

CALCUTTA RESEARCH STUDIES

No. 5

**Rural Self-Government  
in Metropolitan Calcutta**

**MOHIT BHATTACHARYA**

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69R

GENERAL EDITOR: LESLIE GREEN  
INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, NEW YORK

*Rural Self-Government  
in Metropolitan Calcutta*

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1. GOVERNMENT IN METROPOLITAN CALCUTTA : A Manual  
by *M. Bhattacharya, M. M. Singh and Frank J. Tysen*
2. MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT IN THE CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT: A Preliminary Survey  
by *M. M. Singh*
3. MUNICIPAL FINANCES IN THE CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT: A Preliminary Survey  
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4. DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION IN METROPOLITAN CALCUTTA  
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by *R. Dhar*

*\* Subject to change of titles or authors*

INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
NEW YORK

# RURAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN METROPOLITAN CALCUTTA

MOHIT BHATTACHARYA

*Research Fellow in Urban Studies*

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Note

In this study, all statistics above 99,999 are given in lakhs and crores. One lakh=100,000, one crore=10,000,000. One lakh is depicted as 1,00,000, and one crore as 1,00,00,000. The unit of currency used is the Rupee. One Rupee=\$0.21 (approx.)

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## FOREWORD

The Institute of Public Administration, New York, is a private, non-profit organization, chartered under the laws of the State of New York to improve public administration practices, sponsor research in government problems, and conduct educational programmes. Since the end of the Second World War, the Institute has concentrated its efforts on policy problems of urban government, on regional and national problems arising from urbanization and metropolitan growths, and on problems of administration in developing nations. The current series of research studies records the results of work undertaken in and around Calcutta by teams of graduates from Indian, American and British Universities. The teams have been engaged on an international urban studies programme operated by the Institute in close association with the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization, and financed by the Ford Foundation.

This programme has had the two main aims of training research workers in urban studies and of assisting the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization. These twin objectives have been pursued by agreeing projects with that Organization designed to serve both ends. At the same time, the Institute has hoped generally to further the public interest in India by its examination of social, economic and governmental problems in the country's largest urban complex.

Although specific acknowledgements are made in the preface to the present study, I am happy to acknowledge in this foreword the generous financial aid of the Ford Foundation, and the ready response of members of the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization and Ford Foundation advisory group to that Organization whenever approached for assistance by the Institute's research personnel.

LESLIE GREEN



## PREFACE

This report forms part of a wider research project on the government of the Calcutta Metropolitan District, and complements three other research studies on municipal government, municipal finances and district administration respectively. Field investigations for specific parts of the report were carried out with the help of the Department of Local Self-Government and Panchayats, the Department of Development and Planning, and the Department of Community Development and Agriculture, West Bengal. The State Government officers and members of the Block Development Committee of the Baruipur Development Block, and the members of the anchal panchayats and gram panchayats included in the sample surveys, also gave their active cooperation. In addition, the District Boards of 24-Parganas, Howrah, and Hooghly and the Union Boards at Haltu, Boinchola and Bansdrani very kindly supplied much useful data and information.

The research was carried out under the invaluable guidance and supervision of Dr. Leslie Green, Senior Specialist in International Urban Studies, Institute of Public Administration, New York, who gave to it both purpose and direction; and without whose help the portions on rural finances and the chapter on peri-urban government would not have seen the light of day. The discussion on the finances of the union boards was facilitated by the issue of a report on this subject by Dr. R. L. Sarkar and Mr. A. R. Chowdhury of the Economics Section of the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization. Permission to use this report is gratefully acknowledged. Assistance was also given by Mr. T. P. Lahiri, a Geographer of that Organization, and by four other IPA research fellows, namely, Mr. Frank J. Tysen, Mr. A. Datta, Mr. M. M. Singh and Mr. Ali Ashraf.

The work was greatly helped by the expeditious collection of relevant books and documents by the IPA librarians in Calcutta, Mrs. Ruty Guzdar and Miss Hilla Guzder. Mr. A. Lahiri and Mr. A. Ghosh assisted in a research capacity at various times, and typing and secretarial assistance was given by Mrs. B. Loader, Mrs. Ruby Advanio, Miss Penelope Lovery, Miss Jennifer D'Brass, Miss Shahin Sultana and Mrs. Shirin Radhanpurwala.

The valuable help of all these persons and organizations is most gratefully acknowledged. The views expressed in this study, and any errors made, are, however, entirely the responsibility of the author, except for the last three chapters, which were written in collaboration with Dr. Green.

Calcutta, October, 1964

M. B.



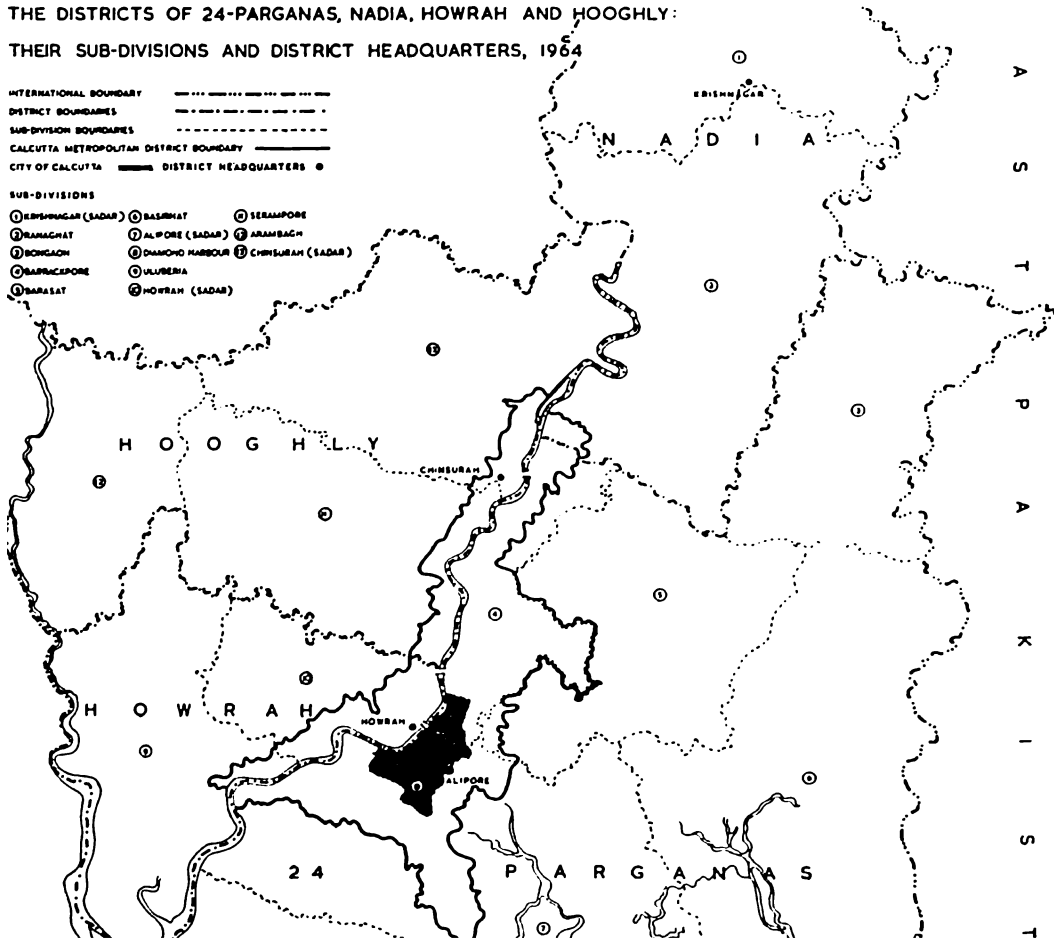
THE DISTRICTS OF 24-PARGANAS, NADIA, HOWRAH AND HOOGHLY:

THEIR SUB-DIVISIONS AND DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS, 1964

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY - - - - -  
 DISTRICT BOUNDARIES - - - - -  
 SUB-DIVISION BOUNDARIES - - - - -  
 CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT BOUNDARY - - - - -  
 CITY OF CALCUTTA - - - - - DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS ●

SUB-DIVISIONS

- |                      |                  |                     |
|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| ① ERISHNIGAR (SADAR) | ② BASMAT         | ③ SERAMPORE         |
| ④ PRAGRAT            | ⑤ ALPORE (SADAR) | ⑥ ARAMBAGH          |
| ⑦ BONGACH            | ⑧ DAMOND HARBOUR | ⑨ CHHISURAH (SADAR) |
| ⑩ PARAKSPORE         | ⑪ ULUBERIA       |                     |
| ⑫ BARASAT            | ⑬ HOWRAH (SADAR) |                     |



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80°30'

**CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT:  
ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARIES, 1963**

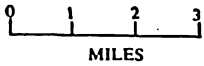
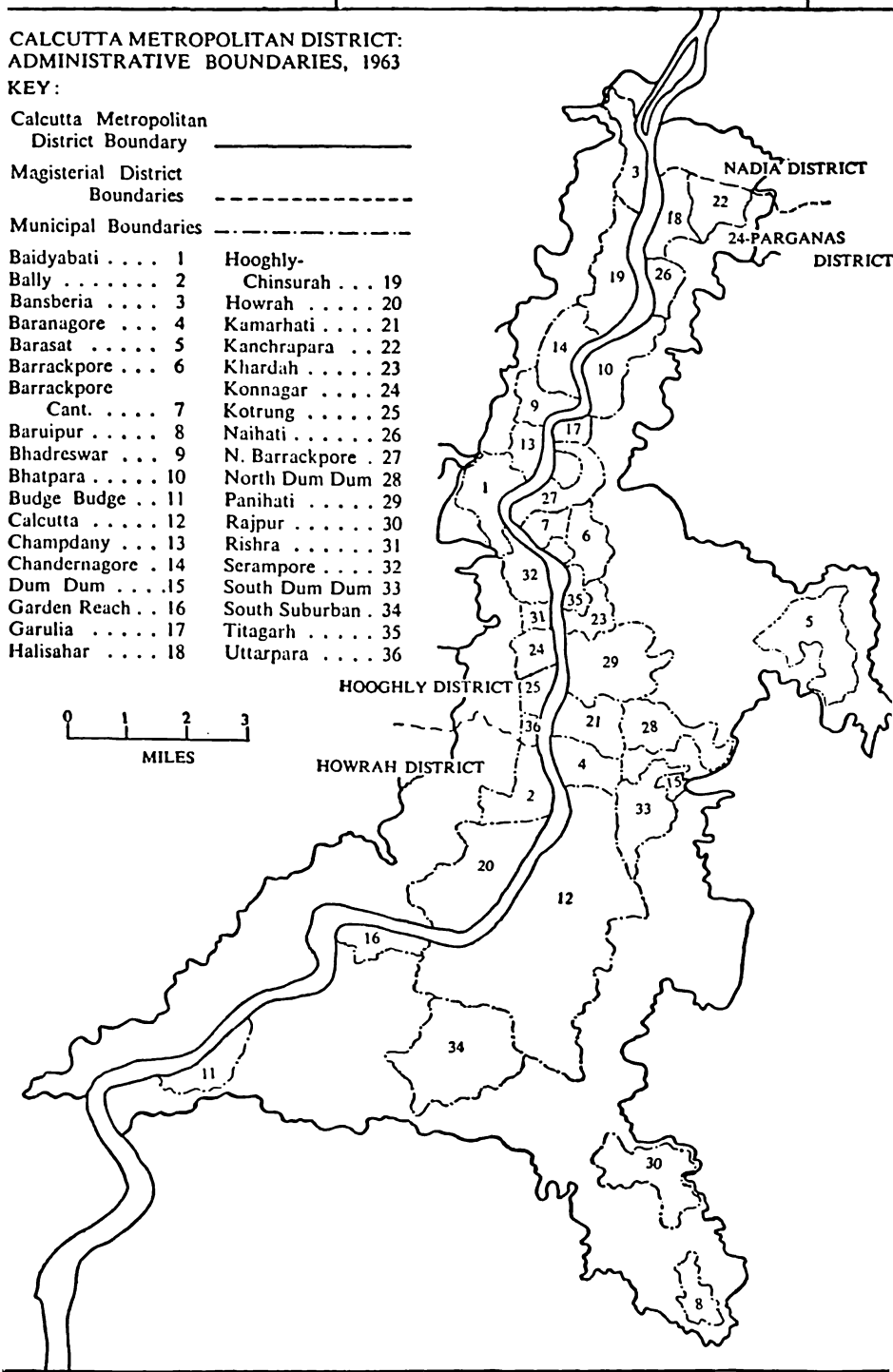
**KEY :**

Calcutta Metropolitan District Boundary —————

Magisterial District Boundaries - - - - -

Municipal Boundaries - - - - -

Baidyabati . . . . . 1	Hooghly- . . . . . 19
Bally . . . . . 2	Chinsurah . . . . . 20
Bansberia . . . . . 3	Howrah . . . . . 21
Baranagore . . . . . 4	Kumarhati . . . . . 22
Barasat . . . . . 5	Kanchrapara . . . . . 23
Barrackpore . . . . . 6	Khardah . . . . . 24
Barrackpore Cant. . . . . 7	Konnagar . . . . . 25
Baruipur . . . . . 8	Kotrung . . . . . 26
Bhadreswar . . . . . 9	Naihati . . . . . 27
Bhatpara . . . . . 10	N. Barrackpore . . . . . 28
Budge Budge . . . . . 11	North Dum Dum . . . . . 29
Calcutta . . . . . 12	Panihati . . . . . 30
Champdany . . . . . 13	Rajpur . . . . . 31
Chandernagore . . . . . 14	Rishra . . . . . 32
Dum Dum . . . . . 15	Serampore . . . . . 33
Garden Reach . . . . . 16	South Dum Dum . . . . . 34
Garulia . . . . . 17	South Suburban . . . . . 35
Halisahar . . . . . 18	Titagarh . . . . . 36
	Uttarpara . . . . . 36



80°15'

80°30'

# CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT : UNION BOARDS AND ANCHAL PANCHAYATS. 1964

## UNION BOARDS

- |                       |                             |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 KANCHRAPARA         | *33 NANGI                   |
| 2 JETIA MAJHIPARA     | *34 CHAITTA                 |
| 3 SHIBDASPUR          | *35 CHINGRIPOTA             |
| 4 MADRAIL NARAYANPUR  | 36 NISCHINTAPUR             |
| 5 RAHUTA              | 37 PUJALI                   |
| *6 SEWLI              | 38 ULUBERIA                 |
| *7 BANDIPUR           | 39 CHENGAIL                 |
| *8 BILKANDA           | *40 BAURIA                  |
| *9 ICHHAPUR NILGUNJE  | 41 BELDUBI                  |
| 10 KHILKAPUR          | *42 NALPUR                  |
| 11 CHOTA JAGULIA      | *43 MANIKPUR                |
| 12 KADAMBAGACHI       | *44 SANKRAIL                |
| 13 KEMIA KHAMARPARA   | *45 JHOREHAT                |
| *14 MADHYAMGRAM       | 46 ANDUL                    |
| 15 CHANDIGARH ROHONDA | *47 DUILYA                  |
| *16 BAKRA ITALGACHA   | 48 MAHIARI                  |
| 17 KAIKHALI HATIARA   | *49 JAGACHA                 |
| 18 MAHISHBATHAN       | *50 SANTRAGACHI             |
| 19 BAMANGHATA         | 51 BANKRA                   |
| *20 BOINCHTOLA        | 52 LILUA                    |
| *21 HALTU             | *53 BALLY                   |
| 22 KHIADAH            | 54 JAGADISHPUR              |
| 23 FARTABAD           | *55 MAKHLA<br>NOAPARA       |
| *24 LANGALBERIA       | 56 RAJYADHARPUR             |
| *25 BORAL             | 57 PIARPUR                  |
| *26 BANSDRONI         | 58 KALISANI<br>BIGHATI      |
| 27 JOKA               | *59 KODALIA<br>DEBANANDAPUR |
| *28 ASUTI             | 60 MAGRA                    |
| *29 GANIPUR           |                             |
| *30 MAHESHTOLA        |                             |
| *31 PANCHHOR          |                             |
| *32 KRISHNAGAR        |                             |

