior Assistant / Junior Accountant	PB-2 Rs.5200 – 20200	Rs.2,100	5
Senior Accountant	PB-2 Rs.5200 – 20200	Rs.2,600	1
Drivers	PB-2 Rs.5200 – 20200	Rs.1,900	3
Peons / Chowkidar / Jarikarak	PB-1 Rs.4560 – 15000	Rs.1,300	3

Promotion Channels

5.37 During visits to the various Districts it was represented that Block Development Officers and Junior Engineers are stagnating for years in the same post and without benefit of regular promotion. A common complaint was that the service rules of the various Cadres have not been finalized for decades and hence the stagnation. It was also learnt that in the past some officers and staff in the PRIs have resorted to litigation to get their rights to promotion recognized.

5.38 It appears that whilst no Recruitment Rules / Service Rules have been framed for the Officers and Staff of the Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, from time to time Executive Orders have been issued laying down the criteria on the basis of which recruitments or promotions are to be made. Thus, in

September, 1977 vide no. PDB 139/77/2 dated 14th September, 1977 instruction was issued regarding filling up the post of Extension Officers (Women and Children), which laid down that 75% of the existing vacancies should be filled up by the direct recruitment through advertisement and the remaining 25% of the existing vacancies to be filled up by the promotion from Gram Sevikas who are matriculates and / or equivalent on seniority cum merit basis, for which a State wise gradation list would be prepared. Subsequently, by a decision dated 13/04/1983, it was decided that the educational qualification should not be a bar for future promotion and that non matriculates Senior Gram Sevak and Gram Sevika may be treated as eligible for posts of Extension Officer (Panchayat) and Extension Officer (Women and Children). A decision was also taken around the same time to fill up 50% of the vacant posts of BDOs by promotion from Extension Officer (Panchayat) and Extension Officer (Women and Children) on the basis of seniority cum merit. The remaining 50% of the vacancies in the posts of BDOs were to be filled up by the direct recruitment through the Assam Public Service Commission. It was provided in the conditions of promotion that minimum length of service in the feeder grade should be 6 years for graduates and 10 years for under graduates.

- 5.39 By the Assam Panchayat and Rural Development Department (Appointment and Promotion) orders 1988 it was provided that Block Development Officer including Principal Gaon Panchayat Training Centre could be promoted to Sub-Divisional Planning

Officer / Secretary, Standing Committee / Secretary, Mohakuma Parishad. The Candidates for the promotion were required to have rendered at least 6 years of continuous service as such 1st January of the year in which the selection was made. The basis of selection was to be merit with due regard to seniority. Similarly, the order also provided that the Sub-Divisional Planning Officers / Secretary, Standing Committee / Secretary Mohakuma Parishad / Instructor (P&CD) borne on the Cadre of Sub-Divisional Planning Officer shall be considered for promotion to the posts of Asst. Development Commission / Deputy Director, Panchayat and Community Development subject to the candidates having rendered at least 6 years of continuous service in the feeder grade. By this order it was further provided that promotion from the level of Asst. Development Commissioner / Deputy Director / Vice Principal, CTC Jorhat, to Joint Director, Panchayat & Community Directorate could be made provided that the candidates for promotion have completed minimum of 5 years continuous service in the feeder grade on the 1st January of the year in which the selection was made.

- 5.40 What these Executive Orders highlight is that at various points in time recruitment and promotion processes were undertaken on fairly well stated principles. What was lacking was consolidation of these orders into regular Recruitment Rules / Service Rules.
- 5.41 For the purpose of examining and recommending the promotion channels which should be created, it would be appropriate to draw

attention to Section 102(8) which provides that the Government may from the specified date constitute such services for each Zilla Praishad as may be described. Further Section 140(1) provides that for Zilla Parishad, Anchalik Panchayats and Gaon Panchayats all appointments shall be by the Chief Executive Officer of Zilla Parishad on the recommendation of the District Selection Committee constituted by the Panchayat and Rural Development Department.

- 5.42 Going by these provisions of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994 it becomes clear that the Cadres for Group III and Group IV Staff will have to be District based. In other words these Cadres will not be All Assam Cadres. However, provincialised employees such as Secretaries of Gaon Panchayats, Tax Collectors-cum-Road Moharers and Chowkidars will be absorbed in the Zilla Parishads but they will be liable for transfer within the District or from one District to another District.
- 5.43 On the basis of these provisions, each Zilla Parishad will be required to constitute the Officers and Staff belonging to the Zilla Parishads into 4 Cadres and have Rules framed accordingly:
- a) P&RD Officers Cadre Rules
 - b) Ministerial and Grade IV Cadre Rules
 - c) Technical Staff Cadre Rules
 - d) Accounts Staff Cadre Rules
- 5.44 The promotion channels under the Officers Cadre Rule, it is contemplated will be as indicated below :

Officers Cadre Rules

Secretary Gaon Panchayat (Special Grade) / Panchayat Officer etc.

(PB 2 + GP Rs.2800)



Extension Officers

(PB 3 + GP Rs. 4300)



Senior Extension Officers

(PB 3 + GP Rs. 4600)



Block Development Officer / Principal, GPS Training Centre

(PB 4 + Rs. 5400)



Asst. Development Commissioner / Planning Officer, Zilla Parishad /

Instructor, Composite Training Centre, Jorhat

(PB 4 + Rs. 5900)



Deputy Director / Vice Principal, CTC

(PB 4 + Rs. 6300)



Deputy CEO / Joint Director, Panchayat and Rural Development

(PB 4 + Rs. 6400)

5.45 Selections from the level of Extension Officers upwards will have to be made by Selection Committees constituted by the Department of Panchayat and Rural Development and the select lists will have to be sent to the Assam Public Service Commission along with other requisite papers for its recommendations. The Appointing Authority for these levels will have to be the Government of Assam or the Zilla Parishad, as may be decided.

5.46 Regarding the Zilla Parishad Ministerial and Grade IV Cadre Rules, it is proposed that the educational qualification for all Grade III Ministerial Staff should be graduation in any stream from a recognized University. They will also have to be able to handle computers including uploading of data and preparing reports. A lower qualification of High School Leaving Certificate would not be suitable for the various kinds of work which the Ministerial Staff would have to discharge in the Gaon Panchayat Offices. It is expected that with devolution of functions to the Gaon Panchayats, the Staff would have to work keeping all rules, instruction etc. from different authorities in view and take decisions which would have to be legally valid. It may be added that there are large numbers of graduates waiting for jobs and no shortage of candidates is therefore envisaged. If the Ministerial Staff are graduates then a higher degree of mobility can also be ensured in their careers.

5.47 The promotion channel for the Ministerial Staff is indicated below :

Ministerial and Grade IV Cadre Rules

Junior Assistant : - 90% by Direct recruitment

10% by promotion from Grade IV

(PB 2 + Rs. 2100)



Supervisory Assistant in GPs / Senior Assistant in Blocks and Zilla

Parishad Office

(PB 2 + Rs. 2400)



Head Assistant in Zilla Parishad Office

(PB 2 + Rs. 2600)

5.48 The promotion channel for the Technical Staff of the PRIs is indicated below :

Technical Staff Cadre Rules

Junior Engineer
(PB 2 + Rs. 2800)



Junior Engineer (Senior Grade)
(PB 3 + 4300)



Assistant Engineer*
(PB 4 + Rs 5400)



Assistant Executive Engineer*
(PB 4 + Rs. 5900)



Executive Engineer/ Deputy Director (Tech)*

(PB 4 +Rs. 6300)



Joint Director (Tech)*

(PB 4 + Rs. 6600)

(* Posts to be filled by Deputation from Technical Deptts./Organizations)

5.49 The promotion channel for the Accounts Staff of the PRIs is indicated below :

Accounts Staff Cadre Rules

Accounts Assistant (Junior)

(PB 2 + Rs. 2100)



Accountant – cum – Store Keeper / Accountant

(PB 2 + Rs. 2400)



Senior Accountant

(PB 2 + Rs. 2600)



Assistant Accounts Officer

(PB 2 + Rs. 2800)



Chief Financial Officer (Financial Adviser/ Sr. F & AO)*

(PB 4 + Rs. 6300)

(* Post to be filled by Deputation from the Assam Financial Service failing which from any other service under the Finance Department)

Chapter - 6

Strengthening of the Commissionerate of Panchayat & Rural Development

- 6.1 The Commissionerate of Panchayat and Rural Development is a Major Directorate under the Department of Panchayat and Rural Development. The Head of the Office is the Commissioner who is a Senior IAS Officer. He is assisted by a team of 5 Joint Directors, of whom 2 are from the Assam Civil Service and 3 from the APRD Service, along with 1 Joint Director (Technical) from an Engineering Department. Below Joint Directors, there are a number of Deputy Directors, 2 of whom are from the ACS and 4 from the APRD Service.
- 6.2 The Commissionerate has two Wings, one being the RD Wing and the other being the Panchayat Wing. Both Wings consist of Branches and Sections. The structure of the Commissionerate is shown below :

Wing	Branch / Section
RD	i) Administration Branch A ii) Administration Branch B iii) Accounts Branch iv) Program Branch v) Technical Branch vi) Monitoring Branch
Panchayat	General i) Establishment – 1 } ii) Establishment – II } iii) Establishment – III } iv) Establishment – IV } v) Program Administration Group Accounts i) AG Audit ii) Bill Branch iii) Budget Branch iv) Compilation & Inspection v) Local Audit vi) Monitoring vii) Public Accounts Committee (PAC) viii) PL Accounts ix) Reconciliation

6.3 The Commissionerate has a major responsibility of overseeing the implementation of several flagship programs launched by the Central Government such as MGNREGA, SGSY, IAY, BRGF etc. as also important schemes of the State Government, such as DDP and Asom Bikash Yojana. The implementation is carried out through 21 Zilla Parishads, 185 Anchalik Panchayats and 2202 Gaon Panchayats in the Plains Areas in Assam and through 27 DRDAs of which 6 are in the Sixth Schedule Districts. Thus the

number of Panchayati Raj Institutions which the Commissionerate controls exceeds 2400. Along with overseeing the functioning of these Institutions, it has also to provide manpower for these Institutions by carrying out recruitment and by deploying them to the Districts. The large volume of funds which are transferred through, or under the aegis. of the Commissionerate of Panchayat and Rural Development runs into hundreds of crores for which proper accounts have to be rendered to the CAG and other Audit Agencies. The Office of the Commissionerate has therefore, to function effectively and has to ensure that the systems are run properly by the field units. It is – to put it briefly – the office which “back stops” the entire PRI set-up in the State.