\* WHOLLY WITHIN CMD

## ANCHAL PANCHAYATS

- |              |               |
|--------------|---------------|
| A SAGUNA     | E SHIKHARBALI |
| B HARIHARPUR | F KALYANPUR   |
| C MADERHAT   | G SUGANDHA    |
| D DHAPDHAPI  |               |

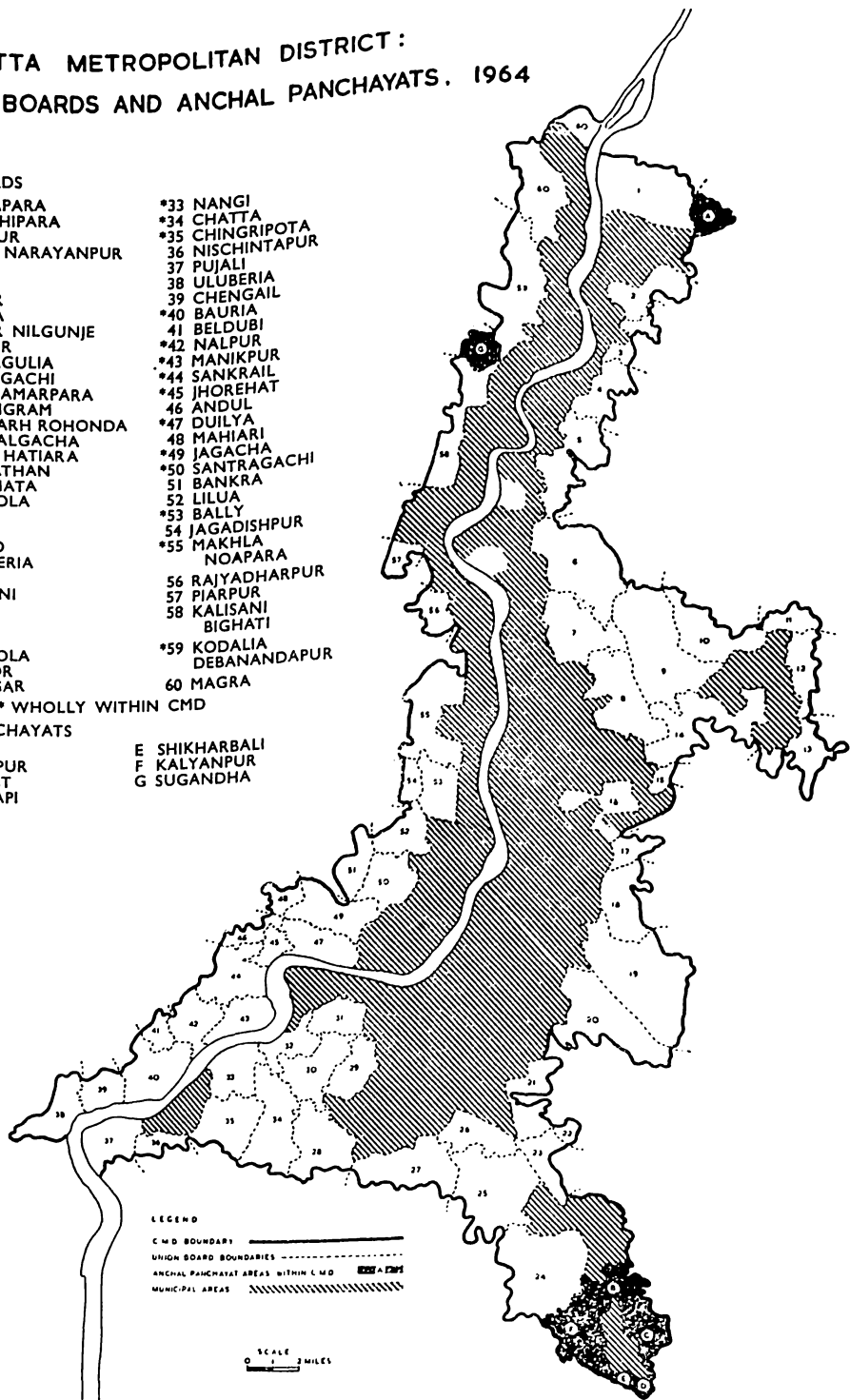


Fig. 3

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD	v
PREFACE	vii
LIST OF MAPS	xiii
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER	
1. DISTRICT BOARDS	
History and Jurisdiction	3—12
Constitution and Membership	3
Committees	4
Staff	5
Statutory Functions	6
The Work of the District Boards	7
Inter-Governmental Relations	8
	10
2. UNION BOARDS	
History and Jurisdiction	13—21
Constitution and Membership	13
Staff	15
Statutory Functions	16
The Work of the Union Boards	16
Inter-Governmental Relations	17
	19
3. ZILLA PARISHADS	
Introduction and Jurisdiction	22—32
Constitution and Membership	22
The Chairman and Vice-Chairman	22
Standing Committees	23
Establishment	24
Statutory Functions	26
Inter-Governmental Relations	27
	28

	PAGE
4. ANCHALIK PARISHADS . . . . .	33—40
Introduction and Jurisdiction . . . . .	33
Constitution and Membership . . . . .	34
Meetings and Committees . . . . .	35
Staff . . . . .	36
Statutory Functions . . . . .	37
Inter-Governmental Relations . . . . .	38
5. ANCHAL PANCHAYATS AND GRAM PANCHAYATS . . . . .	41—54
Introduction and Jurisdiction . . . . .	41
Constitution, Membership and Staff . . . . .	41
Statutory Functions . . . . .	43
Inter-Governmental Relations . . . . .	45
The Work of the Anchal Panchayats and Gram Panchayats (Baruipur) . . . . .	47
6. RURAL FINANCE: DISTRICT AND UNION BOARDS . . . . .	55—72
Administrative Procedures . . . . .	55
District Boards . . . . .	55
Union Boards . . . . .	62
7. RURAL FINANCE UNDER PANCHAYATI RAJ . . . . .	73—83
Zilla Parishads . . . . .	73
Anchalik Parishads . . . . .	74
Anchal Panchayats . . . . .	76
Gram Panchayats . . . . .	79
8. PERI-URBAN GOVERNMENT . . . . .	84—99
Introduction . . . . .	84
Alternative Forms of Peri-Urban Government . . . . .	86
(i) Retaining Panchayati Raj . . . . .	87
(ii) Municipalization . . . . .	92
(iii) A Metropolitan Authority . . . . .	93
(iv) Special Local Authorities . . . . .	95
(v) A Peri-Urban Areas Development Authority . . . . .	96
APPENDIX A: THE MUNICIPALITIES OF THE CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT, 1964 . . . . .	101
APPENDIX B: A NOTE ON PRINCIPLES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT . . . . .	102

	PAGE
APPENDIX C: THE RURAL LOCAL AUTHORITIES OF THE CALCUTTA METRO- POLITAN DISTRICT . . . . .	104
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	105

**LIST OF MAPS**

FIGURE	TITLE	PAGE
1.	The Districts of 24-Parganas, Nadia, Howrah and Hooghly: Sub-divisions and District Headquarters, 1964 . . . . .	viii
2.	Calcutta Metropolitan District: Administrative Boundaries, 1963	ix
3.	Calcutta Metropolitan District: Union Boards and Anchal Panchayats, 1964 . . . . .	x
4.	Calcutta Conurbation . . . . .	85

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	TITLE	PAGE
1.	Magisterial Districts in the Calcutta Metropolitan District, 1963 .	3
2.	Calcutta Metropolitan District: Distribution of Union Boards by Magisterial Districts, 1963	13
3.	Calcutta Metropolitan District: Population of Certain Union Boards and Municipalities, 1961	18
4.	Zilla Parishads: Official Members of Standing Committees, 1964 .	25
5.	Zilla Parishads: Powers and Functions of Standing Committees, 1964	25
6.	Anchalik Parishads: Standing Committees and Official Members, 1964	36
7.	Anchal Panchayats in the Baruipur Development Block, 1963-4 .	48
8.	Anchal Panchayats in the Baruipur Development Block: Members' Educational and Other Characteristics	49
9.	Anchal Panchayats in the Baruipur Development Block: Age and Experience of Members .	49
10.	Gram Sabhas and Gram Panchayats in the Baruipur Development Block, 1963-4	51
11.	District Boards of 24-Parganas, Hooghly and Howrah: <i>Per Capita</i> Ordinary Income and Expenditure, 1962-3 .	56
12.	District Boards of 24-Parganas, Hooghly and Howrah: Estimated Ordinary Income and Expenditure of the District Board Areas Falling Within the Calcutta Metropolitan District, 1962-3 .	57
13.	District Boards of 24-Parganas, Hooghly and Howrah: Income, 1959-60 . . . . .	58

	PAGE
14. District Boards of 24-Parganas, Hooghly and Howrah: Income, 1962-3 . . . . .	58
15. District Boards of 24-Parganas, Hooghly and Howrah: Government Grants, 1959-60 . . . . .	59
16. District Boards of 24-Parganas, Hooghly and Howrah: Government Grants, 1962-3 . . . . .	60
17. District Boards of 24-Parganas, Hooghly and Howrah: Expenditure, 1959-60 . . . . .	61
18. District Boards of 24-Parganas, Hooghly and Howrah: Expenditure, 1962-3 . . . . .	61
19. Calcutta Metropolitan District: Classification of Union Boards according to Total Ordinary Expenditure, 1959-60 . . . . .	63
20. Calcutta Metropolitan District: Income of Selected Union Boards, 1959-60 . . . . .	65
21. Calcutta Metropolitan District: Income of Selected Union Boards, 1961-2 . . . . .	65
22. Calcutta Metropolitan District: Selected Union Boards: Revenue Sources as Percentages of Total Ordinary Income, 1959-60 and 1961-2 . . . . .	66
23. Calcutta Metropolitan District: Selected Union Boards: Current Collection as a Percentage of Current Demand, 1961-2 . . . . .	67
24. Calcutta Metropolitan District: Selected Union Boards: Grants and Contributions as Percentages of Total Ordinary Income, 1961-2 . . . . .	68
25. Calcutta Metropolitan District: Expenditure of Selected Union Boards, 1959-60 . . . . .	69
26. Calcutta Metropolitan District: Expenditure of Selected Union Boards, 1961-2 . . . . .	70



	PAGE
27. Calcutta Metropolitan District: Selected Union Boards: Expenditure Items as Percentages of Total Ordinary Expenditure, 1959-60 and 1961-2 . . . . .	71
28. Calcutta Metropolitan District: Income of Selected Anchal Panchayats, 1961-2 and 1962-3	77
29. Calcutta Metropolitan District: Expenditure of Selected Anchal Panchayats, 1961-2 and 1962-3 .	77
30. Calcutta Metropolitan District: Income and Expenditure of Selected Gram Panchayats, 1961-2 .	81
31. Calcutta Metropolitan District: <i>Per Capita</i> Income and Expenditure of Selected Gram Panchayats, 1961-2 . . . . .	82
32. Calcutta Metropolitan District: Non-Municipal Towns, 1961	89

## INTRODUCTION

As defined by the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Calcutta Metropolitan District embraces both urban and rural local-government authorities. The municipal corporations and municipalities which constitute the urban local authorities have been dealt with in separate monographs<sup>1</sup>. The present survey is confined to a discussion of the different types of rural local authorities to be found within the Calcutta Metropolitan District.

In delineating the Metropolitan District, apart from the urbanized municipal areas, the CMPO has included extensive non-municipal tracts which are partly urbanized (more than twelve per cent of the Metropolitan District) and partly rural but urbanizable (about forty-seven per cent). These non-municipal, rural-urban tracts thus constitute about sixty per cent of the total area of the Calcutta Metropolitan District and contain about fifteen per cent of its total population. And—barring an insignificant area of some five square miles occupied by the Ichapore Defence Estate, the Barrackpore Cantonment and the Dum Dum airport (which are administered by Union Government agencies)—all these tracts fall within the jurisdiction of a multiplicity of rural local authorities.

Until 1957, these rural bodies fell into two groups: (i) at the regional or district level, four district boards governed by the Bengal Local Self-Government Act, 1885, and (ii) at the village level, nearly sixty union boards governed by the Bengal Village Self-Government Act, 1919. Both groups are now in a state of transition, however, as, in conformity with an all-India pattern, a new system of rural local government, generally known as *panchayati raj*, is being evolved in West Bengal. Accordingly, the existing bodies are being replaced by a four-tier system comprising (a) at the village level, gram panchayats, (b) at the former union board level, anchal panchayats, (c) at an intermediate level, anchalik parishads, and (d) at the district level, zilla parishads. Two statutes recently enacted by the State Legislature govern the establishment and operation of these new authorities, namely, the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1956, which refers to gram panchayats and anchal panchayats, and the West Bengal Zilla Parishads Act, 1963, which concerns anchalik parishads and zilla parishads.

As the change-over from the existing system to the new system is a gradual process, during the present transitional stage both systems are found to co-exist within the Calcutta Metropolitan District and, at the time of writing, the new system has, in fact, not made much headway. Of the thirty-two police stations falling within those portions of the four Magisterial Districts of 24-Parganas, Nadia, Hooghly and Howrah which comprise the Metropolitan District, the panchayat system has so far been introduced

<sup>1</sup> See M. M. Singh, 'Municipal Government in the Calcutta Metropolitan District: A Preliminary Survey,' *Calcutta Research Studies* No. 2, 1963; Abhijit Datta and David C. Ranney, 'Municipal Finances in the Calcutta Metropolitan District: A Preliminary Survey,' *Calcutta Research Studies* No. 3, 1964.

in only three. Thus, at present, the extensive non-municipal, rural-urban tracts within the Metropolitan District are, by and large, administered by the old system, consisting of district boards and union boards. Nevertheless, since 1964 marks a turning-point in the history of the rural local authorities within the Calcutta Metropolitan District, this survey must necessarily take both systems into account. As far as the old system is concerned, legislation, the practice of many years, reports and field surveys provide source materials. In the case of the newly-emerging panchayati raj, one has to depend for information almost exclusively on the relevant statutes and rules, supplemented by field surveys in the relatively few instances of newly-established institutions.

At the same time, the persistence of forms of rural government throughout the Metropolitan District's rural-urban fringe appears to indicate an inability of the administrative apparatus to keep in step with the process of urbanization. Rather than to expect new forms of *rural* local government to be introduced in this sector, one might have anticipated that the transitional period would have been used to establish new means of control over such peri-urban development. This report thus not only analyses the old and new forms of rural local government. It concludes with observations on possible directions in which more appropriate solutions might be sought to the problems of the government of the rural-urban fringe now growing quite rapidly around the already municipalized areas of the Calcutta Metropolitan District.

## DISTRICT BOARDS

**History and Jurisdiction**

A district board has jurisdiction over a magisterial (or revenue) district, excepting for any areas falling under a municipality, a notified area authority or a cantonment. As shown in Figure 1, the Calcutta Metropolitan District cuts across the boundaries of four magisterial districts<sup>1</sup>, and portions of these four districts thus fall within the Metropolitan District (Table 1).

**Table 1****MAGISTERIAL DISTRICTS IN THE CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT, 1963**

District	Total Area of District sq. miles	District Area within CMD* sq. miles	Municipal Area within CMD* sq. miles	District Board Area within CMD* sq. miles
24-Parganas	5,639	272.44	94.64†	177.80
Nadia	1,514	8.96	Nil	8.96
Howrah	575	61.08	15.69	45.39
Hooghly	1,216	62.78	29.73	33.05
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>8,944</b>	<b>405.26</b>	<b>140.06</b>	<b>265.20</b>

\*Calcutta Metropolitan District, as defined by the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization.

†Including the area of Barrackpore Cantonment (1.43 sq. miles), but excluding the area of Calcutta Corporation (36.92 sq. miles).

SOURCES: Government of West Bengal, *Statistical Abstract*, 1960; *Census of India*, 1961.

If the municipal areas<sup>2</sup> are then deducted from these portions, the residue in each case

<sup>1</sup> See Frank J. Tysen, 'District Administration in Metropolitan Calcutta,' *Calcutta Research Studies No. 4*: the city of Calcutta itself falls outside the system of district administration.

<sup>2</sup> For a list of municipalities within the Calcutta Metropolitan District, and their areas in square miles, see Appendix A. This list supersedes the lists given in M. M. Singh, 'Municipal Government in the Calcutta Metropolitan District: A Preliminary Survey,' *Calcutta Research Studies No. 2*, Appendix I, pp. 35-6; and in Abhijit Datta and David C. Ranney, 'Municipal Finances in the Calcutta Metropolitan District: A Preliminary Survey,' *Calcutta Research Studies No. 3*, Statistical Appendix Table 1, pp. 47-8, in so far as areas are concerned. The latter tables are based respectively on Administrative Returns and the Union Census, 1951. The present table is based on the Union Census, 1961.

represents the area of the district board falling within the Metropolitan District. As Table 1 shows, two-thirds of the total district board area falling within the Metropolitan District belongs to the District Board of 24-Parganas (177.80 square miles), and only an insignificant portion (8.96 square miles) of the Nadia District Board comes within the Metropolitan District. The shares of the District Boards of Howrah and Hooghly are 45.39 and 33.05 square miles respectively.

All these district boards were constituted under British rule shortly after the passage of the Bengal Local Self-Government Act, 1885, by which they are governed. As a local-government authority<sup>3</sup>, the district board was an entirely artificial invention, and it had no community of interest at its base. But, as the District Magistrate had become the keystone of the revenue system, so the district naturally became the unit of local government<sup>4</sup>. The district itself had developed as a unit of local administration<sup>3</sup> out of the exigencies of land-revenue collection and the maintenance of law and order<sup>5</sup>. Only in the 1860s did the Government begin to pay some attention to the problems of education, roads and sanitation in the rural areas. Accordingly, in 1871 an Act was passed in terms of which district committees were set up under the presidency of the District Magistrates to administer local funds, fed mostly by levying a cess on land revenues. There were no elected members on these committees, which were completely controlled by the District Magistrates, and the funds available were meagre, and were spent mostly on roads.

The era of rural self-government<sup>3</sup> (in contrast to this system of self-administration<sup>3</sup>) was inaugurated by Lord Ripon's Resolution of 1882, which envisaged a two-tier system of rural local government in India consisting of a district board at the top and a number of sub-district or local boards at the bottom. The Bengal Local Self-Government Act, 1885, was framed in the light of this Resolution. Accordingly, a district board was set up in each district, and a local board was established in each sub-division of a district<sup>6</sup>. But the latter had no independent jurisdiction or fund, the authority it could exercise was delegated to it by the district board, and, in view of its precarious existence, it is not surprising that it was subsequently abolished in every sub-division. In consequence, the Act of 1885 remains applicable to-day only in the case of district boards. Even in this instance, however, it is now to be superseded by the West Bengal Zilla Parishads Act, 1963, under which zilla parishads are destined to replace district boards. In this chapter, we are thus dealing with dying institutions which are finally to give way to panchayati raj<sup>7</sup>.

### Constitution and Membership

In spite of the new legislation of 1963, the Act of 1885 still applies to the whole of the non-municipal tracts falling within the Calcutta Metropolitan District. As these

<sup>3</sup> For notes on the terms local government, local self-government and local self-administration, see Appendix B.

<sup>4</sup> Hugh Tinker, *The Foundations of Local Self-Government in India, Pakistan and Burma*; p. 33. Also, see Gyan Chand, *Local Finance in India*, Allahabad, 1947; p. 271.

<sup>6</sup> See Frank J. Tysen, *op.cit.*, ch. 1.

<sup>6</sup> For district and sub-divisional boundaries in and around the Calcutta Metropolitan District, see Figure 1.

<sup>7</sup> See below, chs. 3, 4 and 5.

tracts comprise parts of four magisterial districts, their administrative pattern involves the dual authority of the District Magistrate and the district board. The former mainly represents at district level the headquarters administration of the State Government; the latter constitutes an elected local-government unit co-extensive with the magisterial district. It consists of not less than nine elected members, the exact number being fixed by the State Government. In fact, the District Boards of Nadia, Howrah and Hooghly have thirteen, nineteen and twenty-six members respectively, and the District Board of 24-Parganas, which is now under supersession, formerly had forty members.

The qualifications of voters and members are similar, and include an age qualification (attainment of 21 years), a residential qualification, a tax-paying qualification, and a literacy qualification. This latter qualification has always been a major limiting factor. Even to-day, the Union Census of 1961 shows only 32.5 per cent of the population of 24-Parganas District to be literate. In the Districts of Howrah, Hooghly and Nadia the percentages are 36.9, 34.7 and 27.2 respectively. Moreover, these figures include the municipal population, which is more literate than the rural population. The members of the district board are elected for a term of five years, and a properly-constituted board becomes a body corporate with consequent rights and duties. Each board is presided over by a chairman who is either nominated by the State Government, as in the case of the Nadia District Board, or elected by the members of the board from among themselves, as in Howrah and Hooghly. Each board elects one or two of its members to act as vice-chairmen. For instance, the District Boards of Howrah and Hooghly have two vice-chairmen each. The chairman is the head of the board and of its executive administration. Usually, he delegates some of his powers and duties to the vice-chairmen. The ordinary meetings of a board are to be held at least once in every month, and special meetings are to be held at any time on a requisition signed by not less than one-third of its members. In practice, however, the number of ordinary meetings far exceeds the statutory minimum and, considering the numerous calls thus made on members' time and the distances they must travel<sup>8</sup> to board meetings, the attendance is fairly good, rising in some cases to about sixty-five per cent of the total membership.

### **Committees**

The use of committees for transacting business is general in the district boards under review, and there is statutory provision for an education committee and a district public health committee. The education committee consists of the deputy inspector of schools, three members of the district board, and not more than three residents of the district not being members of the district board. Its functions are to superintend all matters connected with the finances, accounts, maintenance and management of schools maintained by the district board, and to determine conditions for giving grants to schools and libraries. The district health committee, consisting of six members of the district board, the chief medical officer of the district and a few co-opted members, suggests measures for public health and sanitation.

<sup>8</sup> See Figure 1 for district headquarters and extent of each district.

In addition, each district board normally sets up a few other committees every year, such as a finance committee, a public works committee, a union board committee, an appointments committee, a legal committee, and an arboriculture committee. Each of these committees consists of such number of members of the district board as it may elect for the year in question, and, as their names suggest, each is intended to operate for a specific purpose. In spite of their formal constitution, however, very few committees function regularly in practice, only those established for finance, public health, public works, and education operating with any degree of regularity in the three district boards concerned.

### Staff

In appointing their staff, the district boards must conform to the qualifications prescribed by the State Government. Also, in any one year the aggregate salaries and allowances of their establishment for public works cannot normally exceed twenty per cent of the total allocation available for expenditure on public works. The boards exercise control over their staff, but the Divisional Commissioner<sup>9</sup> has over-riding authority in the appointment and dismissal of employees drawing a monthly salary of Rs. 200 or more.

The boards' staffing patterns are quite elaborate. The Act provides for certain specific categories of personnel, such as a district engineer and his staff, and a district health officer and sanitary inspectors. In addition, each board usually appoints a secretary under whose supervision and control its routine administration is carried on. Heading the general establishment, he has under him an accountant to deal with revenue and audit and provident fund matters, and section heads in charge of matters pertaining to education, law, union boards and the like. The District Board of Howrah, however, has no secretary and his duties are performed by the accountant.

As regards the district health officer and district engineer, their departments both have indoor and outdoor staff. For indoor purposes, the medical department is usually headed by a medical superintendent who is assisted by a few compounders, store-keepers and other assistants. For outdoor purposes, medical officers, compounders and attendants are employed to run field dispensaries. However, since Independence, many personnel of the district board health services have been absorbed into the State health service, and the boards' medical departments have been reduced in importance. The civil works departments under the district engineers are thus now the largest of the district board departments, and the district engineers are highly paid officers. At headquarters, each engineer's establishment consists of an accountant, estimators, draughtsmen and assistants. In the field, the area of the board is divided into a number of sections, each headed by a section officer who is responsible for the execution of all public works within his jurisdiction. Under him are appointed work supervisors, clerks, overseers, attendants and bungalow chowkidars.

<sup>9</sup> See Frank J. Tysen, *op.cit.*; in the present case, the Divisional Commissioners of Presidency and Burdwan Divisions are involved.

### Statutory Functions

Originally, the district boards were invested with considerable powers and functions under the Act of 1885, but competing authorities subsequently arose to deprive them of many activities. For example, district school boards were constituted under the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act, 1930, and given powers to exercise jurisdiction in matters relating to primary education within each magisterial district. Similarly, the principal health and medical services (including veterinary services) and important roads, have all recently been taken over by the State Government<sup>10</sup>. In addition, the establishment of union boards under the Bengal Village Self-Government Act, 1919, led to over-lapping jurisdictions and the erosion of the district boards' area of operation. By the end of 1964, zilla parishads will have completed the process of erosion.

The statutory functions remaining to the district boards fall under the following heads, viz: public works, medical and public health measures, education and other functions.

(i) *Public Works*: A district board is charged with the construction and maintenance of works for improving means of communication. It may control and administer roads, bridges, ferries, channels, buildings, and other movable or immovable property. It has power to turn, divert, discontinue, or close any road. It may plant trees, construct water works, provide drainage, and lease land or tanks. Even the construction and maintenance of railways or tramways are within its statutory powers. It may undertake the construction, repair and maintenance of Government buildings (at the cost of the Government); it may construct toll-bars on bridges, roadways or footpaths; and the State may entrust any of its property to the board's control and administration.

(ii) *Medical and Public Health Measures*: A district board is empowered to provide dispensaries and hospitals for the people living within its jurisdiction; it may supply medicines and offer medical assistance to the poor; and, as far as may be possible, it is obliged to provide for the proper sanitation of its district. Any place within its jurisdiction may be provided with an adequate water supply, for which purpose it may construct and maintain water works, tube-wells and tanks. With the sanction of the State Government, a board may contribute to the cost of any municipal water-supply system falling within its jurisdiction, and it has powers to require unwholesome tanks or private premises to be cleansed or drained.

A district public health committee, which is a statutory body, may suggest measures for public health to be executed by a district board. The statute provides for a district health officer and sanitary inspectors, and entrusts a board with the appointment, payment and supervision of all public vaccinators within its area.

(iii) *Education*: A district education committee, which is also a statutory requirement, is empowered to superintend all matters connected with the finances, accounts, maintenance and management of schools maintained by a district board, and to determine conditions for giving grants to schools and libraries. A board is authorized to

<sup>10</sup> See Government of India, *Report of the Taxation Enquiry Commission (1953-4)*, Vol. IV (Evidence), Part III, New Delhi, 1955; p. 692.



establish scholarships and give financial assistance to students residing within its district.

(iv) *Other Functions:* In the case of famine or serious distress, a district board may arrange relief measures; and any other local work which is likely to promote the health, comfort or convenience of the public, may be undertaken by it. It has power to grant licences for fairs or *melas*, for which sanitary arrangements have to be made by it, and it may hold fairs and exhibitions of cattle and locally-manufactured goods and implements, and establish and maintain veterinary dispensaries. For the convenience of travellers, it may establish and maintain bungalows and *sarais*, and, in the interests of agricultural development, it may make grants, maintain model farms and assist experimental measures. In addition, a Divisional Commissioner may direct a board to undertake a census within its district.

### **The Work of the District Boards**

As indicated above, district boards have been deprived of many of their original powers and functions by the rise of rival authorities, such as the district school board and union board, and by the transfer of major responsibilities to the State. At the all-India level, this trend toward "the gradual eclipse of district boards from the social polity" attracted the attention of the Balvantray Mehta Committee, set up by the Government of India to study community projects and the national extension service<sup>11</sup>. Also, in a memorandum to the Taxation Enquiry Commission (1953-54), the West Bengal Government commented as follows:

"The district boards of this State are now at the cross-roads, their future status and functions in the scheme of local government being in a somewhat indeterminate state. Some of the important functions of the district boards, e.g., those in regard to medical relief and public health, and provision and maintenance of roads, are being gradually taken over by the State, while some of their powers and duties may have to be transferred to the proposed village panchayats when they are established<sup>12</sup>."

Finally, and as already indicated, a decision has since been taken to establish new institutions in their place, and zilla parishad rules have now been issued (July, 1964).

Since the district board never had a local community of interest at its base, the gradual erosion of its authority has not met with any great local reaction. It has stood helpless before the onslaught of competing authorities, and has increasingly become little more than an impecunious adjunct of the State. For example, the District Board of 24-Parganas, already superseded by the State, has recently reported, "Services rendered by the District Board on Medical and Education sides are quite popular and they can be counted as a supplement to the larger but necessarily more centralised Government efforts<sup>13</sup>."

<sup>11</sup> Government of India; *Report of the Team for the Study of Community Projects and National Extension Service*, Vol. II, New Delhi, 1957.

<sup>12</sup> Government of India, *Report of the Taxation Enquiry Commission (1953-4)*, Vol. IV (Evidence), Part III, New Delhi, 1955; p. 699.

<sup>13</sup> 24-Parganas District Board, *Annual Administration Report, 1962-3*; p. 8.

In recent years, the four district boards under survey have thus been forced to operate against a general background of uncertainty and indeterminacy. In consequence, their actual activities have fallen far short of even their remaining statutory functions, and the principal services they now render in practice are as follows:

(i) *Public Works:* All four district boards have constructed and attempt to maintain long stretches of metalled and unmetalled roads, bridges and culverts, and buildings for their own purposes. To ensure a supply of drinking water in the rural areas within their jurisdiction, they sink or re-sink tube-wells, and construct and maintain masonry wells. The supply of water from both of these sources is, however, far from adequate, and the boards state they are unable to augment it further because of a paucity of funds. This lack of finances also prevents the proper maintenance and repair of many of their roads<sup>14</sup>.

(ii) *Medical and Public Health:* Under this head, the boards exercise very few functions to-day. They all maintain a number of homoeopathic and allopathic dispensaries, and grant financial assistance to union board dispensaries and medical and social welfare institutions located within their areas. In addition, the District Board of Hooghly maintains a maternity home, an *ayurvedic* out-door dispensary, and a reserved bed in Lady Dufferin Hospital, Calcutta, for the benefit of indigent patients residing within its jurisdiction.

(ii) *Education:* The district boards now have no responsibility in the field of primary education, but they financially assist other educational institutions, such as junior high schools and *madrassas*, night schools, and *chatuspathis* (sanskrit schools). Grants are also made to public libraries, and scholarships and stipends are awarded to students studying mainly engineering, technology, agriculture and medical or veterinary science.