6.4 The volume of work, as well as the complexities involved, are also increasing in respect of the funds, functions and functionaries devolving to the PRIs from 29 Departments. Amendment of Acts and Rules to facilitate the devolution are also on the drawing board. In addition, construction of office-buildings of GPs, APs and ZPs is a major challenge which has been undertaken by the Commissionerate. It will also have to undertake large-scale recruitment for the PRI Offices.

6.5 One of the problem areas for the Commissionerate is proper management of the interface with the Chief Executive Officers of Zilla Parishads. The CEOs are Senior Officers of the IAS/ACS who have been given the status of Joint Secretaries to the

Government of Assam and are therefore equated with Deputy Commissioners of Districts. When the Commissioner, P&RD is away for meetings / conferences, the interface between the Commissionerate and the CEOs have to be handled by the Joint Directors in the Commissionerate. Since technically they are of the level of Deputy Secretaries and they are also otherwise Junior to the CEOs in the ACS, there are sensitivities involved in such interfaces.

6.6 There is need for strengthening the Office of the Commissionerate by providing a level which facilitates interactions between the Commissionerate and the Zilla Parishads. It is recommended therefore that at least 2 Joint Secretary-level Officers from the IAS / ACS should be posted as Additional Commissioners in the Office of the Commissioner, P&RD. Such a measure would otherwise also be justified by the volume of work. These 2 Officers would oversee the work of the different Branches, interact with the ZPs and other PRIs, assist in the framing of strategies and policies, and also deal with the senior echelons of different State Government Departments which are concerned with devolution to the PRIs.

6.7 In addition, there is also a need for restructuring the Wings of the Commissionerate. It appears that the 2 Wings of RD and Panchayat hark back to the period when there were 2 different Directorates of Rural Development and of Panchayat and CD.

Keeping in view the nature of the work load, the number of Wings in the Commissionerate should be increased and the subjects currently dealt by the 2 Wings should be redistributed. In view of the large scale shortage of manpower at present in the PRIs, there is necessity for undertaking recruitment drives. This would be feasible only if there is a Wing dedicated to recruitment only. Similarly the 9 Sections of the Panchayat Accounts Branch and one Account Section in the RD Wing should be combined into an Accounts Wing. There should also be a reconstituted Establishment Wing dealing with all appointments, transfers across Districts, pension cases etc. This Wing would deal with matters related to both the erstwhile CD and RDs Staff and ensure that these are integrated into a single Cadre. With computerization gaining pace in the Zilla Parishads, Anchalik Panchayats and Gaon Panchayats, there is need for a MIS Wing in the Commissionerate which should be properly staffed with technically qualified personnel. Initially it may be set up with 2 IT Engineers, 2 Systems Analysts and 2 Data Entry Operators. This Wing would not only have the responsibility of framing the policy for computerization for PRI Offices and the training of staff in each District but also provide support to the Commissionerate with MIS.

- 6.8 At present the Commissionerate of Panchayat and Rural Development requires more Officers for better coordination with the PRIs. On the other hand, it has a large number of Grade IV posts which could possibly be reduced. The recommended staff

strength of the Commissionerate is given below. This brings down the number of posts in the Commissionerate from 285 to 212.

**Staffing pattern for the Commissionerate of Panchayat
and Rural Development**

Sl. No.	Name of Posts	Total	Existing Pay Scales	Grade Pay
1.	Commissioner	1	Rs.37,400/- – Rs.67,000/-	Rs.10,000/-
2.	Addl. Commissioner (IAS/ACS)	2	Rs.12,000/- – Rs.40,000/-	RS.7,400/-
3.	Jt. Director (ACS)	2	Rs.12,000/- – Rs.40,000/-	Rs.6,600/-
4.	Jt. Director, APRDS	3	Rs.12,000/- – Rs.40,000/-	Rs.6,400/-
5.	Dy Director, ACS	2	Rs.12,000/- – Rs.40,000/-	Rs.6,600/-
6.	Dy. Director, APRDS	4	Rs.12,000/- – Rs.40,000/-	Rs.6,300/-
7.	Senior, FAO	1	Rs.12,000/- – Rs.40,000/-	Rs.6,300/-
8.	FAO	2	Rs.8,000/- – Rs.35,000/-	Rs.5,400/-
9.	Registrar	1	Rs.8,000/- – Rs.35,000/-	Rs.4,900/-
10.	Superintendent (General)	6	Rs.8,000/- – Rs.35,000/-	Rs.4,600/-
11.	Superintendent (Accounts)	4	Rs.8,000/- – Rs.35,000/-	Rs.4,600/-
12.	Senior Accountant / Internal Auditor	12	Rs.5,200/- – Rs.20,200/-	Rs.2,600/-
13.	Senior Assistant	29	Rs.5,200/- – Rs.20,200/-	Rs.2,600/-
14.	Accountant	18	Rs.5,200/- – Rs.20,200/-	Rs.2,400/-
15.	Junior Assistant	52	Rs.5,200/- – Rs.20,200/-	Rs.2,100/-
16.	Stenographer (Grade - I)	2	Rs.12,000/- - Rs.40,000/-	Rs.5,900/-
17.	Stenographer (Grade – II)	2	Rs.8,000/- - Rs.35,000/-	Rs.4,300/-
18.	Stenographer (Grade – III)	2	Rs.5,200/- – Rs.20,200/-	Rs.2,400/-
19.	Jamadar	2	Rs.4,560/- – Rs.15,000/-	Rs.1,600/-

20.	Duftry	4	Rs.4,560/- – Rs.15,000/-	Rs.1,600/-
21.	Roneo Operator	2	Rs.5,200/- – Rs.20,200/-	Rs.1,900/-
22.	Grade – IV	30	Rs.4,560/- – Rs.15,000/-	Rs.1,300/-
23.	Driver	10	Rs.5,200/- - 20,2000/-	Rs.1,900/-

Engineering Wing

Sl. No.	Name of Posts	Total	Existing Pay Scales	Grade Pay
1.	Chief Engineer/ Addl. Chief Engineer	1	Rs.12,000/- - Rs.40,000/-	Rs.7,600/-
2.	Supdt. Engineer/ Jt. Director Technical	2	Rs.12,000/- - Rs.40,000/-	Rs.6,600/-
3.	Assistant Engineer Civil	2	Rs.12,000/- - Rs.40,000/-	Rs.5,400/-
4.	Junior Engineer (Sr. Grade)	4	Rs.8,000/- - Rs.35,000/-	Rs.4,300/-

Planning Wing

Sl. No.	Name of Posts	Total	Existing Pay Scales	Grade Pay
1.	Research Officer	1	Rs.12,000/- - Rs. 40,000/-	Rs.5,900/-
2.	Statistical Officer/ Asstt. Research Officer	1	Rs.8,000/- - Rs.35,000/-	Rs.5,100/-
3.	Planning Officer	1	Rs.12,000/- - Rs.40,000/-	Rs.5,900/-
4.	Inspector of Statistics	1	Rs.8,000/- - Rs.35,000/-	Rs.4,300/-
5.	Sub Inspector of Statistics	1	Rs.5,200/- - Rs.20,200/-	Rs.2,500/-
6.	Economic Investigator	1	Rs.8,000/- - Rs.35,000/-	Rs.4,300/-

MIS Wing

Sl. No.	Name of Posts	Total	Existing Pay Scales	Grade Pay
1.	Assistant Engineer IT	1	Rs.12,000/- - Rs.40,000/-	Rs.5,400/-
2.	Junior Engineer IT	1	Rs.8,000/- - Rs.35,000/-	Rs.4,300/-
3.	MIS Officer	2	Rs.5,200/- - Rs.20,200/-	Rs.2,800/-
4.	Data Entry Operator	2	Rs.5,200/- - Rs.20,200/-	Rs.2,100/-

6.9 An additional issue which came to the notice of the Committee is that because of the nature of the flagship programs and the need to monitor their implementation in the field, officers from the Commissionerate have to visit the Districts frequently. There are also independent monitors appointed by the Government of India who visit the State from time to time and thereafter proceed to the Districts for personal verification. There are costs involved in all these activities of verification and reporting which cannot be glossed over. The annual provision of contingency funds for the Commissionerate are grossly inadequate and need to be increased appropriately. Currently the provision is about Rs. 15 Lacs for the year. Taking a conservative but realistic view of the matter, the Committee recommends that the provision for contingencies be raised to Rs. 30 Lacs during the current year. In future the annual budget provisions for this purpose would have to be fixed at higher levels.

Chapter – 7

Infrastructure requirements of PRIs

Office Accommodation for PRIs

7.1 The general picture which emerges regarding accommodation for Gaon Panchayat Offices, Anchalik Panchayat Offices and Zilla Paishad Offices is that there is some existing accommodation available for all three categories. Thus out of 2202 Gaon Panchayats approximately 1600 already have their own office buildings and it is expected that construction of the remaining offices will also take place in a phased manner. In so far as Anchalik Panchayats are concerned since the Block Development Officers and their staff are already accommodated in the Block Head-Quarter, to a great extent their requirements are met. Similarly, the Zilla Parishads have taken over the buildings belonging to the erstwhile Mohkuma Parishads and therefore they too have some accommodation available.

7.2 During visits to the Gaon Panchayat Offices by the Committee, it was noted that whilst most Gaon Panchayat Offices have their own land, usually 2 Bighas, there were some notable exceptions also. Some of the Gaon Panchayat Offices are, however, in hired accommodation and are extremely congested. There is need to ensure therefore, that all Gaon Panchayat Offices have their own

land, and in case no Government land is available, then there should be no hesitation in purchasing the required land.

7.3 Anchalik Panchayats are all located in the Block Headquarters compound. The accommodation already available with the Blocks is enough in most cases to meet the requirements of the Anchalik Panchayats. There are however, some Blocks which still do not have their own buildings or their lands and buildings have been eroded. There are also a number of old Blocks where the condition of the buildings have deteriorated to such an extent that there is need for reconstruction. There are also one or two odd cases where the Blocks have no land of their own till now and therefore, construction is not possible at this stage. There is also an issue regarding staff quarters. In several Blocks, the staff quarters are no longer being utilized and are lying abandoned. There are also members of the Block staff who prefer to keep their families in nearby towns and do not therefore, intend to occupy any staff quarters. The construction / reconstruction of staff quarters should be undertaken only after ascertaining the real need for such quarters. However, it would be advisable to at least maintain one or two quarters for Grade IV staff including the Chowkidar who are required to protect the property of the Block.