(iv) *Other Services:* All four district boards maintain staging bungalows, which are used by their staff when on tour, or are let out to visitors and tourists. In fairs and *melas*, such as the *Gangasagar mela* within the jurisdiction of the District Board of 24-Parganas but outside the Calcutta Metropolitan District, they provide conservancy and allied services. The boards lease out their reserve tanks and land, deriving quite a good income from this source, and the District Board of 24-Parganas also grants licences for brickfields within its jurisdiction (on the recommendation of the district health officer and the president of the union board within whose area a brickfield falls).

(v) *Joint Services:* The district boards under survey possess a number of ferries which are leased out by auction, and there are also a number of inter-district ferries, the income from which is shared on an agreed basis by the district boards involved. For instance, three such ferries are jointly owned by the District Boards of 24-Parganas and Howrah. Some of the boards also share ferries with municipalities. The Hooghly District Board, for example, jointly owns ferries with each of the municipalities of Bhadreswar and Bhatpara. The management of such joint ferry services is generally entrusted to one of the partners, and the income is shared on agreed principles.

<sup>14</sup> For district board finances, see below, ch. 6.

Instances are not rare, however, of default by the managing authority, as in the case of ferries jointly owned by municipalities<sup>15</sup>.

### Inter-Governmental Relations

Like every other local authority, a district board is a creature of the State Government that controls and supervises it, through specific provisions of the enabling statute and the detailed rules made thereunder, and by means of a substantial hierarchy of State officials. In addition, the Courts of Law have power to review the acts of a district board because "as a public authority the local body's legal liability is no less than that of any other organ of government, and its competence is no more than is set forth in the laws and rules under which it is established."<sup>16</sup> Apart from these institutions, a number of other public bodies, such as the district school board and the union board, have relationships with district boards. These various kinds of relationships are discussed below.

(i) *The State Government: Department of Local Self-Government and Panchayats:* On behalf of the State Government, the Department of Local Self-Government and Panchayats frames policies and makes rules and regulations to guide the operations of district boards. It has the power to annul any proceedings of a district board which are not in conformity with the law and rules, and, in certain cases, it acts as a final appellate authority.

The State Government also has the power to dissolve or supersede a board, or it may direct that a board be reconstituted and a fresh election held. In the case of supersession, which may extend up to six years, the members of the board vacate their offices, a person (or persons) is appointed by the State to carry on the board's functions and all properties of the board vest in the State.

(ii) *The State Government: Divisional Commissioner*<sup>17</sup>: The Divisional Commissioner is intimately connected with the operations of district boards, he and the District Magistrate being required to see that their proceedings conform to the law and rules. The Commissioner has power to remove any member of a board, on the grounds of incapacity, insolvency or absence from six consecutive meetings of the board. He also has an effective role to play in the appointment and dismissal of staff. For instance, without his approval, a board can neither create nor abolish any post the monthly salary of which is Rs. 200 or more. In addition, certain employees have a right of appeal to the Divisional Commissioner in the case of dismissal.

All district board reports and returns are transmitted to the Divisional Commissioner through the District Magistrate. He has the power to modify budget estimates, and he may set limits to expenditure in certain instances, as in the case of relief measures in times of famine or serious distress. His sanction is necessary for the execution of certain board functions, such as road regulations, the fixing of rates of tolls, the provision of water, and a host of miscellaneous functions, including the construction of

<sup>15</sup> See M. M. Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> Harold Zink, Arne Wahlstrand, Feliciano Benvenuti and R. Bhaskaran, *Rural Local Government in Sweden, Italy and India*, London, 1957; p. 80. This power of the Courts is applicable in the case of all local-government institutions.

<sup>17</sup> See also Frank J. Tysen, *op.cit.*

bungalows, the holding of fairs and exhibitions, and measures for agricultural development. The Commissioner may inspect any district board works, and may suspend any of its actions which he deems to be prejudicial to the public interest. When a board defaults in the performance of any duty, he may direct it to rectify such default within a specified time, and, if the board continues in default, he may appoint a person to perform such duty in its place. In the case of disputes between a district board and any other local authority within the same magisterial district, the Commissioner acts as the arbiter.

(iii) *The State Government: District Magistrate*<sup>18</sup>: The role of the District Magistrate is, to quote a spokesman of a district board, that of a post office where the board's reports and returns are deposited for final transmission to, and consideration of, the Divisional Commissioner. But his role is actually more positive than this, as the latter will usually act in connection with district board administration only on the basis of information received from the District Magistrate. Moreover, in certain cases, the District Magistrate is directly involved in the affairs of a district board. For instance, like the Commissioner, he has a general duty to ensure that the board's proceedings conform to the law and rules, he may inspect the board's works, and he may suspend any of its actions in the public interest. In the case of an emergency, he may also arrange for the execution of any work which should have been normally executed by a board, and when the Government removes the chairman of a board, the District Magistrate is called upon to fill the position.

(iv) *The State Government: Other Field Officers*: Firstly, an inspector of local works is appointed for each administrative division to inspect district board works and to advise on civil works. The board has a statutory obligation to submit to the inspector of local works and the Divisional Commissioner, plans and estimates for any work the total cost of which exceeds Rs. 10,000. Secondly, the district boards usually give financial assistance to educational institutions and individual scholars on the recommendation of the appropriate district inspector of schools. Thirdly, public health measures are adopted by district boards in conformity with the suggestions and recommendations of the appropriate district public health committee, of which the chief medical officer of the district is an *ex-officio* member. The latter's recommendation is also necessary for the granting of licences to brickfields.

(v) *District School Boards*: The chairman and vice-chairman of a district board are members of the appropriate district school board, which is constituted under the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act, 1930, to exercise jurisdiction in matters of primary education in the rural areas of the district.

(vi) *Other Public Bodies*: A district board may join with another district board, municipality or cantonment, and constitute a joint committee for any purpose in which they are jointly interested, as in the case of ferries<sup>19</sup>. The Act also provides for other forms of cooperation, particularly as a number of municipalities will usually operate side by side with a district board within the area of the same magisterial district. For example, in the case of a district board road running through a municipality, the

<sup>18</sup> See also Frank J. Tysen, *op.cit.*

<sup>19</sup> For relationships with union boards, see below ch. 2.

State Government may direct that the road be maintained and repaired by the district board, subject to payment by the municipality concerned. Also, a district board may, with the sanction of the State Government, contribute to the cost of a municipal water supply. In the case of a dispute between a municipality and a board arising from such arrangements, the Divisional Commissioner is empowered to arbitrate.

(vii) *Community Development Activities:* The members of a district board are represented on the appropriate district development council, sub-divisional development committee and block development committee. These are all advisory bodies, consisting of official and non-official members, at the district, sub-divisional and block levels respectively. All four district boards under survey implement road development schemes of the development blocks within their areas, with financial assistance from the Government amounting to fifty per cent of the total cost incurred.

## UNION BOARDS

**History and Jurisdiction**

As shown in Table 2, the Calcutta Metropolitan District contains sixty union boards which, like the district boards, are now being replaced. Thirty of these boards fall entirely within the District, while only certain portions of the rest are included within it as, in defining the Metropolitan District, emphasis has been placed on the *mouza* rather than the jurisdiction of a local authority or State administrative unit<sup>1</sup>.

**Table 2**

**CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT: DISTRIBUTION OF UNION BOARDS  
BY MAGISTERIAL DISTRICTS, 1963**

District	Number of Union Boards in each District	Number of Union Boards in CMD*
1. Howrah	81	17
2. Hooghly	129	6
3. 24-Parganas	280	36
4. Nadia	131	1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>621</b>	<b>60</b>

\*Calcutta Metropolitan District.

SOURCES: Government of West Bengal, *Statistical Abstract*, 1960; information supplied by District Magistrates.

The union boards were first established under the Bengal Village Self-Government Act, 1919, and, on an average, each board administers a union of from eight to ten villages with an aggregate population of about 10,000. Apparently, such arrangement was originally made in the belief that the Permanent Settlement, coupled with the predominating influence of local landlords and the increasing centralization of Government control, prevented the development of a consciousness of community at the village level. Thus, although the State Government may declare *any* local area to be a union board, attempts have generally been made to delimit a more or less integrated area, the parts of which are linked together by the nodal influence of a

<sup>1</sup> Other than municipalities, none of which has only partially been included. A *mouza* is the smallest unit used for revenue collection and census purposes. For a list of the union boards falling wholly within the Calcutta Metropolitan District, see Table 19.

*bazar*, or weekly or bi-weekly market, which is ordinarily visited by the people of the area to buy or sell goods, or to undertake other business<sup>2</sup>. This principle is an important one, and is similar to that used in the 1870s in England and Wales to delimit local self-governing parishes. But it has not been followed in the creation of other local authorities in West Bengal<sup>3</sup>.

The organization and functions of the union boards cannot be understood save in the context of their history<sup>4</sup>. In the rural sector, the attention of the early British Administration was first drawn to the problem of village watch and ward. Accordingly, a *chaukidari* panchayat system was instituted by Act VI of 1870, which took a union of villages rather than a single village as the unit of panchayat administration. The *chaukidari* panchayats consisted of local members appointed by the District Magistrate, and they functioned as agents for the assessment and collection of a *chaukidari* tax, which was levied to support a village police force—the *chaukidars* (*chowkidars*) and *dafadars*. These panchayats were responsible only for the maintenance of law and order, and they had nothing to do with the familiar local-government functions of road construction and repair, drainage, public instruction and the like<sup>5</sup>.

Such local-government functions were first introduced by the Bengal Local Self-Government Act, 1885, which envisaged an inter-related system of rural self-government at the district, sub-divisional and village levels. Alongside the *chaukidari* panchayats, union committees were constituted under the Act to manage local pounds, schools and roads. Each committee was concerned with a number of villages, it had jurisdiction over an area of from twelve to fourteen square miles, and it was subordinated to the district board on which it depended very much for funds.

In 1907-8, a Royal Commission on Decentralization dealt, *inter alia*, with rural local bodies, and recommended the concentration of *chaukidari* and other local-government functions into a single rural local authority. Also, the Commission desired that the foundation of rural self-government should be a natural village, rather than an artificial union of villages which might not evoke the interest of local people. Seven years later, a District Administration Committee, which was appointed in 1914 by the Government of Bengal to improve administrative machinery, expressed dissatisfaction with the way village affairs were being administered by the union committees and *chaukidari* panchayats. It reported in favour of establishing a network of rural authorities combining the functions of these two bodies, and it recommended the constitution of a village judiciary for trying petty civil and criminal cases. The Bengal Village Self-Government Act, 1919, under which the union boards now operate, resulted mainly from these recommendations, although *chowkidars* and *dafadars* continued to be employed under the legislation of 1870.

The union boards have thus functioned for more than four decades, until the

<sup>2</sup> See West Bengal Government, *Union Board Manual, Vol. I*, Alipore, 1955; p. 181.

<sup>3</sup> Including the new panchayat system; see below chs. 3, 4 and 5, and especially p. 33. An *anchal* panchayat, however, is to have jurisdiction over an area the same as that of a union board.

<sup>4</sup> See, in this connection, Naresh Chandra Roy, *Rural Self-Government in Bengal*, University of Calcutta, 1936.

<sup>5</sup> In terms of Appendix B, they were units of local self-administration.

advent of panchayati raj<sup>6</sup>. As indicated in Chapter 1, the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1956, is gradually coming into force and, when the new panchayats have been set up throughout the rural areas, the union boards, like their predecessors the chaukidari panchayats and union committees, will become but part of the history of rural local government in West Bengal.

### **Constitution and Membership**

Under the Act of 1919, the State Government may declare a local area to be a union, and may establish a union board for such area by notification. A board thus constituted becomes a body corporate with consequent rights and duties. It consists of six to nine members elected for a term of four years, the exact number being fixed by the State Government. Qualifications of voters and members are similar, and include (i) attainment of the age of twenty-five years, (ii) a residence qualification, (iii) a tax-paying qualification, and (iv) a literacy qualification, which has been as much a limiting factor as in the case of district boards. The members are elected from multi-member constituencies. Thus, for instance, within the Calcutta Metropolitan District, the Union Boards of Haltu and Boinchtola each have nine members elected from three wards or constituencies. In practice, elections are often fought on party lines, and the voters do not fail to recognize who, among the candidates, belongs to which political party. In one recent instance, two of the major all-India political parties (the Congress and Communist Parties) engaged in a keen contest which ultimately led to a Court case involving disputed elections. As a result, the new board could not meet, its work was virtually paralysed and its local-government services came to a standstill.

Ordinary meetings of a union board are held once a month, and special meetings may be called at any time by the president (chairman). Anybody absenting himself without sufficient reason from six consecutive meetings, is liable to be removed from the board. In practice, however, instances of cancelled meetings resulting from the lack of a quorum are quite common among the union boards under survey, and the rule appears to be more honoured in its breach than its observance.

Every union board is presided over by a president, who is normally elected by its members from among themselves. It may also elect one of its members to be the vice-president. The law provides for the removal or resignation of a president or vice-president, or of any other member, and in actual practice such removals and resignations are not infrequent. For instance, four members of the Bansdroni Union Board have recently been removed by the district board, and one of its members has resigned. As the case of Bansdroni Union Board proves, however, vacancies existing in a board do not stand in the way of its acts and proceedings. The president exercises all the powers vested in the board by law and the rules made thereunder, but he cannot, of course, act in contravention of any order of the board passed at a meeting. In addition, the general superintendence and control of the board's establishment vest in him, the vice-president exercising no statutory powers. On the other hand, the president's

<sup>6</sup> See below, ch. 5.



powers may be delegated to the vice-president and, in consequence, instances are not uncommon where the president and the vice-president are found to be at loggerheads.

### **Staff**

Subject to the general approval of the district board, a union board has power to appoint and fix the salaries of its staff. Very few of the union boards under survey can, however, afford to maintain a substantial permanent staff. In most cases, the staff consists of (i) dafadars and chowkidars, (ii) sweepers, (iii) tax-collectors, and (iv) one or two full-time or part-time clerks. The dafadars and chowkidars, constituting the village police, fall under the dual control of the District Magistrate and the union board concerned. So far as their appointment is concerned, a board has only the power of nomination, and the final appointing authority is the District Magistrate, who may even reject its nominees. The District Magistrate's sanction is also needed to dismiss chowkidars and dafadars, and he determines the number to be appointed, their salary and their equipment, after considering the views of the union boards concerned. These provisions illustrate the emphasis placed on village watch and ward by the Act of 1919, which also imposes a compulsory union rate to meet the expenses of the village police. It also specially provides that, in the case of non-payment of chowkidars and dafadars (and other staff), the District Magistrate may appoint a person to assess and collect the rate. Within the Calcutta Metropolitan District, this special provision has been invoked in the case of the Bansdroni Union Board, where a tahsildar has in fact been appointed by the District Magistrate for the purpose.

Of the other staff, one or two sweepers are usually employed by a union board. The tax-collector has no fixed salary, but he is generally paid a percentage of the total amount he collects (e.g. ten per cent), and he may also undertake the work of a clerk at a nominal salary. A more affluent board, such as the Haltu Union Board, will employ a few clerks on a part-time or full-time basis, but the impression obtained from field observation within the Metropolitan District is that the actual establishment of all union boards falls very far short of that which would be required if they were to undertake anything like the elaborate functions listed in the Act of 1919 (which appear to be more ambitious than even those of the Bengal Municipal Act, 1932).

### **Statutory Functions**

Under their enabling statute, union boards possess an imposing list of powers and duties, which may be divided into three categories, (i) compulsory, (ii) optional, and (iii) judicial.

(i) *Compulsory Functions:* The most important mandatory function is to secure the due performance of their duties by the dafadars and chowkidars, and to exercise general control over them. In addition, union boards must, as far as possible, provide sanitation and conservancy services, and prevent public nuisances. For these purposes, they may execute all necessary works. In the case of an outbreak of an epidemic disease among people or cattle, the boards are required to make an immediate report to the district medical officer of health, and they must also supply any local information needed by the District Magistrate or district board.

(ii) *Optional Functions:* The union boards have a wide range of optional functions covering most of the familiar local-government powers and services. Thus, they may remove huts or privies, construct or remove private or public drains, and establish burning ghats and burial grounds. If any pool or pit appears to be injurious to public health, they may take appropriate measures against it; and, on similar grounds, they may clear jungle or thick vegetation. They have power to control the erection of buildings, walls or platforms; and, to provide the unions with an adequate supply of water, they may take all necessary steps, including the construction of water works and the like.

The control of all roads, bridges and waterways within the unions, which are not owned by any private person or other public authority, vests in the union boards. Furthermore, they may provide for street lighting, undertake small irrigation projects, and take measures for the improvement and development of cottage industries; and other optional functions include the establishment and maintenance of dispensaries and primary schools, the granting of stipends to students reading in agricultural classes, and the making of grants to any public library or reading room. The boards also have power to issue licences for any trade or business declared by the State Government to be offensive or dangerous, and they may undertake such other functions as may be transferred to them by the district boards.

(iii) *Judicial Functions:* The State Government may, by notification, form union benches for the administration of criminal and civil justice in petty cases within the areas of the union boards. Generally, the boards are first given criminal jurisdiction, and civil jurisdiction is granted only after the satisfactory administration of criminal justice.

### **The Work of the Union Boards**

As already observed, the functions actually performed by the union boards within the Calcutta Metropolitan District constitute no more than a small fraction of their statutory functions. Limited financial resources have apparently been the greatest obstacle to the expansion of their activities. Statistics for the year 1961-2<sup>7</sup> indicate a wide variation in the annual income of the boards under survey, ranging from Rs. 2,827 in the case of Chatta Union Board in 24-Parganas District to Rs. 23,291 in the case of Bally Union Board in Howrah District. The more affluent boards, such as Haltu in 24-Parganas, Makhla Noapara in Hooghly, and Bally and Santragachi in Howrah, can afford to spend more on public amenities than most others, which generally have a very low income, but, even so, their activities are very much limited relative to the needs of the communities they serve.

Almost all the union boards under survey are situated on the periphery of municipal corporations and municipalities. Their close proximity to these urban institutions, coupled with a high population density, has in recent years led to pressing demands for more and better local-government services. Some of the union board areas have in fact been classed as urban in the 1961 Census and, as Table 3 shows, they may easily

<sup>7</sup> See below, ch. 6.

bear comparison with certain municipalities within the Calcutta Metropolitan District<sup>8</sup>. Since these and other similar non-municipal areas undoubtedly fulfil the

**Table 3**

**CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT: POPULATION OF CERTAIN UNION BOARDS AND MUNICIPALITIES, 1961**

Urban Areas Under Union Boards			Urban Areas Under Municipalities		
Union Board	District	Population	Municipality	District	Population
1. Bally	Howrah	29,737	1. Konnagar	Hooghly	29,443
2. Uluberia	„	18,509	2. Baruipur	24-Parganas	13,608
3. Panchoor	24-Parganas	25,131	3. Dum Dum	„	20,041
4. Madhyamgram	„	18,483	4. Rajpur	„	24,812

SOURCE: *Census of India, 1961.*

criteria for municipalization, and are faced with important and peculiar administrative problems, they are dealt with below in detail in Chapter 8.

As regards the actual operation of the union boards under survey, at least fifty per cent of their income is generally spent on administration, including the entire cost of maintaining the village police<sup>9</sup>. They thus have very little left for expenditure on other local-government services. All of them construct and maintain village roads, which are usually unmetalled. The emphasis is, however, invariably on maintenance rather than construction. As regards water supply, the boards maintain a few tube-wells which constitute the main source of drinking water, and these are sometimes supplemented by the district boards, which may also sink or re-sink tube-wells within their areas. In addition, the union boards within a development block area receive assistance from the block's water-supply scheme. Nevertheless, in the heavily-populated union board areas, such as those of Haltu and Bansdroni, there is an acute shortage of drinking water.

The boards' drainage and conservancy services are negligible. To cite a few instances, the boards of Madhyamgram, Ganipur, Langalberia and Chatta in 24-Parganas District, and Bauria and Nalpur in Howrah District, spent nothing at all on these items in 1961-2. So far as medical and public health functions are concerned, a few union boards, such as those of Bally in Howrah District and Kodalia Debanandapur and Makhla Noapara in Hooghly District, maintain dispensaries with financial assistance from the district boards. In some instances, the union boards contribute to

<sup>8</sup> The list of urban areas under union boards given in Table 3 is merely representative and not exhaustive. A full list of the towns will be found below in ch. 8.

<sup>9</sup> For a detailed analysis of union board finances, see ch. 6.

the maintenance of charitable dispensaries managed by the district boards, but, generally speaking, the services provided are far from adequate.

Owing to public demand for street lighting in the union board areas very close to Calcutta, Howrah and other municipalities, the boards concerned, such as the Haltu Union Board in 24-Parganas District, have arranged for street lighting with electric power supplied by the Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation and the West Bengal State Electricity Board. But the capital expenditure involved has come mainly from public donations.

Occasionally, the union boards take steps to clear jungle and thick vegetation, and their other functions include grants to public libraries, financial help to poor students and paupers, and the maintenance of a few pounds. Generally speaking, however, they have been deterred from undertaking many activities since 1956, not only because of lack of funds but also because of the knowledge that they were soon to be replaced by new institutions. Their days being numbered, they could hardly be expected to show great enthusiasm for their work.

### **Inter-Governmental Relations**

(i) *General*: The union boards come into contact mainly with the State Government and its field officers, district boards, district school boards and other union boards. As the union boards are creatures of the State, the latter exercises an elaborate system of supervision and control at various levels of administration on the basis of statutes and rules. At the highest level, the Department of Local Self-Government and Panchayats is responsible for framing general policies which are to be executed by the State's various field agencies. Of these, the most immediately responsible agent is the circle officer<sup>10</sup>, who, as indicated below, is directly in charge of union board affairs within his circle, the area of which comprises approximately thirty unions. The next higher official involved is the Sub-divisional Officer, who exercises some of the powers of the District Magistrate at the sub-divisional level. The District Magistrate and Divisional Commissioner in turn exercise further powers over the union boards. The relationships thus obtaining are described below, *seriatim*.

(ii) *The Divisional Commissioner*:<sup>11</sup> The law provides for the supervision of union boards by the Divisional Commissioner, the District Magistrate, the Sub-divisional Officer and the circle officer.<sup>12</sup> These officials have access to all board records, and may inspect the board's works or properties. The Divisional Commissioner is empowered to annul any board proceedings which are not in conformity with the law or rules, and a board may obtain loans and undertake small irrigation projects only with his sanction. If a board should neglect its duties, or exceed or abuse its powers, he may order a fresh election, and, as an extreme measure, he may remove the president or supersede the board.

(iii) *The District Magistrate*: The District Magistrate divides a union into

<sup>10</sup> In areas where community development projects are launched, the block development officer is, *ex officio*, the circle officer.

<sup>11</sup> See Frank J. Tysen, *op.cit.*

<sup>12</sup> The block development officer, *ex officio*, where development blocks have been established.

electoral wards, and appoints an election officer to conduct union elections. He may compel a board to perform certain functions, such as the registration of births and deaths; he may suspend the execution of any of its orders; and his views are considered by the Divisional Commissioner when superseding a board, or taking any steps with regard to it. As already indicated, the District Magistrate exercises his greatest control in connection with dafadars and chowkidars, as he decides their appointment and dismissal, and the permitted annual cost of their equipment. Moreover, in the case of the non-payment of the village police (or other staff), he may appoint his own nominee to exercise all the powers of a union board in regard to the assessment and collection of union rates.

Appeals from a union board order or action lie to the District Magistrate in specific cases, such as the contravention of a board's order by any person, and disputes between a board and a municipality. Audit reports, and reports on the general working of union boards, are submitted to him by the circle officer, and without his sanction no expenditure may be incurred in excess of the approved budget. Moreover, on receipt of the board's assessment list through the circle officer, the District Magistrate may, if necessary, order an assessment revision.

(iv) *The Sub-divisional Officer* :<sup>13</sup> At the sub-divisional level, the Sub-divisional Officer may exercise many of the powers of the District Magistrate in connection with union boards, either concurrently or on the latter's behalf.

(v) *The Circle Officer*: The post of circle officer (now being filled by the block development officer wherever development blocks have been set up) was created primarily to keep a close watch on the working of the union boards. The circle officer is the field agent of the State administration at the village level. He attends to the needs of the union boards, inspects their work, audits their accounts, and submits reports to the Sub-divisional Officer and District Magistrate.

(vi) *The Thana Officer*: In so far as the union boards are concerned with village watch and ward, they operate in close association with the police administration of the State at the thana (or police-station) level. The boards maintain a list of undesirable persons within their areas who are regularly watched by their dafadars and chowkidars, and information about such persons is transmitted to the officer in charge of the thana. The dafadars and chowkidars attend muster parades at the police station, and assist the State police in the discharge of their duties.

(vii) *The District Boards*: Within a magisterial district, the administration of rural areas is shared by the district board and a number of union boards. Hence, the Bengal Local Self-Government Act, 1885, and the Bengal Village Self-Government Act, 1919, both provide for the partial subordination of the union boards to the district board. The latter is given powers to superintend the administration of the union boards within its area, except in matters relating to dafadars and chowkidars. The chairman of the district board may have access to all the records and work of a union board, and the district board arbitrates in disputes between two or more union boards. If a union board fails to elect a president, the district board may appoint one from

<sup>13</sup> See Frank J. Tysen, *op.cit.*

among the members of the union board; the president and members of a union board are removable by the district board; and the latter may compel a union board to undertake sanitary and public health measures. An appeal by any owner or occupier of land who has been ordered by a union board to cleanse his land, lies to the chairman of the district board.

Appointments to the staff of a union board, and enforcement of building regulations within its area, require the district board's approval; the management of any institution, or the execution of any work, within the area of a union board, may be made over to it by the district board, provided the latter meets the costs involved; and union boards form joint committees among themselves with the sanction of the district board. As regards financial control, the district board may make grants-in-aid to union boards, with or without conditions; union board budget estimates are annually submitted to it; and no expenditure in excess of the budget may be incurred by union boards without its sanction. If a union board defaults in the performance of any duty imposed by the district board, a period may be fixed by the latter for its performance; it may suspend the execution of any order or work of a union board; and its views are considered by the Divisional Commissioner before he orders the dissolution or supersession of a union board.

(viii) *The District School Board*:<sup>14</sup> Under the provisions of Sec. 34 of the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act, 1930, a tax on trades, businesses and professions is levied in rural areas by the District Magistrate. The union board realizes this tax and remits the amount to the District Magistrate, after deducting ten per cent thereof to defray the costs of collection.

(ix) *Other Union Boards*: Under the provisions of Sec. 32AA of the Act of 1919, a union board may constitute a joint committee with one or more union boards for any purpose in which they are jointly interested. As already indicated, such a joint committee requires the prior approval of the district board within the area of which the union boards fall.

(x) *Miscellaneous*: There is no statute defining relationships between union boards and municipalities, but, in the case of a dispute between a municipality and a union board within the same district, the District Magistrate concerned will be the final deciding authority. Union boards work in close association with the development block within the jurisdiction of which they fall, each board being represented on the block development committee by its president and one other member.

<sup>14</sup> See M. Bhattacharya, M. M. Singh, and Frank J. Tysen, 'Government in Metropolitan Calcutta: A Manual', *Calcutta Research Studies No. 1*.

## ZILLA PARISHADS

### Introduction and Jurisdiction

In accordance with the general policy of the Union Government to remodel the system of rural local government in India, zilla parishads are to be introduced by the Government of West Bengal in each magisterial district in the place of the existing district boards, and a new tier of local authorities known as anchalik parishads is to be created at the development block level. The enabling legislation is the West Bengal Zilla Parishads Act of 1963, and rules have now been published (July, 1964) to implement its provisions. As yet, however, no zilla parishads or anchalik parishads have actually been set up.

The local bodies created by the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1956, and the West Bengal Zilla Parishads Act, 1963, are designed to establish an integrated system associated with community development activities and bringing about democratic decentralization, so as to secure effective public participation in rural planning and development. As the latter Act provides for two kinds of local authorities, the zilla parishad and the anchalik parishad, each of these may be treated separately, however, and this chapter thus discusses the proposed structure and functions of only the zilla parishads.

### Constitution and Membership

For each magisterial district, the State Government is to establish a zilla parishad bearing the name of the district. Its jurisdiction will extend over the whole of the non-municipal and non-cantonment areas within the district, and will thus overlap the jurisdiction of any other local authority established under the two new Acts. Each zilla parishad will be a body corporate with consequent rights and duties, and will consist of members and associate members. Associate members will not have the right to vote, nor will they be eligible for election as chairman or vice-chairman. They will consist of certain State Government officials, viz: the Sub-divisional Officer of each sub-division of the district, and the district panchayat officer. The members and associate members will normally hold office for a period of four years, and, apart from the associate members, the following persons will be members of a zilla parishad:

- (i) the presidents of anchalik parishads of the development blocks within the district, *ex officio*;
- (ii) two adhyakshas (presidents) of gram panchayats, elected by the adhyakshas from among themselves, one from each of the two constituencies into which each sub-division is to be divided;
- (iii) members of the Union House of the People or State Legislative Assembly whose constituencies comprise the district or any part thereof, and who are not Ministers;

- (iv) members of the Union Council of States or State Legislative Council, not being Ministers and having a place of residence in the district;
- (v) the chairman of a municipality or mayor of a municipal corporation in the district, to be appointed by the State Government;
- (vi) the president of the district school board, *ex officio*; and
- (vii) two women having a place of residence in the district, to be appointed by the State Government.

The State Government will thus have at least three nominees on a zilla parishad, in addition to the officials who will be associate members. The rest of the members will be either indirectly elected or enjoy membership *ex officio*. Thus, a zilla parishad will link together a number of bodies, viz: gram panchayats, anchal panchayats, anchalik parishads, municipalities, district school boards, the State Legislature and even the Union Parliament.<sup>1</sup> A person will be disqualified from membership if, *inter alia*, he has failed to pay any local taxes due, is an undischarged bankrupt, is an employee of the zilla parishad, is of unsound mind, has been dismissed from the service of the Union or State Government, or of a local authority, for misconduct, or has been convicted and sentenced for moral turpitude. In addition, the State Government may remove a member or an associate member on grounds of misconduct, incapacity, or absence from six consecutive meetings of a zilla parishad.

A zilla parishad will normally hold a meeting at least once a month, and special meetings may be arranged in cases of emergency. Decisions are to be taken by majority vote (an associate member not having the right to vote).

### **The Chairman and Vice-Chairman**

Each zilla parishad will have a chairman and a vice-chairman elected by the members from among themselves; provided that a chairman of a municipality, a mayor of a municipal corporation and the president of the district school board may not be so elected. The State Government will have power to remove either of them from office.