7.4 In a number of districts, the Zilla Parishads are functioning from buildings which had earlier been constructed by the Mohkuma Parishads. These buildings are mainly RCC constructions.

However, there are some exceptions such as Sibsagar, Zilla Parishad, which is functioning from an extremely old Assam-type building from erstwhile District Board days, and Nowgong Zilla Parishad which is functioning from an old Assam type construction to which additions have been made from time to time.

7.5 It has been seen that even where the Zilla Parishads are now working from RCC Buildings belonging earlier to the Mohkuma Parishads, there is congestion and meeting halls etc. are somewhat small. In the case of Sibsagar and Nowgong Zilla Parishads there is no option but to shift the Zilla Parishad meetings to other buildings where large halls are available. Such an arrangement causes inconvenience to everybody and also stands in the way of organizing meetings at short notice.

7.6 In addition to the office building for the Zilla Parishad, it is necessary to provide for some accommodation where visiting officers from the Gaon Panchayats and Anchalik Panchayats can stay. There could also be a few room for visiting dignitaries, guest faculty for training etc. There would also be need for constructing quarters for accommodation of CEO and other Zilla Parishad Officers.

- 7.7 Accommodation for providing training to different categories of employees and officers would also need to be provided including hostel facilities.
- 7.8 The State Government has decided that office buildings for Gaon Panchayats, Anchalik Panchayats and Zilla Parishads will be constructed with fixed plinth area. There will be barbed-wire boundary fencing for Gaon Panchayats and Anchalik Panchayats, whilst Zilla Parishads will have brick boundary walls. Models for office buildings to be constructed for Gaon Panchayats and Anchalik Panchayats have also been developed along with cost estimates and these have been intimated to all concerned.
- 7.9 As a part of this exercise, Government has decided that in so far as the Gaon Panchayat Offices are concerned if they are in hired premises then they will furnish detailed plan of a building of the approved design within an area of 98 sq. mtr. and estimates within a financial limit of Rs. 11 Lakh. Similarly, where there is an existing building, the GP has been asked to furnish plan and estimate for raising the covered area to 98 sq. mtr. The financial limit in such a case would be Rs.8.5 Lakh. Similarly, in the case of Blocks, if they are in rented buildings, then they would be required to furnish detailed plan of a building of the approved design having a plinth area of 312 sq.mtr. and within a financial ceiling of Rs. 28 Lakhs. Where there is an existing building the Blocks can give plan and estimate for raising the covered area to 312 sq.mtr. The financial ceiling in such cases would be Rs. 21

Lakhs. In so far as Zilla Parishad Buildings are concerned, the Department has taken a decision to allow construction of an area of 1100 sq. mtr subject to maximum cost of Rs. 1.25 Crores. Provision is to be kept for adding another 400 sq.mtr. at a later stage.

7.10 These decisions relating to construction of buildings of approved design and plinth area are in the correct direction. As mentioned a large numbers of Gaon Panchayat Offices have now their own buildings and it is expected that in a phased manner all the PRIs will have their own buildings within the next 2 to 3 years. The construction programme is massive and is spread over large number of sites over the Plains Areas of the State. Proper monitoring would be necessary to ensure that all these construction projects get completed in time.

7.11 There is also a proposal to construct Multipurpose Halls in rural areas on the lines recommended by the TASFC. A decision has been taken that the Zilla Parishads will get these halls constructed through the PWD.

7.12 It may be added that even after the construction as planned is completed there could be other requirements, such as construction of storage space in the Gaon Panchayat Offices, construction of living accommodation for Chowkidar etc. This would depend upon the difficulties experienced and the actual needs. For this, a

separate programme of minor construction may have to be considered later.

Other Infrastructure needs

7.13 Computers are being provided to the Gaon Panchayat offices. However, most Gaon Panchayat Offices are unable to work online since internet connections are still not available. For uploading data, the staff concerned have to go to the Block Headquarters. What is more, both the Gaon Panchayat Offices and the Block Offices are in the rural areas where power cuts, especially during the working hours, are extremely frequent. Need for standby generators is a point which was repeatedly made by the staff and the officers working with Gaon Panchayats and Anchalik Panchayats. It is recommended that standby generator sets be provided to all Gaon Panchayats and Block Headquarters where computers have been installed or are being installed.

7.14 There are also problems of transport at all levels. For making field visits, and also for attending meetings in the rural areas, the public transport system, as it exists today, is totally inadequate and unplanned. Vehicles which were earlier placed with the Blocks have long become unusable; no replacements have been provided but the drivers still continue to draw their salaries.

7.15 There are also problems of water-supply in most Gaon Panchayat Offices. The Block Offices are in a somewhat happier situation as they still have their old tubewells and water pumps.

7.16 Looking to the needs of the PRIs, the following recommendations are made:

- All Gaon Panchayat Offices must be provided with electricity connection. Where the location of the Gaon Panchayat Office is very distant from electricity supply line, alternative arrangements for power through DG sets need to be provided. It is recommended that Diesel Generator Sets (minimum 1.5 KW) be provided to all such Gaon Panchayat Offices.
- Gaon Panchayat and Anchalik Panchayat Offices need to have telephone connections to enable members of the public to contact them. The landlines should also have broadband facilities so that online data entry can be undertaken from the Gaon Panchayat level.
- Water supply facilities would need to be installed in all the Gaon Panchayat Offices, where these are lacking. Water supply would be necessary not only for drinking purposes but also for the toilets.

- 7.17 It is of utmost importance that the officers and the staff of the Panchayati Raj Institutions should be seen as being active and efficient. They have to make their appearance felt in the rural areas. For this purpose, they should be allowed to take advantage of modern technologies in dealing with their functions.
- 7.18 The staff of the Gaon Panchayats and the Anchalik Panchayats should be provided with motor-bikes with which they can travel easily into the village areas. They could be asked to take loans from banks for acquiring motor-bikes of their choice. It is recommended that the State Government should subsidize the EMIs to the extent of one-third for the first thirty-six months. The overall subsidy could be limited to one-third of the cost of a motor-bike of approved make. The usual stipulation that guarantees for repayment of loans will be given only after the employees concerned are confirmed in service should be waived in such cases. In addition they should be paid Fixed TA @ Rs. 600 per month regularly for maintaining their motor-bikes.
- 7.19 As a part of the same effort field staff, including all members of the staff of the GPs should be encouraged to have their own mobile phones. This would benefit the Gaon Panchayat/Anchalik Panchayat office as the staff member concerned will always have a reliable communication-link with the office and this would also enable better control by the office over the output of the staff deputed for field work. A fixed amount for meeting the monthly expenditure on the mobile may be reimbursed to them.

7.20 To enable Officers of the Commissionerate of P&RD, the Zilla Parishads and Blocks to become mobile, it would be necessary to provide vehicles. In practically all the Blocks the vehicles placed earlier have become junk. The BDOs and Extension Officers have been finding it difficult to tour the villages in their jurisdictions. It is absolutely essential that at least one vehicle be provided in each Block. The Zilla Parishads also require vehicles to enable their Officers to carry out inspections and also to liaise and coordinate with Offices of other departments. The Commissionerate of P&RD also needs vehicles for enabling its Officers to visit the Districts. In addition they have to provide transport facilities to Officers from Government of India who visit the State to see the progress in implementation of Flagship Programmes. In the light of the above position, it is recommended that vehicles be provided on the following scale :

Sl.No.	Office	No. of vehicles to be provided
1.	Commissionerate of Panchayat and Rural Development	5 (five)
2.	Zilla Parishads	3 (three) each
3.	Development Blocks	1 (one) each

7.21 Small reprographic machines may also be provided to GPs and AP Offices to enable them to prepare copies for various official meetings. This is a especially necessary in rural areas where Xerox facilities are not available in the local marketplaces.

Chapter – 8

Procedures for devolution of functionaries to PRIs

- 8.1 Article 243-G of the Constitution provides that the legislature of a State may, by law, endow the Panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as Institutions of Self-Government and such law may contain provisions for the devolution of powers and responsibilities upon Panchayats at the appropriate level, subject to such conditions as may be specified therein, with respect to–
- a. the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice.
 - b. the implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them including those in relation to the matters listed in the Eleventh Schedule.
- 8.2 In accordance with this provision of the Constitution the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994 has, vide Section 19, laid down the functions which the Gaon Panchayats shall perform. Similarly, in respect of Anchalik Panchayats, Section 49 lays down the general functions which the Anchalik Panchayats shall perform. In so far as Zilla Parishads are concerned, Section 90 provides that it shall be the

function of a Zilla Parishad to prepare plans for economic development and social justice of the District and ensure coordinated implementation of such plan in respect of matters enumerated in the said Section.

8.3 The sectors in respect of which the Gaon Panchayats, Anchalik Panchayats and the Zilla Parishads are to carry out activities relate to a whole host of State Government Offices dealing with Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Dairy Development, Poultry, Fisheries, Social Forestry, Khadi and Village Industries, Rural Housing, Drinking Water, Roads, Bridges, Rural Electrification, Education, Rural Sanitation, Cultural Activities, Markets and Fairs, Public Health, Social Welfare, Welfare of Weaker Section etc. To carry out these activities the PRIs today do not have the requisite expertise and the field and/or office staff required. These activities are currently being carried out by different State Government Offices in the District.

8.4 Devolution to the Panchayati Raj Institutions is not merely the transfer of functions. To be effective, devolution has to be accompanied by transfer of funds as also functionaries. In so far as functionaries are concerned, Section 140 of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994 provides that for the Zilla Parishad, Anchalik Panchayat and Gaon Panchayats Grade III and Grade IV staff shall be appointed by the Chief Executive Officer of Zilla Parishad on the recommendation of the District Selection Committee of the Panchayat and Rural Development Department

constituted by the Government in the Panchayat and Rural Development Department. In respect of Grade I and Grade II Officer, it is provided that they shall be posted in the Panchayats and Zilla Parishads by the State Government.

- 8.5 Whilst Section 140 will guide future appointments to Grade III and IV and deputation to Grade I and II post, no mechanism has been clearly spelt out in the Act by which devolution would cover the existing functionaries in State Government Offices in the Districts. The Assam Panchayat (Administrative) Rules, 2002, which was notified nearly 8 years after the Act was passed, gives certain indications regarding the manner in which it was proposed to deal with the issues arising out of the expected devolution of functionaries. Thus, Rule 8(i) refers back to Section 140(i) of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994 which provides that the State Government may post from time to time additional staff of the Grade I, Grade II, Grade III and Grade IV to Zilla Parishad or Anchalik Panchayat or Gaon Panchayat as it may deem necessary. Rule 8(ii) provides that the additional staff appointed as under Sub Rule (i) shall not be treated as deputed staff and they shall enjoy all other benefits as they would have enjoyed in their respective parent department. Rule 8(iv) further clarifies that the salary and other allowances of the staff posted under Sub Rule (i) shall be borne by their respective departments.

8.6 The effect of the provision in the Assam Panchayat (Administrative) Rules, 2002 is to create three categories of personnel in the PRIs. These are :

- (i) Provincialised Panchayat Employees placed under ZPs, APs and GPs
- (ii) Other Panchayat Employees appointed / engaged in terms of Section 140 (i) of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994
- (iii) Additional Officers and Staff posted by State Government who will not be treated as on deputation.

8.7 The division of employees into three categories namely, Provincialised, Non-provincialised and Government- posted additional staff and officers can give rise to a lot of unnecessary confusion. Apart from dividing the employees into different categories – which is likely to have deleterious effect on office discipline and work culture – it does not automatically lead to transfer of funds and functionaries as promised under the devolution.

8.8 It would be appropriate to mention here that the Panchayati Raj Institutions in Assam are still fledging organizations, buffeted by a fast flowing torrent of Central Sector Schemes. Currently they neither have the manpower nor the organizational strength by which they can secure work from the additional officers and staff posted by the State Government. This could lead to a situation where the staff and officers of the State Government Offices in

the Districts continue to function without cooperating with the PRIs, and thereby the devolution of powers to the PRIs becomes unworkable. It is necessary that the intentions of Assam Panchayat Act, 1994 should be honoured and realized in full in the interest of the rural public, and all scope for confusion in the working of the system should be avoided. .

- 8.9 It may be noted that in most cases the additional Officers and staff posted by the State Government would continue to work from their original offices. No separate space, in fact, is proposed to be constructed in the ZPs, APs and GPs to provide office accommodation for State Government employees.
- 8.10 Before suggesting the procedure which should be adopted for devolution of officers and staff to the PRIs it is necessary to spend some times discussing the problems which hinder their free movement from the State Government to the Panchayats. The transfers of fund from the State Government to the PRIs is currently being done through the mechanism of Grants-In-Aid. Consequently, the PRIs are treated as Grants-In-Aid Institutions. In the normal course State Government employees would find it difficult to work in such institutions as the service in PRIs may not be treated as “duty” under Government and could therefore raise fears relating to pensionary benefits. An added difficulty is regarding whether the service in the PRIs could be treated as regular deputation, and if so, then whether willingness of the individuals concerned will have to be obtained before their

deployment in PRIs. Rule 8 of the Assam Panchayat (Administrative) Rules, 2002 in fact provides that the deployment will be on deputation basis with the proviso that the State Government would be responsible for the payment of the salary.

8.11 It would be appreciated that the devolution of staff and officers is a new development for which there are no exact precedents. The provincialisation of certain services in the early part of the 20th Century is not replicated in the present situation where certain departmental offices, which will be a part of the Panchayati setup, will also simultaneously be planning, implementing and monitoring some schemes and functions on behalf of the State Government. The District Agriculture Office, for example will continue to have the responsibility of implementing some of the State level Agricultural Projects and Programme. Similar would be the case of the Forest Department, PHE, and Health Department Offices in the Districts.

8.12 Keeping this aspect in mind, it is suggested that the procedure for devolution of officers and staff should proceed in a phased manner.

8.13 Activity mapping had been carried out once in 2002 and thereafter in June, 2007. The Activity mapping for devolution of functions, functionaries and funds to Panchayati Raj Institutions in Assam, notified vide notification no. PDA 336/2001/Pt-III/32 dated 25th

June, 2007 gives a complete list of the various categories of the officers and staff belonging to different Departments who would be devolved to the PRIs. This notification covers 29 Departments and indicates the devolution to the Zilla Parishads, Anchalik Panchayats and Gaon Panchayats, with practically all deployments of Departmental officers and staff being classified as deputations. It is understood that there has not been any movement thereafter in pursuance to the said notification.

8.14 It is recommended that as a first step the District-level offices and the subordinate offices / institutions of the 29 Departments be tagged to the appropriate Panchayat body viz. Zilla Parishad or Anchalik Panchayat or Gaon Panchayat. This would naturally take into account the location of the Departmental office and the level / levels at which it would provide service. Once the tagging is done, then steps should be taken to notify this to the members of the public by making necessary changes in the office sign-boards etc. The practice followed by Kerala in this regards could form the basis of this exercise.

8.15 In this phase, all employees of the offices from Grade I to Grade IV would be deemed to be “attached” to these offices for Panchayat duties whilst remaining employees of the State Government. At this stage they would serve the State Government and also provide service to the Panchayats. At this stage, a part of the Plan funds belonging to the Department should be allotted for implementing the Panchayat level Plans which would have found

place in the District Development Plan. In Kerala apparently 30% of the Plan funds are routed through the Panchayats and implemented by the Departmental Offices tagged to the Panchayats.

8.16 Before beginning the next phase, the Assam Pension Rules should be suitably modified so that service on deputation to Panchayat bodies and attached Organizations is treated as 'duty' for the purpose of the Pension Rules. The requirement that officers should return to regular posts in the State Government from deputation before their superannuation should also be waived in the case of deputation to Panchayats.

8.17 In the second phase posts in Grade III and Grade IV of the offices tagged to the Panchayats should be converted from State Government posts to Panchayat posts. The incumbents in those posts should now be placed on deputation to the Panchayats. Their salaries would, however, still be paid by the State Government. This could be done either by routing the amount required each month through the Zilla Parishads or could be done through regular salary bills prepared by the tagged office. In the latter case, however, after the pay-bill is signed by the Drawing and Disbursing Officer, it should be countersigned by the Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Parishad.

8.18 During this second phase as posts in Grade III and Grade IV fall vacant because of retirements, deaths, resignations etc. the Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Parishad would take steps to fill up the vacancies by following the procedures laid down in Section 140(i) of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994. In so far as Grade I and Grade II posts in the tagged offices are concerned postings will continue to be made by the concerned Departments of the State Government. This would be in accordance with the provision of Section 140(i) of the Assam Panchayat Act. Since these posts would belong mainly to the organized services of the State Government it is not being suggested that these posts be converted into Panchayat posts.

8.19 In the second phase, the Zilla Parishads will also constitute separate District level services for those serving in the Panchayats and in the tagged Departmental offices. A common cadre of District Panchayat ministerial and subordinate staff should be created with the existing staff under the control of the Zilla Parishad and the newly recruited staff, who would then be deployed not only to the Zilla Parishad, Anchalik Panchayat and Gaon Panchayat Offices but also to the tagged offices for filling up vacant Grade III (ministerial) and Grade IV posts of Peons, Chowkidars etc.

8.20 In the third phase, the salaries for the Grade III and Grade IV posts in the tagged offices must be paid through the Zilla Parishads. At this stage the office expenses for the tagged offices

should be similarly routed through the Zilla Parishads. This could be done either through the mechanism of the State Finance Commission or by direct transfers from the Departments to the Zilla Parishads concerned. Between the two, the first option may be more efficient. In so far as Grade I and Grade II officers are concerned who would mainly be self -drawing officers, their salaries may continue to be paid directly by the State Government through the Treasuries. In this phase, District level service rules should be drawn up for the different categories of technical staff in the tagged offices so that recruitment qualifications and promotion channels are well designed to improve the technical skills of the staff and also to improve their promotion prospects.

- 8.21 It is presumed that the devolution of funds, function and functionaries would get completed during this third phase. In this phase there could be question whether some or all of Grade I and Grade II posts should be converted into Panchayat posts. The principle which should be followed in deciding the question is whether the services of a particular post in Grade II or even in Grade I are utilized entirely by the Panchayats. If the reply is in the affirmative, then obviously it is a post it should be considered for conversion into a Panchayat post. In such a case, the posting of the officer would be treated as on deputation. If ,on the other hand, the service of the post is utilized wholly or mainly by the State Government then this could be retained as a State Government post and the incumbent would be treated as deployed

on State Government duties. In respect of other posts, a view would have to be taken on case-by-case basis and there could be a sharing of such posts between the State Government and the Panchayats.

- 8.22 Before concluding, it would be appropriate to mention that deputation of any officer to the Panchayats should be on standard deputation terms which should be laid down by the Notification. The instructions relating to deputations should be modified so that it is not necessary for each case of deputation to be referred to the Finance Department for approval. This power should be delegated to the District level Officer of the devolved Departments so that the service of the deputationists gets recognized right from the beginning. In addition the requirement of leave salary contribution and pension contribution should be met by the Government Department concerned and this should not be an extra cost levied on the Panchayats.

Chapter – 9

District Rural Development Agencies

- 9.1 There are 27 District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs) in Assam. of these 6 are in the district i.e Karbi Anglong, North Carchar, Baksa, Udalguri, Chirang and Kokrajhar. The remaining 21 are in the Plains Districts of Assam. These 27 DRDAs have a total authorized staff strength of 1135. As against this, the manpower in position is 908, representing 80% of the authorized strength. The manpower in position includes 216 gazetted Officers and 692 Non-gazetted staff. District-wise details may be seen at Annexe-IV.
- 9.2 The DRDAs are mainly accommodated in their own buildings. These are mostly double-storied RCC structures and have the requisite facilities for the authorized staff strength. There are provisions for holding meetings and conferences in these buildings. They have also the requisite telephone and internet connections. They also have their own vehicles which enables them to undertake quick tours into the rural areas. By and large the DRDAs have adequate accommodation and other facilities and therefore, no additional facilities are being recommended in respect of these institutions.

- 9.3 In so far as other aspects of DRDAs is concerned, it may be mentioned that there are basically three issues which are causing concern amongst the officers and staff of the DRDAs. These issues are indicated below :
- a. Proposal for merger of the DRDAs with the Zilla Parishads in the Plains areas and with the Autonomous Councils in the Hill areas.
 - b. Absorption of the DRDA staff in the Zilla Parishads or the State Government
 - c. Pension facilities for the DRDA staff.
- 9.4 Regarding the first issue i.e. merger of the DRDAs with the Zilla Parishads, the Third Assam State Finance Commission (TASFC) had observed that in the context of the Constitutional arrangements under Part IX and IX A read with Schedule XI, there is no separate relevance of DRDAs and it therefore recommended that DRDAs should be completely merged with the Zilla Parishads.
- 9.5 In this context it is pointed out that the DRDAs have been visualized as specialized and professional agencies, capable of managing the anti-poverty programs of the Ministry of Rural Development, and to effectively relate this to the overall efforts of the poverty eradication. The policy relating to DRDAs is indicated in the following lines:

‘In other words while the DRDAs will continue to watch over and ensure effective utilization of the funds intended for anti-poverty programs, it will need to develop a far greater understanding of the processes necessary for poverty alleviation / eradication. It will also need to develop the capacity to build synergies among different agencies involved for the most effective results. It will therefore need to develop distinctive capabilities rather than perform tasks that are legitimately in the domain of the PRIs or the Line Departments. The role of the DRDAs will therefore be distinct from all the other agencies, including the Zilla Parishads.’