A zilla parishad will be permitted to delegate the following powers, functions and duties to the chairman:

- (i) general financial and executive responsibility;
- (ii) passing orders on bills and signing cheques;

<sup>1</sup> In this connection, it may be noted that the idea of associating Members of Parliament or the State Legislature with the zilla parishad has been opposed in some quarters. For instance, a report of a seminar on *The Pattern of Rural Government in India*, held at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, 1958, states: "the nearer a representative is to the people who have chosen him, the more significant becomes his role as a democratic leader. This principle is flagrantly violated by suggesting that M.P.s and State Legislators should be *ex-officio* members of primary or district organizations. The Central and State Legislators have neither the relevant status nor the particular interest to qualify them for such membership." (p. 7) This kind of criticism may also be levelled at certain other members of the zilla parishad, in so far as their interests may be divided because of their divided responsibilities, and their performance of duties may thus become perfunctory only. Such criticism may, in fact, be recognized in the provision that, if a president of an anchalik parishad or an adhyaksha is elected as chairman or vice-chairman of the zilla parishad, he must vacate his office of president or adhyaksha.



- (iii) administrative supervision and control over the work of the executive officer and secretary;
- (iv) in cases of emergency, issuing directives in consultation with the District Magistrate for the execution, suspension or stoppage of any work;
- (v) inspection of, and calling for reports and information from, any anchalik parishad, anchal panchayat, gram panchayat or other local authority within its district;
- (vi) passing bills for travelling allowances drawn by the vice-chairman, any other member, the executive officer and the non-official members of the standing committees (other than the primary education committee); and
- (vii) on the recommendation of the finance and establishment committee, passing orders of dismissal, removal or demotion of any officer or employee holding a post with a monthly salary of less than Rs. 300.

When the office of the chairman is vacant, a zilla parishad may delegate such powers, functions and duties to the vice-chairman. Otherwise, it may normally delegate any of the following functions to the vice-chairman:

- (i) inspection of, and calling for reports from, any anchalik parishad, anchal panchayat or gram panchayat within the district;
- (ii) passing orders and signing cheques for limited amounts; and
- (iii) supervising the general office establishment, including the maintenance of important records and office orders.

At zilla parishad meetings, the admissibility of a resolution or question is to be decided by the chairman.

### **Standing Committees**

The Act provides for the following standing committees of a zilla parishad:

- (i) finance and establishment committee,
- (ii) public health committee,
- (iii) public works committee,
- (iv) agriculture and irrigation committee,
- (v) industry and cooperation committee,
- (vi) public and social welfare committee, and
- (vii) primary education committee.

A parishad may also constitute other committees with the approval, or under the direction, of the State Government, and all committees are to hold meetings at least once a month.

Each committee will have elected as well as nominated members. The Zilla Parishads of Hooghly, Howrah and Nadia, having jurisdiction within the Calcutta Metropolitan District, are to have standing committees each consisting of six elected members; and in the case of the Zilla Parishad of 24-Parganas, the number has been fixed at nine. The members of a zilla parishad are also to nominate two persons on each standing committee, other than the primary education committee, having knowledge of, and experience in, the subjects assigned to such standing committee.

In addition, each committee, other than the primary education committee, will have as members certain officers of the State Government shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**

**ZILLA PARISHADS: OFFICIAL MEMBERS OF STANDING COMMITTEES, 1964**

Standing Committee	Official Members
1. Finance and Establishment Committee	Special Officer, Planning and Development District Panchayat Officer
2. Public Health Committee	District Health Officer Assistant Engineer, Rural Water Supply
3. Public Works Committee	Executive Engineer, Public Works District Engineer
4. Agriculture and Irrigation Committee	Executive Engineer, Irrigation District Agricultural Officer
5. Industry and Cooperation Committee	Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies District Industrial Officer
6. Public and Social Welfare Committee	District Social Educational Officer Special Officer, Tribal Welfare, or District Publicity Officer

Each standing committee will exercise the powers and perform the functions of a zilla parishad in relation to the subjects assigned to it in Table 5, within financial limits to be fixed by the State Government from time to time.

**Table 5**

**ZILLA PARISHADS: POWERS AND FUNCTIONS OF STANDING COMMITTEES, 1964**

Standing Committee	Powers and Functions Assigned
1. Finance and Establishment Committee	Finance, budget, taxation, administration, establishment, planning, coordination and supervision
2. Public Health Committee	Public health, sanitation, nutrition, rural water supply, dispensaries, hospitals and family planning
3. Public Works Committee	Roads, including bridges and culverts, construction and maintenance of public buildings, works and properties, and rural housing
4. Agriculture and Irrigation Committee	Agriculture, food production, irrigation, forests and fisheries, animal husbandry, poultry and veterinary services
5. Industry and Cooperation Committee	Marketing, warehousing, food-processing, co-operative societies, rural credit, small savings and cottage industries
6. Public and Social Welfare Committee	Social education, literacy, recreation, social welfare (including welfare of women, children and weaker communities), tribal welfare, statistics, adult education, information and mass communication, and publicity
7. Primary Education Committee	Primary education

Of these standing committees, the finance and establishment committee will exercise certain additional powers. For instance, each standing committee will have to obtain its views before giving administrative approval and financial sanction to a scheme. In addition, every item of cost or expenditure sanctioned by a standing committee must be placed before the finance and establishment committee for information. And the latter will be empowered to recommend the creation of posts and the appointment and transfer of staff, to consider the budgets of anchalik parishads, to recommend grants to and contributions from lower panchayat bodies, to prepare and submit an annual administration report to the zilla parishad, to maintain accounts of receipts and expenditures of the zilla parishad, and to recommend the levying of rates, fees and tolls, the transfer of properties, schemes and works, and the granting of licences under the Act.

All standing committees will exercise powers of decision within their respective jurisdictions and financial limits, and will be responsible for the execution of such decisions; subject to the submission of quarterly progress reports and minutes of monthly proceedings to the zilla parishad. Copies of such minutes of proceedings are to be sent to the parishad's executive officer<sup>2</sup> by the official members of each standing committee, who are also to take such action as is necessary to implement committee decisions. The parishad itself will decide any problem of jurisdiction of or between the standing committees.

### **Establishment**

A secretary is to be appointed by each zilla parishad, although for four years after the date of its creation the district panchayat officer is to act as *ex-officio* secretary. Through the chairman, the secretary will be responsible to the zilla parishad and its standing committees in all matters relating to the budget, loans, progress of expenditure, receipts from all sources, imposition of fines and penalties, custody of the zilla parishad fund in the Government treasury, contributions and grants made by the Government or by any local authority, and creation of posts and framing of by-laws.

To prepare the budget, the secretary is to collect all necessary financial data, in consultation with the District Magistrate and the various district-level officers and with reference to the State Plan Budget for the district. His draft budget is to be submitted to the finance and establishment committee, with whose recommendations it is then to be submitted to the zilla parishad and, finally, to the State Government. He is to receive quarterly progress reports of zilla parishad expenditure from an executive officer, who is to be appointed to assist him in the discharge of his responsibilities and is to furnish records, returns and information called for by him. The secretary is also to sign all important correspondence of the parishad with the State Government, and to inspect the institutions and work of the zilla parishad and anchalik parishads.

The executive officer is to be appointed by the State, but will be removable by

<sup>2</sup> See below, *Establishment*.

a resolution of a majority of not less than two-thirds of the total number of members of the zilla parishad. Working under the administrative control of the chairman, but also responsible for complying with any directives of the secretary, the executive officer is to keep the former informed of the progress of development activities and other problems and difficulties of the district. He is to prepare the agenda for the meetings of the parishad, and to take necessary action on the decisions arrived at by such meetings. Usually, all correspondence of the parishad and its standing committees (other than that allocated to the secretary) is to be carried on by him, and the records and accounts of the parishad are to be placed in his charge. He is to exercise administrative control and supervision over the parishad office and staff, and is to secure coordination between the parishad, its standing committees and the district-level officers in all matters relating to the execution of schemes and works approved by the parishad or its standing committees.

Other officers and employees may be appointed by a zilla parishad as and when required. In addition, the State Government may place the services of its officers and employees at the disposal of a zilla parishad, such personnel being removable by a resolution passed by a two-thirds majority and possibly including any or all of the following, viz: the district panchayat officer, the assistant engineer (rural water supply), the district engineer, the district agricultural officer, the district industrial officer and either the special officer for tribal welfare or the district publicity officer.

### **Statutory Functions**

Many of the functions of the district boards conferred by the Bengal Local Self-Government Act, 1885, have been retained in the Act of 1963. The constitution of a new tier of local authorities, viz: the anchalik parishads, between the district and union levels has, however, necessitated a re-allocation of such functions between the zilla and anchalik parishads. In addition, in conformity with the preamble to the Act of 1963, an attempt has been made to blend the functions of planning and development with the more traditional local-government activities.

Nevertheless, the Act does not make a functional differentiation between the two tiers of authorities, and almost identical powers have been allocated to the zilla parishad and anchalik parishad.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the zilla parishad's area of jurisdiction includes the areas of the lower-tier authorities, and it has been empowered to advise the State Government on the allocation of development work among such authorities. Thus, neither the zilla parishad nor any of the lower-tier authorities will in fact operate as autonomous, self-contained units. In addition, under the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1956, the gram panchayats are empowered to function as executive agencies at the village level, and, under the Act of 1963, a zilla parishad is forbidden to execute any schemes confined to a block, unless their implementation is beyond the competence of the anchalik parishad for that block, financially or otherwise. It follows that the zilla parishad will apparently have little room left for

<sup>3</sup> See Secs. 18 and 65 of the West Bengal Zilla Parishads Act, 1963.

direct operation.<sup>4</sup> At best it will directly undertake schemes which extend over more than one block, or which are too costly for an anchalik parishad to implement.

The statute contains a comprehensive list of powers, functions and duties entrusted to a zilla parishad. It may acquire, hold and dispose of land and other property. Under Sec. 18 of the Act, its general powers are enumerated in detail. These include the development of agriculture, livestock, industries, the cooperative movement, rural credit, water supply, irrigation, public health and sanitation (including the establishment of dispensaries and hospitals), communications, primary or adult education (including the welfare of students), social welfare and other objects of general public utility. A zilla parishad may make grants to any school, public library or other public institution within its district, and to the anchalik parishads. For the benefit of the residents of the district, it may contribute to the cost of any institution situated outside the district; and it may contribute towards the cost of water-supply or anti-epidemic measures undertaken by a municipality within the district. To further technical or other special forms of education, it may establish scholarships or award stipends, and, in times of distress, it may adopt relief measures. Village *hats* (weekly or bi-weekly markets) and daily markets may be acquired and maintained by it, and work or institutions entrusted to it by the State Government, or by any other authority, may be executed or maintained by it.

A zilla parishad will also be empowered to examine and sanction the budget estimates, and to coordinate the development plans, of the anchalik parishads within its jurisdiction. In addition, it is to advise the State Government on all matters relating to the development of the district, including the allocation of development work among gram panchayats, anchal panchayats and anchalik parishads; and it will be given general powers of supervision over these authorities, which are to give effect to its directions in matters of policy or development plans.

Finally, the State Government may vest a zilla parishad with any other powers, and the latter may be called upon to manage any of the State Government's property or works. It may divert, discontinue or close any road which is under its administrative control; it may take over from, or transfer to, any other authority any road or other property on agreed terms and conditions; and it may grant licences for fairs or *melas* on payment of a fee.

### **Inter-Governmental Relations**

As in the case of a district board, the State Government is to determine the structure and functions of a zilla parishad. The Act provides for a close relationship between the State Government and the zilla parishad, and between the latter and other local authorities, viz: the district school board, municipalities, contiguous zilla parishads and lower-tier institutions at development block and village levels.

(i) *The State Government: Departmental Control:* A zilla parishad will be the creature of the State Government, which will control and guide it by means of statutes, rules and directives, and mainly through the Department of Local Self-Government

<sup>4</sup> See M. Venkatarangaiya, *The Pattern of Rural Government*, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, 1958; pp. 69-70.

and Panchayats. Another department which will also be very much concerned with the operations of the zilla parishads, is the Development and Planning Department. The latter is to inform the zilla parishads through the District Magistrate of the amount of Government funds to be made available to them.

At the State level, the Directorate of Panchayats is charged with the responsibility of implementing State policies regarding panchayat institutions. At the district level, the district panchayat officer belonging to that Directorate is to be an associate member of the zilla parishad, and, as indicated above, is to act as its *ex-officio* secretary for a period of four years from its date of establishment, maintaining liaison with the State Government on financial and administrative matters. Other officers of the traditional State field units, such as the division and district, will also be involved in zilla parishad administration. Apart from financial control, the Act provides for elaborate administrative and quasi-judicial control by the State, which is exercisable either by headquarters or by field officers. The State Government will have power to rescind any resolution passed by a zilla parishad, or by any of its standing committees.

The Divisional Commissioner, or any other officer not below the rank of a deputy collector<sup>5</sup>, may be authorized to inspect any documents, institutions and offices of a zilla parishad; and instructions and directions may be given by the State Government for the discharge of any of its duties. Its chairman or vice-chairman, and any of its members or associate members, may be removed by the State Government, which will also retain the power to supersede a zilla parishad and to appoint an administrator to exercise its powers, duties and functions. In addition, the State Government is to act in some cases as a final appellate authority, e.g. an appeal against an order of punishment awarded by a zilla parishad to certain categories of officers and employees, will lie to the State.

(ii) *The State Government: Divisional Commissioner:* The Divisional Commissioner and District Magistrate will retain some of the powers they formerly exercised over a district board. For instance, the Commissioner will be the final appellate authority for appeals preferred against an assessment by a zilla parishad. No money or irrecoverable value of stores lost by theft, fraud or otherwise may be written off except with his sanction; and he is to be the controlling officer for passing bills of travelling allowances drawn by the chairman of a zilla parishad.

(iii) *The State Government: District Magistrate:* The District Magistrate will act as the agent of the State Government and serve as a bridge between the headquarters administration and the zilla parishad. He is to appoint the returning officer for zilla parishad elections, and to call meetings of the parishad for the members' oath-taking and for elections of chairman and vice-chairman of the parishad and its standing committees. He is to draw up the terms and conditions for the transfer of zilla parishad property to anchalik parishads, and to classify State irrigation schemes in the district into two categories, to be executed and managed respectively by the zilla and anchalik parishads. The District Magistrate is also empowered to decide which,

<sup>5</sup> Usually a district-level officer concerned with land and land-revenue matters. See Frank J. Tysen, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

between the zilla and anchalik parishads, will execute and maintain a State-sponsored work.

As the *ex-officio* secretary to the zilla parishad, the district panchayat officer will bring the arm of the State Government directly to its aid. The District Magistrate will be involved in this development in two ways. First, the district panchayat officer is to consult with him about the affairs of the zilla parishad, and is to give him copies of his inspection reports. Secondly, the district panchayat officer is at present wholly responsible to the District Magistrate for his work and, if this relationship should be maintained, the latter will thus have a substantial part to play in the parishad's administration. In addition, the District Magistrate will control the annual allocation of State funds to the zilla parishad and its standing committees, and all communications on grants and contributions will pass through his office.

Another important field of supervision and control may also be opened up to the District Magistrate in that, as already noted, each standing committee of a zilla parishad is to include two district-level State officers. At present, these officers are also in varying degrees subordinate to the District Magistrate, and if these relationships should continue, he may again be able to play a varying part in parishad affairs, if not always so direct or immediate as in the case of the district panchayat officer.

(iv) *The State Government and Local Self-Administration:*<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the most important feature of the 1963 Act is the evolution of a type of local administration in which the machinery of State will directly be involved in the affairs of the zilla parishad. For example, the Act provides for administrative assistance to the zilla parishad by the State Government, which may place the services of its officers and employees at the former's disposal. The State district-level officers will be permitted to attend the meetings of the zilla parishad or any of its standing committees, either on their own initiative or on the invitation of the parishad, or of any of its committees. They may then furnish these bodies with facts, information and technical advice.

More importantly, and as already indicated, a number of such district-level officers are to be *ex-officio* members of the parishad's standing committees. The rules issued under the new Act appear to make these committees the real centres of power and authority, and the official members will have a significant role to play in their activities. In consultation with other district-level officers concerned, they are to prepare the agenda for the meetings of their standing committees, to take necessary action on the decisions reached at such meetings, and to forward copies of the proceedings to the executive officer for submission to the meetings of the zilla parishad *for information*.

The official members of the standing committees will also be responsible for keeping their superior officers informed of committee decisions, and of the progress in implementing such decisions. Before any scheme is sanctioned by the zilla parishad, the relevant standing committee is to have the necessary plans and estimates prepared by the district-level officer of the department concerned. The standing committee is next to consider the scheme, and then to have it executed by the same district-level

<sup>6</sup> For a definition of this term, see Appendix B.

officer. It appears that a scheme has to be referred to the zilla parishad for sanction only if a standing committee exceeds the financial allocations made by the Government *via* the District Magistrate.

In practice, therefore, panchayati raj at the district or zilla level will apparently be strongly biased towards local self-administration<sup>7</sup>; the role of certain district-level officers will be likely to be crucial to its effective operation; and the District Magistrate will hold an important watching-brief for the State. It will be a representative form of local government,<sup>7</sup> in which responsibility to the State will apparently be a major factor in the work of the standing committees.

(v) *Municipalities and Municipal Corporations*: The Act of 1963 envisages a closer relationship between urban and local bodies than presently exists. The chairman of a municipality or mayor of a municipal corporation in the same district is to be a member of the zilla parishad. With the approval of the State Government, a zilla parishad may contribute towards the cost of water-supply or anti-epidemic measures undertaken by any municipal authority within the district and, under the direction of the State, a zilla parishad may take over the control and maintenance of an entire road, part of which runs through and is maintained by a municipal authority.

(vi) *Zilla Parishads*: Two or more adjacent zilla parishads may jointly undertake any development scheme or establish a common ferry on agreed terms and conditions. Any difference in the interpretation of such terms and conditions is to be decided by the State Government, which will also resolve any other inter-zilla parishad disputes.

(vii) *Anchalik Parishads*: The anchalik parishads at the block level are to be intimately related to the structure and functions of the zilla parishad. The presidents of the anchalik parishads within the district will be *ex-officio* members of the zilla parishad. The latter has been empowered to advise the State Government on the allocation of development work between anchalik parishads, and to coordinate and integrate their development schemes. If an anchalik parishad should fail to execute a scheme for lack of funds, staff or technical assistance, the zilla parishad will be permitted to supply these to it. Any road, property or work of a zilla parishad may be transferred by it to an anchalik parishad; and the State Government's financial allotments to a zilla parishad for any scheme under the State Plan which is confined to a development block, and which the anchalik parishad concerned is competent to execute, is to be reallocated to the latter by the zilla parishad.

In addition, an anchalik parishad will be required to submit statements of account and budget estimates to the zilla parishad concerned for scrutiny and sanction, and the latter has been given statutory power of supervision over all anchalik parishads within its jurisdiction, which are to give effect to its directions. A zilla parishad, or any of its standing committees, will be authorized to call for information, reports or records from an anchalik parishad. Its officers will have the power to visit the offices and to inspect the work of an anchalik parishad, and the latter is to take into consideration the objections of the zilla parishad to any of its activities. Finally, disputes

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix B for an explanation of the terms *local government*, *local self-administration* and *local self-government*.



between an anchal panchayat and an anchalik parishad, or between two or more anchalik parishads within the jurisdiction of the same zilla parishad, are to be referred to the latter for final decision.

(viii) *Anchal Panchayats and Gram Panchayats*: Since the panchayat system envisages “integrated and organically-linked” local bodies, the anchal panchayats and gram panchayats at the union and village levels are to be connected to the zilla parishad through membership and other statutory provisions. Thus, two adhyakshas, elected by the adhyakshas from among themselves from the gram panchayats in a sub-division of a district, are to be members of the zilla parishad of that district. The zilla parishad has been empowered to advise the State Government on the allocation of development work among the gram panchayats and anchal panchayats<sup>8</sup>, it has been given powers of supervision over all these bodies identical to those exercisable over anchalik parishads, and they are likewise obliged to give effect to any direction of the zilla parishad on matters of policy or planning. The latter may also transfer any institution or work under its management and control to any anchal or gram panchayat within its jurisdiction.

(ix) *District School Boards*: The district school board, constituted under the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act, 1930, is to be transformed into a primary education committee of the zilla parishad. Subject to the directions of the State Education Department, the committee is to give effect to the instructions of the zilla parishad, but its constitution, powers, functions and duties will continue to be governed mainly by the Act of 1930.

(x) *Other Public Bodies*: With the inclusion of local members of the Union House of the People or State Legislative Assembly, and of the Union Council of States or State Legislative Council, as members of the zilla parishad, the latter will also be connected with the State Legislature and Union Parliament. The reasons for this innovation are not clear—it may be intended to enhance the prestige of the parishad, or to off-set the significant role of the official members of the standing committees—but a new set of political relationships may eventually be forged in practice.

<sup>8</sup> See Sec. 18(2) of the Act of 1963. Since the anchal panchayat, under the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1956, has no direct executive functions, this provision may perhaps be applicable to the gram panchayats only. It is true, however, that the State Government may confer functions on the anchal panchayat under the latter Act, and that the anchalik parishad may allocate a scheme to it where the gram panchayat cannot undertake such scheme.

## ANCHALIK PARISHADS

**Introduction and Jurisdiction**

The West Bengal Zilla Parishads Act, 1963, establishes an intermediate authority, the anchalik parishad, between the zilla parishad at the district level, and the anchal panchayat and gram panchayat at the union and village levels. The anchalik parishad is to come into existence at the level of the present development block. The Balvantray Mehta Committee, whose recommendations were, by and large, accepted by the Government of India, suggested a three-tier system of rural local government. Each State was, however, allowed to implement the scheme in conformity with local conditions. All of them have based their highest and lowest-tier authorities on the district and village respectively. But, at the intermediate level, some have used the development block as the basic unit, while others, such as Gujarat, Maharashtra and Mysore, have used the taluk.<sup>1</sup>

As has already been observed, the Bengal Local Self-Government Act, 1885, set up local boards in each sub-division which operated between the district and village levels. But these boards were not corporate, they had no independent authority, all their functions were delegated to them by the district board, and they were abolished in 1936. The selection of the development block for the new intermediate authority in preference to the traditional sub-division, is thus hardly surprising, especially as the block had already been delineated for the community development programme. Since the new system of rural local government was to be development-oriented, the block as an already-operating development unit was readily acceptable for local-government purposes. The area of the block, which is normally co-terminous with that of a thana, comprises about one hundred villages with a population of not more than one lakh.<sup>2</sup> Like the district, the block is an 'artefact of Government' rather than a social unit that has been clothed with the apparel of administration.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The taluk is an administrative unit smaller than, and subordinate to, the sub-division. For the purpose of revenue collection, this unit was created in *ryotwari* and other tenancy tracts such as Madras, as distinguished from *zamindari* or permanently-settled tracts such as Bengal.

<sup>2</sup> See Development Commissioner, Government of West Bengal, *Manual on Community Development Programme*, West Bengal, 1958: pp. 12 and 24.

<sup>3</sup> See Howard W. Beers and Douglas Ensminger, 'The Development Block as a Social System,' *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, April-June, 1959, in which the possibility of the emergence of the block as a social system is examined from the sociological standpoint. A rather critical view is held by Tinker, who considers that there is no area between a village and a district which can provide a real sense of community. In his opinion, the headquarters of a development block is a potential nucleus for the growth of a local consciousness of community only where it is located in a market town which serves the neighbouring villages. See 'The Village in the Framework of Development,' *Administration and Economic Development in India*, (Ralph Braibanti and Joseph J. Spengler, ed.), London, 1963. It is in fact difficult to make any *a priori* judgment about the status of a development block, as this will ultimately depend on the intensity of its operational influence, and its nodality in relation to surrounding areas in respect of administrative, economic, social and cultural contacts.

Since, under the Act of 1963, an anchalik parishad is to be established for each development block, a brief description of the organization and functions of the latter will not be out of place here.<sup>4</sup> In accordance with the national community development policy,<sup>5</sup> with its accent on the improvement of social and economic conditions in rural areas, West Bengal started its community development programme early during the First Five Year Plan. The block, which was created as an area for the execution of community development activities, emerged as a unit of State administration somewhat similar to the district and sub-division.<sup>6</sup> The area of a block is wider than that of a circle, consisting of approximately thirty village unions and having an area of from ten to twelve square miles, and a population of from 6,000 to 8,000<sup>7</sup>. Since the circle was constituted mainly for the administrative supervision of the union board areas, the development block, which is being given identical functions, supersedes the circle and inherits its activities.

The objective of community development is the all-round upliftment of the village community. Hence, the functions of the block cover all aspects of social and economic development in the rural areas. Broadly speaking, its activities occupy the following major fields: (i) agriculture and animal husbandry, (ii) irrigation, (iii) land reclamation, (iv) rural health and sanitation, (v) education, (vi) social education, (vii) communications, (viii) rural arts, crafts and industries, and (ix) housing. In addition, the block administration is intimately linked with the operations of the union boards and panchayats, through which most of its activities are channelled. As the successor to the circle, the block also keeps a close watch on the operations of the union boards and panchayats, the block development officer being *ex officio* the inspector of these local bodies.

Each block has a team of specialists headed by the block development officer, who has a general responsibility for its administration. The members of his team include an agricultural extension officer, a cooperative inspector, an extension officer (panchayats), an assistant veterinary surgeon, a sub-assistant engineer, a medical officer of health, and social education organizers. In addition, multipurpose male and female officers called village-level workers, or gramsevaks and gramsevikas, function directly in the village and serve as links between village people and the block-level staff. Each village-level worker is usually in charge of from ten to twelve villages, or of a union or anchal panchayat area.

### **Constitution and Membership**

Unlike the defunct local board at the sub-divisional level, an anchalik parishad, which is to be established by the State Government for each development block, will be a body corporate with consequent rights and duties. Like the zilla parishad, it is to consist of members and an associate member, the latter being the block deve-

<sup>4</sup> In this connection, *see* also the discussion on block administration in Frank J. Tysen, *op.cit.*

<sup>5</sup> For a brief but rounded discussion of the community development programme, its history, organization and contents, *see* S. C. Dube, *India's Changing Villages*, Ithaca, N.Y., 1958; ch. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Unlike the district and the sub-division, the block is not, of course, given all the functions of general administration, such as maintenance of law and order, revenue collection and the like.

<sup>7</sup> Government of West Bengal, *Union Board Manual*, Vol. 1, Alipore, 1955; p. 223.

lopment officer, who will not, however, have the right to vote. There is no directly-elected member in the anchalik parishad<sup>8</sup>, and, apart from the block development officer, the State Government is to appoint two women, and two persons belonging to a backward community, who have a place of residence in the block. The members are also to co-opt two other persons experienced in social work or rural development, likewise having a place of residence within the block.

The pradhans of the anchal panchayats, and the presidents of the union boards, are to be *ex-officio* members of the anchalik parishad; and, from within the territorial limits of each anchal panchayat, one adhyaksha is to be elected by the adhyakshas of the gram panchayats of that area from among themselves. As in the case of the zilla parishad, the members of the Union House of the People or State Legislative Assembly whose constituencies lie within the block or any part of it, and members of the Union Council of States or State Legislative Council having a place of residence within the block, are also to be members of the anchalik parishad. They must not, of course, be Ministers of State.

The members of an anchalik parishad are required to possess qualifications similar to those prescribed for a zilla parishad, and are liable to dismissal by the State Government mainly on grounds of misconduct, incapacity, conviction, absence from six consecutive meetings, and non-payment of any tax or fee for more than a year. They are ordinarily to hold office for a period of four years. The president and the vice-president of an anchalik parishad are to be elected by the members from among themselves. They may be removed from office by the State Government, and by a resolution passed by a two-thirds majority of the anchalik parishad. The powers, functions and duties of an anchalik parishad may be delegated to its president or vice-president in the same way and to the same extent as the zilla parishad may make such delegations to its chairman or vice-chairman.

### Meetings and Committees

It will be obligatory for the anchalik parishad to hold meetings at least once a month, and the Act provides for emergency and special meetings. All issues in a meeting are to be decided by majority vote. Except for the primary education committee, whose role will be taken over by the district school board at the district level, the number, composition and functions of the standing committees of the anchalik parishad, which are listed below, will be identical to those of the standing committees of the zilla parishad, viz:

- (i) finance and establishment committee,
- (ii) public health committee,
- (iii) public works committee,
- (iv) agriculture and irrigation committee,
- (v) industry and cooperative committee,
- (vi) public and social welfare committee, and

<sup>8</sup> In Assam alone, the members of the panchayat samiti established as the intermediate-tier authority are directly elected by the gram sabha, which is the basic unit of the panchayat system of rural local government.

(vii) primary education committee.

Other committees may be constituted by the anchalik parishad with the approval of the State Government. Each standing committee is to consist of (i) five persons to be elected by the members from among themselves, (ii) not more than two officers of the State Government, or of the anchalik parishad, appointed by the State Government, and (iii) not more than two persons acquainted with the subject assigned to the standing committee concerned. No person, however, may be a member of more than two standing committees.

According to the rules now issued, Table 6 indicates the State Government officials who are to be members of the standing committees.

**Table 6**

**ANCHALIK PARISHADS: STANDING COMMITTEES AND OFFICIAL MEMBERS, 1964**

Standing Committee	Official Members
1. Finance and Establishment Committee	Block Development Officer Panchayat Extension Officer
2. Public Health Committee	Sub-assistant Engineer, Public Health Engineering Medical Officer, Primary Health Centre, or Sub- divisional Health Officer
3. Public Works Committee	Sub-assistant Engineer of the Block Sub-divisional Assistant Engineer, Public Works Department
4. Agriculture and Irrigation Committee	Veterinary Assistant Surgeon Agricultural Extension Officer
5. Industry and Cooperation Committee	Inspector of Cooperative Societies Extension Officer, Industries
6. Public and Social Welfare Committee	Social Education Organizer (male) Sub-divisional Publicity Officer
7. Primary Education Committee	Thana Sub-inspector of Schools Social Education Organizer (female)

As in the case of the zilla parishad, these standing committees are to exercise the powers of the anchalik parishad in connection with the subjects assigned to them, and within the financial limits fixed by the State Government. Also, the standing finance and establishment committee will occupy a superior position, with important additional powers identical to those entrusted to the finance and establishment committee of the zilla parishad.

**Staff**

The block development officer will become the *ex-officio* chief executive officer of the anchalik parishad. The State Government may, however, recall him if a resolution

to that effect is passed by a two-thirds majority. He will exercise general control over all officers and employees of the anchalik parishad, and his powers and duties will closely resemble those to be entrusted to the executive officer of a zilla parishad. He is to prepare the agenda for the meetings of the anchalik parishad, and to submit quarterly statements of accounts to its finance and establishment committee. Necessary action has to be taken by him to implement the decisions of the anchalik parishad, and it is his duty to keep the president informed of the problems, difficulties and progress of development activities within the block.

The State Government may place at the disposal of the anchalik parishad other of its officers and employees, and, like the chief executive officer, they will be removable by a two-thirds majority. The anchalik parishad may appoint other officers and employees, but it will have no power to create or abolish a post carrying a monthly salary of Rs. 200 or more.