‘The DRDAs are expected to coordinate effectively with the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Under no circumstance will they perform the functions of PRIs’.

‘The DRDAs will maintain their separate identity but will function under the Chairmanship of the Chairman of the Zilla Parishad. They are expected to be a facilitating and supporting organization to the Zilla Parishad, providing necessary executive and technical support in respect of poverty reduction efforts. Wherever the Zilla Parishads are not in existence or are not functional, the DRDAs would function under the Collector / District Magistrate / Deputy Commissioner, as the case may be’.

(Source : Guidelines of DRDA Administration : Ministry of Rural Development, 1999)

- 9.6 Whilst the DRDAs are focused only on facilitating and guiding anti-poverty programs, the Zilla Parishads are involved in a large number of activities which are listed at Section 90 of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994. These activities are grouped under 20 different heads and only one of these is poverty alleviation programs. There is great danger that if the DRDAs are merged with the Zilla Parishads, then the DRDAs would lose their focus and thereby the entire thrust of the Central Government and the State Government for reducing poverty in the rural areas would get blunted. The single-minded pursuit of the poverty alleviation programs and of devising policies and methods to improve their effectiveness is likely to suffer a set back because of the multiplicity of goals before the Zilla Parishads.
- 9.7 Currently the Zilla Parishads are showing a lot of interest in the merger of the DRDAs with them. This, however, is more the result of the crippling shortages of officers and staff in the Zilla Parishads. A merger of the DRDAs would lead to some hands becoming available to Zilla Parishads and thereby enable the Zilla Parishads to function better. In the process, however, the functioning of the DRDAs is likely to deteriorate since their staff would have to do the work of the Zilla Parishads.
- 9.8 From both these angles it would not be pragmatic to merge the DRDAs with the Zilla Parishads. It may be added that there is no specific Constitutional provision which requires the DRDAs to be

wound up. It is, therefore, recommended that the DRDAs should be allowed to exist outside the Zilla Parishads.

- 9.9 Regarding the second issue i.e. absorption / provincialization of the services of the staff of DRDAs, it would be appropriate to mention that under the Guidelines of DRDA Administration issued by Ministry of Rural Development (1999) the State Government has appointed staff in the different DRDAs in accordance with the directions of Govt. of India. One of these directions was that by and large the staff appointed should be dedicated to DRDA related works and should not be frequently transferred. The Grade III and Grade IV staff of DRDA have been recruited over the years and they have been engaged in the works of the DRDA ever since their appointment. These members of the staff who are in the late 40s and early 50s are extremely worried since they have not been given any permanent status so far. It may be mentioned here that the DRDAs have been constituted under the Societies Act by the Govt. of India and Govt. of Assam. The employees of the DRDAs are nominally only employees of Societies. In all other respects, they are like State Government employees and are subject to similar discipline. Most of them have put in long years of service. The State Government as a model employer, has a duty to treat their cases in accordance with the principles of equity and fair play. They cannot be treated as casual employees as they have been in continuous employment for more than 280 days over a period of two years and have therefore to be treated as permanent in their posts.

9.10 Ministry of Rural Development had earlier advised all State Governments to absorb these staff members in Line Departments and to improve their service conditions. A few States have since absorbed the DRDAs staff in the Zilla Parishads by placing the DRDAs within the fold of the Zilla Parishads. In Assam, it has not been feasible to absorb the DRDAs staff in the Line Departments. It has also not been included in the list of departments / organizations which would devolve funds, functions and functionaries to the PRIs.

9.11 As mentioned earlier, it would not be pragmatic to merge the DRDA with the Zilla Parishad. This is more so when Zilla Parishads are still struggling to find their feet. In fact in the 6th Schedule Areas, there are no Zilla Parishads and therefore, any form of merger with the Zilla Parishads is not feasible in the concerned districts. The DRDA staff in those districts are also not keen to be placed with the District Councils as they apprehend that their salaries would get diverted for other activities and therefore they would not get their salaries in time each month. The option of absorbing Zilla Parishads staff in Line Departments has not been feasible despite the passage of a number of years. In fact, in the present situation it would be difficult to find nearly 700 posts in other departments for absorbing the DRDA employees.

9.12 The issue of absorption of the DRDA staff has been under consideration now for more than a decade. The long delay in settling this matter is obviously affecting the morale of the staff

and this is likely to affect the quality of their work. In these circumstances, and looking at the limited number of persons involved, it is recommended that the services of the DRDA staff be provincialised and they be placed directly under the Department of Panchayat and Rural Development.

- 9.13 It may be pointed out that under the DRDA Guidelines, the State Government have the options to follow their own salary structure. However, in so far as the Administrative Cost Ceiling fixed for DRDAs, any increase above the ceiling would have to be met by the State Government. The point that needs to be noted is that at present the Administrative Cost for DRDAs are shared between the Centre and the State Government in the ratio of 90:10. The absorption of the DRDA staff in State Government posts would therefore, not impose any excessive cost on the State Government.
- 9.14 A positive decision in this regard would go a long way to meet a longstanding demand of the DRDA staff and would definitely bolster their morale.

Chapter – 10

Training for PRI Officers and Staff

- 10.1 The Gaon Panchayat Offices have been functioning under very difficult circumstances. The Gaon Panchayat Secretary is a lone-handed official. In most Gaon Panchayats there is no Road Moharer-cum-Tax Collector and even if one is available, the individual is fairly aged and untrained. Similarly, in majority of the Gaon Panchayats there is no Peon-cum-Chowkidar. In the circumstances a Gaon Panchayat Office is open only as long the GP Secretary can remain available there. Because of other field-work which he has to supervise and also the need to report back on different issues to the Blocks the GP offices are frequently left closed. This is a situation which has to be remedied, especially if the Gaon Panchayat Office is to function as the ‘front office’ for the entire Government.
- 10.2 Recommendations of the Committee regarding the staffing pattern for Gaon Panchayat Offices have already been made in an earlier part of this Report. It will be seen that the staff strength of the Gaon Panchayat is proposed to be eight. To make the office function efficiently and effectively it would be necessary to provide training to all members of the staff so that they are aware

of the objectives and goals of the Panchayats as instruments for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation and the roles which they have to play individually.

10.3 It would be seen that the Gaon Panchayat staff in 2202 Gaon Panchayats will ultimately be close to 17,000. Similarly, the clerical and accounting staff of the Anchalik Panchayats and the Zilla Parishads also would need to be trained. Training facilities have therefore to be built up to meet the requirements of such large number of employees.

10.4 The staff of Gaon Panchayats, Anchalik Panchayats and the Zilla Parishads would need to be trained seriously in Office Procedures. In addition ,they would need to be trained in Purchase Procedures, Payment Procedures and Accounting Procedures. Furthermore, as staff working in the Panchayats their awareness levels would have to be raised regarding schemes of different Departments connected with Rural Development. In addition they would also need exposure to agricultural operations in the field along with pisciculture, animal husbandry etc. What is envisaged is that all the office staff should be trained properly in all these matters. Ideally each Junior Assistant should be trained for at least two months covering all these aspects. The training should consist not only of lectures, but also field visits and practical work. They should also be enabled to upgrade their computer skills during this training period. The Secretary, Gaon Panchayat, should, in addition, be trained in Leadership and Motivation.

- 10.5 Apart from this basic training, it has been observed by the TASFC that the staff of PRIs will need frequent training particularly in the field of Micro-Level Planning and maintenance of Accounts. Elected representative would need adequate training for taking right decisions in the right direction. It has been also recommended that the training programs may also be extended to the concerned functionaries of the line departments. It has been suggested that exposure visits of the staff and the elected representatives to other States, or even within the State, would help augment capacity building. TASFC has observed that sporadic program of training taken up occasionally may not help in augmenting capacity building.
- 10.6 In addition to what has been recommended by the TASFC regarding training, it is suggested that every two years all members of the staff who have received the basic training in Office Procedures and Accounting should be called for a short training session for updating their knowledge and skills.
- 10.7 Those members of the staff who have been recruited earlier by the different agencies should also receive the basic training. In addition they should be encouraged to do their work on Computers.
- 10.8 To carry out the training for all the Panchayat staff in a District, the Zilla Parishad concerned would have to set up their own

training institutions. It may be mentioned here that the training institutes set up by the SIRD are doing excellent work. However, these institutes have to concentrate on various aspects of implementation of schemes of the Central Government and the State Government. It would be difficult for the SIRD training centres to change the focus of their training programs and give training in Office Procedure, Maintenance of Accounts, Leadership and Motivation etc. For this, the requisite inputs have to come from the Assam Administrative Staff College. The faculty would also have to be selected carefully from amongst officials / retired officers available in the District Headquarters.

- 10.9 It may be added that there are some training centres under the control of the Commissionerate of Panchayats and Rural Development. The Central Training Centre at Jorhat, the Extension Training Centres at Kahikuchi and at Joysagar are some of them.. In addition there are three PRTCs at Kahikuchi, Joysagar and Arunachal. Currently most of the faculty posts in these institutions are vacant; even some of the posts of office assistants in these Training Centres have not been filled. It should be examined as to how these training institutions can be resuscitated and utilized for the large-scale training effort which would have to be launched as recruitment processes get under way.

Chapter – 11

Recruitment of Panchayat Staff

- 11.1 The staffing pattern for the Gaon Panchayats, Anchalik Panchayats and Zilla Parishads have been given in Chapter 5. To provide the PRIs with the staff required, very large numbers of suitable individuals would have to be selected and recruited.
- 11.2 Section 140(i) of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994 provides that the Grade III and Grade IV staff of the Zilla Parishads, Anchalik Panchayats and Gaon Panchayats shall be appointed by the Chief Executive officers of the Zilla Parishads on recommendations by the District Selection Committees constituted by the Government in the Panchayat and Rural Development Department.. However, whilst on paper this appears to be fairly straightforward and simple_exercise, there are a number of issues which need to be settled well ahead.
- 11.3 The Recruitment Rules have not been framed so far for any of the posts. In the past recruitments have been carried out through Executive Orders and these are still to be replaced by Recruitment Rules. The Recuitment Rules not only have to indicate the eligibility conditions such as educational qualification, experience, age limits etc. but also indicate the mode of

recruitment i.e. whether by written examination, speed test, viva voce, or by a combination of all or any two of these methods. This is an exercise that has to be undertaken immediately for at least the following categories :

- a) Junior Assistants
- b) Secretaries, Gaon Panchayat
- c) MIS Officers and
- d) Junior Engineers

11.4 As regards filling up of vacancies by promotion is concerned, the eligibility conditions, such as number of years of service in the feeder grade, the mode of selection i.e. whether on the basis of seniority- cum- fitness, seniority –cum- merit or merit- cum- seniority etc., would have to be laid down. It is important that seniority lists for all categories of officers and staff are given a final shape following the instructions laid down by Department of Personnel. The composition of the Departmental Promotion Committees would also have to be specified so that regular DPC meetings can be held.

11.5 The issues relating to recruitment should be handled in the proposed Recruitment Wing in the Commissionerate of Panchayat and Rural Development. The issues relating to promotions should be handled by the Establishment Wing of the same office.

11.6 Keeping in view the fact that there are more than 2400 offices under the control of the Commissionerate of Panchayat and Rural Development it is felt that filling up of the existing vacancies in these offices will itself be a heavy load. Filling up of all the new posts recommended in Chapter 5 of this Report would be a herculean task. In this connection, it needs to be mentioned that from the perspective of Cadre Management, it is not wise to fill up all vacancies at one go. It is always better to plan the recruitment actions in such a way that only planned number of vacancies get filled up each year. In other words, a perspective plan for recruitment covering a period of 5 to 10 years would need to be drawn up, and based on that, between 10% to 20% of the overall vacancies should be filled in each year. This would lead to seniority lists to be created batch-wise and this would later facilitate batch-wise promotions. It would also help in succession planning at different levels in the offices of the PRIs.

11.7 Regarding the manner in which recruitments should be carried out, it is felt that this a matter of details, where pros and cons would have to be weighed objectively by the State Government. Whilst recruitment actions involving small number of candidates could possibly be handled fully by the Recruitment Wing in the Commissionerate, it may not be feasible when large numbers of candidates from all over the State are likely to apply. In the latter event, there are basically two options :-

- a) Outsourcing of the examination of the candidates to well-known HR Firms

- b) To refer the recruitment to a Staff Selection Commission for PRIs under the Panchayat and RD Departments.

11.8 It is understood that in the recent past the State Government has made some recruitment through HR Firms and the experience has been good. However, where recruitments are planned over a number of years and the recruitment tests need to be standardized a Staff Selection Commission has certain advantages. In fact in the Central Government all recruitments to Class III Posts are made through the Staff Selection Commission and apparently the Ministries have found the selections to be satisfactory. A view would have to be taken regarding which of the two options would be more suitable in the case of Assam.

Chapter 12

Sixth Schedule Districts and transparency in Poverty Alleviation Schemes

- 12.1 In Assam out of 27 Districts, 6 Districts, are in the Sixth Schedule Areas and therefore outside the purview of the Assam Panchayati Raj Act.
- 12.2 Some of the Districts falling within the Sixth Schedule Areas are large in size. In fact Karbi Anglong District is the largest in the State, having an area of 10,434 sq. kms.. North Cachar Hills District is a close third, with an area of 4,888 sq. kms.. Along with Kokrajhar,(3,538 sq. kms), these three Districts account for more than 24% of the State's area. When the areas of the other three BTAD Districts is taken into account, the figure is likely to be closer to a third of the State. The point to be noted is that roughly a third of Assam is not covered by the Assam Panchayati Raj Act, 1994.
- 12.3 It is, however, to be noted that the six Districts covered by the Sixth Schedule have three Councils, namely the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council and the Bodoland Territorial Council. These Councils

have executive responsibility in respect of most matters with which the Zilla Parishads are empowered. In addition they also have legislative powers in respect of those items. In that sense the Autonomous Councils have more power than the Zilla Parishads as the third tier of Government. What they lack, however, are institutions equivalent to Gaon Panchayats and Anchalik Panchayats which enable a larger degree of people's participation.

12.4 In each of these Districts there is a DRDA. The Governing Body of the concerned DRDA is headed by a Member of the Council as Chairman and the Executive Director is the Principal Secretary of the Council.

12.5 For selection of schemes under NREGA Village Development Committees (VDCs) have been set up by the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council. These VDCs are composed of individuals nominated by the Council. A Junior Engineer acts as the Secretary of the VDC. The scrutiny of applications for job-cards, issue of job-cards etc. are done through 11 Blocks, which are headed by Block Development Officers. There are Block Level Coordination Committees for scrutinising schemes and making recommendations to the Council. These Block Level Coordination Committees include Members of the Council whose constituency or part thereof is included in the Block area, and are usually headed by an Executive Member.

- 12.6 Similarly, in the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts, which are all in the Plains areas of Assam, the Council has set up Village-level committees called VCDCs. These consist of nominated members and are headed by a nominated Chairmen, who could be MLACs.
- 12.7 Because of the large area of Karbi Anglong District and the far-flung habitations, there are practical difficulties in involving the entire population in the implementation of the anti-poverty programmes. Some of the villages are “shifting” villages, which is a remnant from the days of “jhum” cultivation, and they are in hilly terrain, with difficult connectivity. The average density of population in Karbi Anglong is only 78 per sq. km. compared to the average of 340 for the entire State. In such far flung areas, with sparse population and distant habitats, it would be difficult to organize periodic consultations with the targeted population, as is done through the Gram Sabha meetings in the Plains of Assam. In such a situation only empowered representatives from the distant hamlets can give voice to their needs for economic opportunities, infrastructural facilities and markets. These representatives would have to report back to the public concerned as to the decisions taken on their demands, the schemes sanctioned etc.
- 12.8 In the Sixth Schedule area Districts the selection of schemes and their implementation is based on pressure from the ‘supply side’. To improve the quality of implementation the ‘demand side’ has to be strengthened. This can only happen when the public

awareness is raised and they are enabled to participate in the decision-making process. It may not be out of place to mention that there have been questions about governance in some of these districts. Some of these areas have also suffered from militancy, which is fortunately under control now, even though instances of extortion are still reported. There is a definite need to improve the quality of governance in all these Districts. Governance in the Sixth Schedule Areas of Assam would get toned up if a greater degree of transparency could be ensured in the selection of schemes and beneficiaries and in the expenditure incurred under different schemes.

- 12.9 As mentioned earlier, the long distances involved, the poor communication and the sparse population preclude any Gaon Panchayat like institutions in these areas. The formation of Village Councils under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule would also not meet the purpose since those would be judicial bodies and would not be involved in development matters. An alternative approach is, therefore, necessary. Given the pre-eminence of the Councils in these Districts, what looks feasible is a sub-structure under the Councils. The sub-structure could consist of 26 Consultative Committees corresponding to the 26 constituencies of each Council. The villagers in each District Council Member's constituency could elect ten members to represent them in these Consultative Committees. In addition the Council could, if thought necessary, nominate an equal number of village chiefs to the Consultative Committees. The schemes

could be considered at meetings of these Consultative Committees and recommendations made to the District Council. The selection of beneficiaries could also be overseen by the Consultative Committees.

12.10 Once these Consultative Committees are set up nominated bodies like the VDC, VCDC, BLCC etc. may no longer be necessary and could be wound up by the District Councils.

Chapter 13

Summary of Recommendations

- 13.1 It is recommended accordingly that the Secretaries who are graduates be placed in PB-2 (Rs. 5,200 – Rs. 20,200) with a Grade Pay of Rs. 2,800. Those GP Secretaries who are under-graduates may be placed in PB-2 (Rs. 5,200 to Rs. 20,200) with a Grade Pay of Rs. 2,600. To distinguish the GP Secretaries in the Grade Pay of Rs. 2,800 from those who will be in the Grade Pay of Rs. 2,600, the former may be designated as ‘Secretary (Special Grade)’ or, alternatively, as ‘Secretary (Grade – I)’ (Ref. Para 5.5).
- 13.2 A post of Supervisory Assistant is therefore found necessary for ensuring proper supervision of the office staff and also for ensuring that all members of the public are attended to by the staff members concerned with courtesy and speed. The Supervisory Assistant will also be responsible for preparation of tax demand each year, for issue of notices and for collection of Panchayat dues. In this he will be assisted by one of the Junior Assistants and a Peon-cum-Notice Server. These three members of the staff will form the Tax-Collection Unit of the Gaon Panchayat. (Ref. Para 5.7).

- 13.3 One Junior Assistant will function as Accounts Assistant. It will be his duty to ensure that the accounts work of the Gaon Panchayat office is always up-to-date and that all papers relating to accounts are maintained properly and presented before audit. (Ref. Para 5.8).
- 13.4 One Junior Assistant will be responsible for uploading data concerning different schemes under implementation in the Gaon Panchayat area and for other correspondence work. (Ref. Para 5.9).
- 13.5 One of the Junior Assistants will also attend to the members of the public visiting the Gaon Panchayat Office, provide them with the information required, assist them with their applications and provide them with Birth Certificates, Death Certificates, Income Certificates etc.as may devolve on the Gaon Panchayat. (Ref. Para 5.10).
- 13.6 The Junior Assistants are envisaged as individuals who will also function as Data Entry Operators. (Ref. Para 5.11).
- 13.7 It will, however, be the duty of the Secretary, Gaon Panchayat and the Supervisory Assistant to ensure that the Gaon Panchayat office remains open, without fail, during the notified office-hours and there is always a responsible employee in the office to deal with visitors, telephone calls etc. (Ref. Para 5.12).

13.8 In this context it is recommended that each Gaon Panchayat should have a JE to attend to all technical matters. (Ref. Para 5.13).

13.9 After consideration of all aspects, the following staffing pattern for Gaon Panchayat Offices is recommended (Ref. Para 5.14).

Designation of Posts	Pay-Scale	Grade Pay	No. of Posts
Secretary, Gaon Panchayat (Special Grade / Grade-I) / Secretary Gaon Panchayat	PB-2 Rs. 5200 – 20200	Rs. 2,800 Rs. 2,600	1
Supervisory Assistant	PB-2 Rs. 5200 – 20200	Rs. 2,400	1
Junior Assistants	PB-2 Rs. 5200 – 20200	Rs. 2,100	3
Junior Engineer	PB-2 Rs. 5200 – 20200	Rs. 2,800	1
Chowkidar/Peon/Jarikarak	PB-1 Rs. 4560-- 15000	Rs. 1,300	2
		Total	8

13.10 It is recommended accordingly that the post of BDO should be placed in Pay Band 4 (Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 40,000). The Grade Pay for the BDO from P&RD should accordingly be fixed in Pay Band 4 (Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 40,000) with Grade Pay of Rs. 5,400. (Ref. Para 5.18).

13.11 This Committee agrees with the recommendation of the Assam Pay Commission that the present incumbents of the posts of EO (Fisheries) should be transferred and absorbed in the Fisheries Department and recommends accordingly (Ref. Para 5.20).

13.12 It is recommended that there should be two posts of Senior Extension Officers and two posts of Extension Officers with upgraded pay in each Block (Ref. Para 5.21).

13.13 The Senior Extension Officers may be placed in the Pay-scale 3 (Rs. 8,000 to 35,000) with Grade Pay of Rs. 4,600. The Extension Officers should be placed in Pay Band 3 (Rs. 8,000 to Rs. 35,000) with Grade Pay of Rs. 4,300. If the existing incumbent is an under-graduate, then the individual posts of Extension Officers occupied by them may be operated at a lower level of Rs.5,200 to Rs.20,200 with Grade Pay of Rs. 2,800 (Ref. Para 5.22).

13.14 For this, it would be appropriate to have a post of Panchayat Officer in each Block for assisting the BDO in this regard. The vacant post of EO (Fisheries) in the Pay Band 2 (Rs. 5,200 to Rs. 20,200) with Grade Pay of Rs. 2,800 could be utilized for this purpose (Ref. Para 5.23).

13.15 It is, therefore, recommended that 1 post of Junior Engineer in each Block be raised, from PB-2 ie. Rs. 5,200 to Rs. 20,200 with grade pay of Rs. 2,800, to Junior Engineer (Senior Grade) in the PB-3 pay scale of Rs. 8,000 to Rs. 35,000 with grade pay of

Rs. 4,300. The Technical Wing in the Block Office should also be strengthened by creating a post of Assistant Engineer in the PB 4 payscale of Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 40,000 with Grade Pay of Rs. 5,400 (Ref. Para 5.24).

13.16 In so far as the question of providing support to the Chief Executive Officer is concerned, it is felt that he should be supported by two Deputy Chief Executive Officers. One of them would be responsible for the Planning Wing, and if the Government so thinks fit, could also be designated as the Chief Planning Officer. The other Deputy Chief Executive Officer should be responsible for the Administrative Functions including Establishment work which is likely to be quite heavy. In addition it is recommended to create a post of Assistant CEO in PB 4 (Rs. 12,000 – 40,000) with Grade Pay of Rs. 5,400. The Assistant CEO will act as Staff Officer to the CEO and assist him in all matters relating to the CEOs duties and functions (Ref. Para 5.33).

13.17 it would be necessary to upgrade the post of Sub-Divisional Planning Officer to that of Planning Officer in PB-4 pay scale i.e. Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 40,000 with grade pay of Rs. 5,900. This would enable experienced BDOs to contribute to the planned development of a District by getting promoted to the posts of Planning Officers in the Zilla Parishads. It is recommended that there should be two posts of Planning Officer in each Zilla Parishad, with one Planning Officer being responsible for consolidation of the District Plan and its implementation, and the

other being responsible for Monitoring and Evaluation (Ref. Para 5.34).

13.18 It is recommended therefore that at least 2 Joint Secretary-level Officers from the IAS / ACS should be posted as Additional Commissioners in the Office of the Commissioner, P&RD (Ref. Para 6.6).

13.19 In addition, there is also a need for restructuring the Wings of the Commissionerate. It appears that the 2 Wings of RD and Panchayat hark back to the period when there were 2 different Directorates of Rural Development and of Panchayat and CD. Keeping in view the nature of the work load, the number of Wings in the Commissionerate should be increased and the subjects currently dealt by the 2 Wings should be redistributed. In view of the large scale shortage of manpower at present in the PRIs, there is necessity for undertaking recruitment drives. This would be feasible only if there is a Wing dedicated to recruitment only. Similarly the 9 Sections of the Panchayat Accounts Branch and one Account Section in the RD Wing should be combined into an Accounts Wing. There should also be a reconstituted Establishment Wing dealing with all appointments, transfers across Districts, pension cases etc. This Wing would deal with matters related to both the erstwhile CD and RDs Staff and ensure that these are integrated into a single Cadre. With computerization gaining pace in the Zilla Parishads, Anchalik Panchayats and Gaon Panchayats, there is need for a MIS Wing in the Commissionerate which should be properly staffed with

technically qualified personnel. Initially it may be set up with 2 IT Engineers, 2 Systems Analysts and 2 Data Entry Operators. This Wing would not only have the responsibility of framing the policy for computerization for PRI Offices and the training of staff in each District but also provide support to the Commissionerate with MIS (Ref. Para 6.7).

13.20 Taking a conservative but realistic view of the matter, the Committee recommends that the provision for contingencies be raised to Rs. 30 Lacs during the current year. In future the annual budget provisions for this purpose would have to be fixed at higher levels. (Ref. Para 6.9).

13.21 The construction / reconstruction of staff quarters should be undertaken only after ascertaining the real need for such quarters. However, it would be advisable to at least maintain one or two quarters for Grade IV staff including the Chowkidar who are required to protect the property of the Block (Ref. Para 7.3).

13.22 In addition to the office building for the Zilla Parishad, it is necessary to provide for some accommodation where visiting officers from the Gaon Panchayats and Anchalik Panchayats can stay. There could also be a few room for visiting dignitaries, guest faculty for training etc. There would also be need for constructing quarters for accommodation of CEO and other Zilla Parishad Officers (Ref. Para 7.6).

13.23 Accommodation for providing training to different categories of employees and officers would also need to be provided including hostel facilities (Ref. Para 7.7).

13.24 Looking to the needs of the PRIs, the following recommendations are made (Ref. Para 7.16) :

- All Gaon Panchayat Offices must be provided with electricity connection. Where the location of the Gaon Panchayat Office is very distant from electricity supply line, alternative arrangements for power through DG sets need to be provided. It is recommended that Diesel Generator Sets (minimum 1.5 KW) be provided to all such Gaon Panchayat Offices.
- Gaon Panchayat and Anchalik Panchayat Offices need to have telephone connections to enable members of the public to contact them. The landlines should also have broadband facilities so that online data entry can be undertaken from the Gaon Panchayat level.
- Water supply facilities would need to be installed in all the Gaon Panchayat Offices, where these are lacking. Water supply would be necessary not only for drinking purposes but also for the toilets.

13.25 The staff of the Gaon Panchayats and the Anchalik Panchayats should be provided with motor-bikes with which they can travel easily into the village areas. They could be asked to take loans from banks for acquiring motor-bikes of their choice. It is recommended that the State Government should subsidize the EMIs to the extent of one-third for the first thirty-six months. The overall subsidy could be limited to one-third of the cost of a motor-bike of approved make. The usual stipulation that guarantees for repayment of loans will be given only after the employees concerned are confirmed in service should be waived in such cases. In addition they should be paid Fixed TA @ Rs. 600 per month regularly for maintaining their motor-bikes (Ref. Para 7.18).

13.26 As a part of the same effort field staff, including all members of the staff of the GPs should be encouraged to have their own mobile phones. This would benefit the Gaon Panchayat/Anchalik Panchayat office as the staff member concerned will always have a reliable communication-link with the office and this would also enable better control by the office over the output of the staff deputed for field work. A fixed amount for meeting the monthly expenditure on the mobile may be reimbursed to them (Ref. Para 7.19)

13.27 In the light of the above position, it is recommended that vehicles be provided on the following scale (Ref. Para 7.20) :

Sl.No.	Office	No. of vehicles to be provided
1.	Commissionerate of Panchayat and Rural Development	5 (five)
2.	Zilla Parishads	3 (three) each
3.	Development Blocks	1 (one) each

13.28 Small reprographic machines may also be provided to GPs and AP Offices to enable them to prepare copies for various official meetings. (Ref. Para 7.21)

13.29 It is recommended that as a first step the District-level offices and the subordinate offices / institutions of the 29 Departments be tagged to the appropriate Panchayat body viz. Zilla Parishad or Anchalik Panchayat or Gaon Panchayat. This would naturally take into account the location of the Departmental office and the level / levels at which it would provide service. Once the tagging is done, then steps should be taken to notify this to the members of the public by making necessary changes in the office sign-boards etc. The practice followed by Kerala in this regards could form the basis of this exercise (Ref. Para 8.14).

13.30 In this phase, all employees of the offices from Grade I to Grade IV would be deemed to be “attached” to these offices for

Panchayat duties whilst remaining employees of the State Government (Ref. Para 8.15).

13.31 Before beginning the next phase, the Assam Pension Rules should be suitably modified so that service on deputation to Panchayat bodies and attached Organizations is treated as ‘duty’ for the purpose of the Pension Rules. The requirement that officers should return to regular posts in the State Government from deputation before their superannuation should also be waived in the case of deputation to Panchayats (Ref. Para 8.16).

13.32 In the second phase posts in Grade III and Grade IV of the offices tagged to the Panchayats should be converted from State Government posts to Panchayat posts. The incumbents in those posts should now be placed on deputation to the Panchayats. Their salaries would, however, still be paid by the State Government. (Ref. Para 8.17).

13.33 During this second phase as posts in Grade III and Grade IV fall vacant because of retirements, deaths, resignations etc. the Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Parishad would take steps to fill up the vacancies by following the procedures laid down in Section 140(i) of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994 (Ref. Para 8.18).

13.34 In the second phase, the Zilla Parishads will also constitute separate District level services for those serving in the Panchayats

and in the tagged Departmental offices. A common cadre of District Panchayat ministerial and subordinate staff should be created with the existing staff under the control of the Zilla Parishad and the newly recruited staff, who would then be deployed not only to the Zilla Parishad, Anchalik Panchayat and Gaon Panchayat Offices but also to the tagged offices for filling up vacant Grade III (ministerial) and Grade IV posts of Peons, Chowkidars etc (Ref. Para 8.19).

13.35 In the third phase, the salaries for the Grade III and Grade IV posts in the tagged offices must be paid through the Zilla Parishads. At this stage the office expenses for the tagged offices should be similarly routed through the Zilla Parishads (Ref. Para 8.20).

13.36 Before concluding, it would be appropriate to mention that deputation of any officer to the Panchayats should be on standard deputation terms which should be laid down by the Notification. The instructions relating to deputations should be modified so that it is not necessary for each case of deputation to be referred to the Finance Department for approval. This power should be delegated to the District level Officer of the devolved Departments so that the service of the deputationists gets recognized right from the beginning. In addition the requirement of leave salary contribution and pension contribution should be met by the Government Department concerned and this should not be an extra cost levied on the Panchayats (Ref. Para 8.22)

13.37 From both these angles it would not be pragmatic to merge the DRDAs with the Zilla Parishads. It may be added that there is no specific Constitutional provision which requires the DRDAs to be wound up. It is, therefore, recommended that the DRDAs should be allowed to exist outside the Zilla Parishads (Ref. Para 9.8)

13.38 The issue of absorption of the DRDA staff has been under consideration now for more than a decade. The long delay in settling this matter is obviously affecting the morale of the staff and this is likely to affect the quality of their work. In these circumstances, and looking at the limited number of persons involved, it is recommended that the services of the DRDA staff be provincialised and they be placed directly under the Department of Panchayat and Rural Development (Ref. Para 9.12).

13.39 The staff of Gaon Panchayats, Anchalik Panchayats and the Zilla Parishads would need to be trained seriously in Office Procedures. In addition ,they would need to be trained in Purchase Procedures, Payment Procedures and Accounting Procedures. Furthermore, as staff working in the Panchayats their awareness levels would have to be raised regarding schemes of different Departments connected with Rural Development. In addition they would also need exposure to agricultural operations in the field along with pisciculture, animal husbandry etc. What is envisaged is that all the office staff should be trained properly in all these matters. Ideally each Junior Assistant should be trained for at least two

months covering all these aspects. The training should consist not only of lectures, but also field visits and practical work. They should also be enabled to upgrade their computer skills during this training period. The Secretary, Gaon Panchayat, should, in addition, be trained in Leadership and Motivation (Ref. Para 10.4).

13.40 In addition to what has been recommended by the TASFC regarding training, it is suggested that every two years all members of the staff who have received the basic training in Office Procedures and Accounting should be called for a short training session for updating their knowledge and skills (Ref. Para 10.6).

13.41 There is a definite need to improve the quality of governance in all these Districts. Governance in the Sixth Schedule Areas of Assam would get toned up if a greater degree of transparency could be ensured in the selection of schemes and beneficiaries and in the expenditure incurred under different schemes (Ref. Para 12.8).

13.42 Given the pre-eminence of the Councils in these Districts, what looks feasible is a sub-structure under the Councils. The sub-structure could consist of 26 Consultative Committees corresponding to the 26 constituencies of each Council. The villagers in each District Council Member's constituency could

elect ten members to represent them in these Consultative Committees. In addition the Council could, if thought necessary, nominate an equal number of village chiefs to the Consultative Committees. The schemes could be considered at meetings of these Consultative Committees and recommendations made to the District Council. The selection of beneficiaries could also be overseen by the Consultative Committees (Ref. Para 12.9)

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
PANCHAYAT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
DISPUR:GUWHATI

No PDA 115/2009/22

Dated Dispur, the 19th April, 2010.

ORDER

In view of the devolution of fund, function and functionaries to the PRIs, the activities of the PRIs have increased / shall increase manifold. The physical & HR infrastructure of the PRIs and also those of the Block Development Officers, Zilla Parishads, District Rural Development Agencies and the Commissionate of Panchayat and Rural Development, Assam requires strengthening. Therefore, it is decided to constitute a one man committee chaired by Sri S. K. Purkayastha, IAS (Retd.) assisted by Sri D. N. Chutia, ACS (Retd.) for a study of the structure and requirements of the Zilla Parishads set-up in Assam and also the requirement of the office of the Commissioner, Panchayat and Rural Development, Assam and Office of the Block Development Officers and District Rural Development Agencies in Assam. The terms of reference of the Committee shall be as follows: -

1. To examine and propose the physical infrastructure required for GPs, APs, ZPs DRDAs, Sixth Schedule areas and Commissionerate of Panchayat and Rural Development, Assam.
2. To suggest for own staffing pattern of PRIs including entry qualification for each category looking into devolution of powers. To suggest for promotional avenues of the PRI employees. [Recommendation of the Third Assam State Finance Commission. The staffing pattern proposed by the SIRD may be consulted.]
3. To suggest procedures / rules to be framed by Government for transfer / placement of Officers / Staff of transferred departments to PRIs including DRDAs.
4. All knowledge and information within the public domain which may be acquired during the carrying out of the study for all time and for all purpose be treated as confidential and held in confidence and shall not be directly or indirectly be disclosed to any person whosever without the written permission of Govt. of Assam.
5. Committee shall complete its work within 3 months of beginning the same.

The team shall visit Kerala for 3 clear days to obtain information from the State.

Other terms of the Committee are enclosed.

Encl. As stated above.

Sd/- A. Kumar
Principal Secretary to the Government of Assam,
Panchayat and Rural Development Department.

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
PANCHAYAT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (C) DEPARTMENT

No PDA 115/2009/58

Dated Dispur, the 8th September, 2010.

From : Sri G. Bora, ACS
Deputy Secretary to the Government of Assam.

To ✓ : Sri S. K. Purkayastha, IAS (Retd),
Chairman, One Man Committee in Panchayat and Rural Development
Department, Government of Assam.
Address:- Resident of Avani Regency, Flat No 2201,
7 Radhagobindanath Saran, Tollygaunj, Kalkatta-700033.

Subject : Regarding report on the One Man Committee.

Ref. : Order No PDA 115/2009/22 dated 19th April, 2010.

Sir,

With reference to the above, I am directed to state that your Committee has been requested to suggest the staffing pattern of PRIs along with other points as per the order mentioned above. Now it is found that along with the suggestion of staffing pattern of PRIs their pay scales are also required to be mentioned.

Therefore, you are requested to suggest the pay scales of employees of the proposed ~~the~~ staffing pattern in your report.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature]
08/9/10

Deputy Secretary to the Government of Assam,
Panchayat and Rural Development Department

Memo No PDA 115/2009/58-A

Dated Dispur, the 8th September, 2010.

Copy to:-

Sri D. N. Chutia, ACS (Retd), Pub Sarania Pramath Baruah Road, Near Central
Public School, House No 3, P.O. Ulubari, Guwahati-7 for necessary action.

By Order etc,

[Signature]

Deputy Secretary to the Government of Assam,
Panchayat and Rural Development Department

(COPY)

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
PANCHAYAT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPTT. 'A' BRANCH

NO. PDA. 198/73,

Dated Dispur, the 15th March '74.

From:- Shri H. R. Dasgupta, A. C. S.
Deputy Secretary to the Govt. of Assam,
Panchayat & C. D. Deptt.To:- All Deputy Commissioners
&
all Sub-Divisional Officers of Plain District.

SUB:- STAFFING PATTERN OF THE MOHKUMA PARISHAD/GAON PANCHAYAT.

Sir,

I am directed to say that Govt. have tentatively decided that staffing pattern of the Mohkuma Parishad and Gaon Panchayat offices will be as follows:-

MOHKUMA PARISHAD

Head Assistant	1(one)
Accountant	1(one)
U. D. Assistants	2(two)
L. D. Assistants	4(four)
Tax Supervisor	2(two)
Tax Collector	5(five)
Daftry	1(one)
Peons	5(five)
Chowkidar	1(one)

GAON PANCHAYAT

Gaon Panchayat Secretary	1(one)
Office Assistant	1(one)
Mohurir	1(one)
Tax Collector	2(two)
Chowkidar	1(one)
Peon	1(one)

Government sanctioned for each of the defunct Mohkuma Parishad one post of U. D. Asstt., Two Posts of L. D. Asstt., two persons and one Chowkidar. These posts will be retained in the new Mohkuma Parishad and the expenditure for the entertainment of these posts will be born as prevailing now. Govt. also propose to create one post of Head Assistant and one Post of Accountant for each of Mohkuma Parishad. The remaining posts in a Mohkuma Parishad/Gaon Panchayat will have to be created by the Mohkuma Parishad and the expenditure for entertainment of such staff will be born out of the Mohkuma Parishad fund or the Gaon Panchayat Fund as the case may be.

With a view to absorb the staff of defunct Anchalik Panchayat/Gaon Panchayat, it is decided that :

contd...2/-

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(1) The posts of Head Asstt. and U.D. Asstt. in Mohkuma Parishad offices and Secretaries of Gaon Panchayat may be filled from the U.D. Asstts. of defunct Anchalik Panchayats on the basis of seniority qualification and suitability. The remaining posts of Gaon Panchayat Secretaries may be filled up from the trained and qualified Secretaries of the defunct Gaon Panchayats according to seniority.

(2) Secretaries of defunct Gaon Panchayats who could not be absorbed under (1) above, may be absorbed against the posts of office assistants in the Gaon Panchayat and Tax collectors in Mohkuma Parishads and Gaon Panchayats on the basis of seniority and suitability.

(3) Lower Division Assistant of Anchalik Panchayats may be absorbed against the posts of Tax Supervisors, Muharirs on the same basis, and

(4) The other staff of all categories of the defunct Anchalik Panchayat and Gaon Panchayat may accordingly be absorbed in the remaining suitable posts.

I am accordingly to request you to prepare a list of incumbent of defunct Anchalik Panchayat/gaon Panchayat to be absorbed against particular posts on the principle outlined above in respect of each Sub-Division and send the same to Govt. As the staff will be appointed and submitted to Government by 10/4/74 so that it may be forwarded to the Mohkuma Parishads immediately on their constitution.

As regards the post of Accountant in Mohkuma Parishad, it is proposed to fill up the posts by deputing the existing Accountant/Accounts Assistants under the Director of Panchayat, Assam.

Yours faithfully,

Sd/- H. R. Dasgupta,
Deputy Secretary to the Govt. of Assam,
Panchayat & C. D. Department.

MEMO NO. PDA. 108/73- A, Dt. Dispur, the 15th March, 1974.

Copy to the Director of Panchayat, Assam, Tehabari, Gauhati-8 for information and necessary action. He may kindly select suitable candidates accordingly and send the list to Govt. urgently.

2) All Panchayat Officers.

By order etc.,

Sd/- H. R. Dasgupta,
Deputy Secretary to the Govt. of Assam,
Panchayats & C. D. Department.

Kalita.

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