### **Statutory Functions**

The powers, duties and functions to be entrusted to the anchalik parishad are hardly distinguishable from those to be entrusted to the zilla parishad<sup>9</sup>. Also, in the allocation of functions, the relationship between the zilla parishad and the anchalik parishad seems to be paralleled by the relationship between the anchalik parishad and the anchal panchayat and gram panchayat. For example, the anchalik parishad will be debarred from undertaking any scheme within an area over which a gram panchayat has jurisdiction; unless, of course, the implementation of such scheme is beyond the competence of the gram panchayat. Any scheme which extends to more than one anchal panchayat may, however, be undertaken by the anchalik parishad.

The Act empowers an anchalik parishad to acquire, hold and dispose of property including land, and to enter into contracts. Like the zilla parishad, it will have power to adopt measures, including the granting of financial assistance, for the development of agriculture, livestock, cottage industries, the cooperative movement, rural credit, water supply, irrigation, public health and sanitation (including the establishment of dispensaries and hospitals), communications, primary and adult education (including students' welfare), social welfare, the relief of distress, and other objects of general public utility. Within the area of the block, the anchalik parishad may make grants to any school, public library or public welfare organization. In addition, it may make grants to the zilla parishad or to the anchal panchayats, and may contribute towards the cost of water-supply or anti-epidemic measures undertaken by a municipality within the block. The power to coordinate and integrate the development plans of the anchal panchayats within the block has also been given to the anchalik parishad, which will have general powers of supervision over anchal panchayats and gram panchayats within the block, the latter being obliged to give effect to the directions of the anchalik parishad on matters of policy or planning for development<sup>10</sup>. The Act

<sup>9</sup> See Secs. 17 and 18 of the Act of 1963.

<sup>10</sup> As a zilla parishad will have similar powers of supervision over all the lower-tier authorities, the lower the status of a local authority in the panchayati-raj system, the greater and more numerous will be the controls over it.

permits the transfer of functions from the State Government to the anchalik parishad and *vice versa*, and the State Government may invest the anchalik parishad with additional powers.

In addition, an anchalik parishad may divert, discontinue or close temporarily any road which is under its control and management. No trade or business which is declared by the State Government to be offensive or dangerous, may be carried on within a block without an annually-renewable licence granted by the anchalik parishad, which will also be empowered to grant licences for *hats* or markets, to establish toll-bars and ferries, and to provide sanitary arrangements at fairs, *melas* and places of worship or pilgrimage within its jurisdiction.

### **Inter-Governmental Relations**

(i) *The State Government:* The relationship of the State Government to the anchalik parishad is to be very similar to that obtaining in the case of the zilla parishad<sup>11</sup>. Through the Department of Local Self-Government and Panchayats and its Directorate of Panchayats, the State Government will create an anchalik parishad and define, expand and regulate its powers and functions by statute, rules and regulations. In addition, the Departments of Development and Planning, and of Agriculture and Community Development, will inform the anchalik parishad through the District Magistrate of the nature and kinds of Government grants, contributions and other resources that may be made available to it. Two women and two other persons belonging to a backward community are to be nominated by the State Government to the anchalik parishad, and the block development officer, who is a State official, is to be an associate member and *ex officio* the chief executive officer of the anchalik parishad.

(ii) *The State Government: Divisional and District Officers:* State officials at various levels of the field administration, such as the Divisional Commissioner, the District Magistrate and the Sub-divisional Officer, are also to be involved in the government of anchalik parishads. For instance, the Divisional Commissioner is to be empowered to write off financial losses due to theft, embezzlement and the like. Similarly, the District Magistrate is to act as the medium between the anchalik parishad and the State Government in all communications concerning the allotment of State funds. He will also be responsible for allocating the execution and management of State-sponsored schemes for irrigation and the supply of drinking water and lighting between a zilla parishad and anchalik parishads. And he will act as an appellate authority, as in the case of any appeal against an assessment made by an anchalik parishad.

In relation to an anchalik parishad, the Sub-divisional Officer will occupy almost the same position as does the District Magistrate in relation to a zilla parishad. For instance, the former is to call meetings for the co-option of members to an anchalik parishad, for the election of its president and vice-president and for the appointment of members of standing committees. He will be the controlling officer for passing bills of travelling allowances drawn by the president, and the anchalik parishad fund is to be lodged with him.

<sup>11</sup> See *Inter-Governmental Relations*, pp. 28-32.

Besides these three officers, a number of other State officials who are posted at the levels of the sub-division, block and thana, are also to be associated with anchalik parishads. For instance, a licence for a *hat* or market may be granted by an anchalik parishad only after its lay-out plans have been approved by the sub-divisional health officer. Moreover, standing committees are to be set up in exactly the same way as for a zilla parishad. Each of these standing committees is to have associated with it two States officials posted at sub-divisional, block or thana level, and they will function in exactly the same way as in the case of the zilla parishad.

These relationships at the level of the anchalik parishad thus reinforce the previous conclusion that the system being established appears to have a strong bias towards local self-administration<sup>12</sup>. This observation is not intended as a criticism. It is intended merely to clarify the type of local government that will apparently emerge from the application of panchayati raj at the district and intermediate levels in the non-municipal areas of the Calcutta Metropolitan District.

(iii) *Zilla Parishads*: The anchalik parishad is intimately to be connected with zilla parishad administration, and it will, in many respects, be subordinated to the latter<sup>13</sup>.

(iv) *Anchal Panchayats and Gram Panchayats*: The anchal panchayats and gram panchayats, which constitute the union and village tiers of the new local-government system, are to be related to the anchalik parishad in much the same way as the latter is to be related to the zilla parishad. The pradhans (chairmen) of the anchal panchayats are to be *ex-officio* members of the anchalik parishad, and one adhyaksha, elected by the adhyakshas of gram panchayats from each anchal panchayat area, is also to be a member of the anchalik parishad. The anchal panchayats and gram panchayats within a development block will be distinctly subordinated to the anchalik parishad for that block. The latter will be empowered to make grants to, and to coordinate and integrate the development plans of, the anchal panchayats within its jurisdiction. It will also exercise general powers of supervision over the anchal panchayats and gram panchayats within its area, which will be obliged to give effect to its directions on matters of policy or planning for development<sup>14</sup>.

In addition, an anchal or gram panchayat will be bound to supply information, reports or any records called for by the anchalik parishad or any of its standing committees. Any officer of an anchalik parishad may inspect the offices of the anchal and gram panchayats, which are also to take into consideration the objections made by the anchalik parishad to any of their proposed or actual work. Moreover, the budgets of the anchal and gram panchayats are to be approved by their anchalik parishad, which will have power to settle the share of State grants and contributions of the gram panchayats within its limits for any development scheme. The anchal panchayats and gram panchayats are also to depend on their anchalik parishad for information regarding the annual allotment of State funds to them<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix B for a definition of this term.

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed discussion on the relationship between a zilla parishad and anchalik parishads, see *Inter-Governmental Relations*, pp. 31-2.

<sup>14</sup> See also below, ch. 5, pp. 53-4.

<sup>15</sup> A parallel provision can be found in Sec. 27 of the Act, in terms of which the zilla parishad has been given identical powers of supervision over all lower-level bodies.



As regards the allocation of functional jurisdictions, the Act prohibits an anchalik parishad from executing any scheme in an area over which a gram panchayat has jurisdiction. If, however, a scheme will be beyond the competence of a gram panchayat, financially or otherwise, the anchalik parishad may execute the scheme itself, or entrust it to the gram panchayat or anchal panchayat, and give the latter necessary financial and technical assistance. The Act implies, therefore, that the functional area of an anchalik parishad, as that of a zilla parishad, will be indeterminate. It may, however, execute a scheme that extends to more than one anchal panchayat area. Lastly, in any dispute between two or more anchal panchayats, or between an anchal panchayat and any of its constituent gram panchayats, the decision of the anchalik parishad within the jurisdiction of which the dispute takes place is to be final.

(v) *Other Public Bodies:* Like the zilla parishad, an anchalik parishad is to have, as its members, the members of the House of the People or Legislative Assembly of the State, and of the Council of States or Legislative Council of the State.

## ANCHAL PANCHAYATS AND GRAM PANCHAYATS

**Introduction and Jurisdiction**

Under the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1956, the anchal panchayat and gram panchayat together constitute the two lowest tiers of the newly-evolved panchayati raj system in West Bengal. They are designed to supplant the existing union boards, which have for so long been the smallest rural self-governing units. As of December, 1963, however, anchal panchayats and gram panchayats have been set up in only three police stations within the Calcutta Metropolitan District, viz: Chakda in Nadia District, Polba in Hooghly District, and Baruipur in 24-Parganas District. The constitution of the gram panchayat at the village level conforms to the all-India pattern. The anchal panchayat, however, is peculiar to West Bengal. It is to have jurisdiction over an area formerly falling under a union board, and, according to one authoritative source<sup>1</sup>, it is intended to work in unison with the gram panchayat to form, for all practical purposes, a single unit of rural local government.

The organization and functions of these panchayats are particularly important for two significant reasons. In the first place, the entire edifice of the panchayat system of rural local government has direct contact with the people only through the gram panchayat at the lowest level, where direct popular election is alone provided for. All the other tiers of government are to be constituted mainly on the basis of indirect election. In the second place, as an executive agency, the operating field of the gram panchayat is more definite than that of either the zilla parishad or anchalik parishad. As already observed, under the provisions of the West Bengal Zilla Parishads Act, 1963, a zilla parishad is normally prohibited from executing any schemes confined to the area of an anchalik parishad; and the latter, in turn, is normally debarred from undertaking any schemes within the area of a gram panchayat. In these circumstances, it might be expected that the executive functions would be likely to gravitate towards the gram panchayat, while the superior units would tend to become supervisory bodies rather than direct executive agencies. However, financial and technical inadequacy on the part of the gram panchayats may well prevent any such tendency from developing, so that, in practice, the higher-tier local authorities will possibly function by default.

**Constitution, Membership and Staff**

In remodelling the rural local-government units, the all-India pattern has been tailored to suit the needs of West Bengal. In keeping with the tradition of the union

<sup>1</sup> N. M. Bardhan, 'Panchayats in West Bengal,' *West Bengal 1962*, Government of West Bengal, 1962; p. 35. But see also, Ministry of Community Development and Cooperation, Government of India, *Report of the Study Team on Panchayati Raj Finances*, 1963, Part II, 1964; p. 141; "When fully implemented, Panchayati Raj will be a four-tier system in this State."

boards, and the current all-India concept of direct popular participation, the Government of West Bengal has adopted a scheme under which three closely-linked bodies will comprise the lowest, or village-level, tiers of government, namely, (i) the gram sabha, (ii) the gram panchayat, and (iii) the anchal panchayat.

(i) *Gram Sabhas*<sup>2</sup> : The State Government is empowered to constitute a gram sabha for any specified rural area with a population ranging from 750 to 1,500. The upper population limit may be substantially exceeded, however, if it is found desirable to keep a *mouza* or village intact in order to form a gram sabha. A gram sabha is to consist of all persons whose names are included in the electoral roll<sup>3</sup> of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly for the area in question. It is to hold one yearly and one half-yearly general meeting, in which it is to consider the budget of the gram panchayat for the following year, its annual report, and the work to be done the following year. Also, the gram sabha may give directions to the gram panchayat, and the members of the former are to have the right to ask questions about the administration of the latter.

(ii) *Gram Panchayats*: Every gram sabha is to have a gram panchayat consisting of not less than nine and not more than fifteen members, to be elected by the members of the gram sabha from among themselves. A gram panchayat thus constituted is to be a body corporate with consequent rights and duties<sup>4</sup>. The State Government may associate with the gram panchayat any persons (not exceeding one-third of the total number of members) possessing special qualifications. Such persons will not, however, have a right to vote. Nor will they be eligible for election as *adhyaksha* (president) or *upadhyaksha* (vice-president) of the gram panchayat, who are to be elected by the other members of the gram panchayat from among themselves<sup>5</sup>, and who are to be removable from office by a two-thirds majority of the gram panchayat. The qualifications for membership of a gram panchayat are to include, *inter alia*, an age limit (twenty-five years or more) and a tax-payment criterion (defaulters being ineligible). The Act, however, does not lay down any residence or literacy qualification. Normally, the members' term of office is to be four years, but the State Government may extend this by a period not exceeding one year. A member is to be removable by the State Government for default in tax payments, absence from six consecutive meetings, and the like. And a gram panchayat is to hold meetings at least once a month, at which meetings all questions are to be decided by majority vote.

A gram panchayat is to appoint its staff with the approval of the district panchayat officer, and the Act provides for the loan of the services of the secretary of an anchal panchayat to a gram panchayat.

(iii) *Anchal Panchayats*: The gram sabha and gram panchayat together form one local-government unit. Their areas are one and the same, and the former constitutes

<sup>2</sup> The gram sabha has not been recognized as a statutory body in Madras, Mysore, and Rajasthan.

<sup>3</sup> The qualifications for which are: (i) twenty-one years of age, and (ii) not otherwise disqualified by non-residence, unsoundness of mind, crime or corrupt or illegal practice.

<sup>4</sup> A gram sabha has no corporate status.

<sup>5</sup> The sarpanch, who is head of the gram panchayat in Assam, Bihar, Rajasthan, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, is directly elected.

the electorate while the latter is the executive body of the gram sabha. But, the anchal panchayat, which is unique to West Bengal, has been differently conceived. It is virtually the union board in a new name in so far as its jurisdiction is concerned, which is to embrace the areas of from eight to ten contiguous gram panchayats. Its name and territorial limits are to be specified by the State Government, and it is to consist of members elected from among the members of every gram sabha by its gram panchayat, in the ratio of one member for every two hundred and fifty members of the gram sabha. No person may have concurrent membership of both the gram panchayat and the anchal panchayat. The members are to hold office for four years. A pradhan (chairman) and an upapradhan (vice-chairman) are to be elected by the members from among themselves, and the provisions relating to qualifications and dismissal of members and executive heads are similar to those applicable to their counterparts in the gram panchayat organization. Like the gram panchayat, an anchal panchayat is to be a body corporate with consequent rights and obligations. It may constitute committees and determine their number of members, and it is to hold meetings at least once a month.

The Act makes a more liberal provision for the staff of the anchal panchayat, however. Every anchal panchayat is to have a secretary to take charge of its business, to prepare its budget estimates, to render an annual statement of accounts, and to prepare an annual statement of the work to be done during the following year. He is to be the executive officer of the anchal panchayat, and is to be appointed by the State Government, which is to determine his conditions of service, including pay and allowances. Simultaneously, the secretary is to act under the direction of the pradhan, through whom he is to be responsible to the anchal panchayat. There is also statutory provision for the appointment of additional staff, with the prior approval of the district panchayat officer. A gram panchayat or an anchal panchayat is to have power to take disciplinary action against any of its employees, who may, however, appeal to the district panchayat officer. The dafadars and chowkidars, previously placed under the union board administration, are to be maintained by the anchal panchayat, within the local limits of which they are to be responsible for general watch and ward. The extent of authority which the union board formerly exercised over them is to be retained by the anchal panchayat.<sup>6</sup>

(iv) *Nyaya Panchayats*: The judicial organization associated with the former union boards is retained in the 1956 Act, under which an anchal panchayat, on the authorization of the State Government, is empowered to constitute a nyaya panchayat consisting of five members, called vicharaks (judges), who are to be elected for four years by the anchal panchayat from amongst the members of the gram sabha. One of the members of the nyaya panchayat is to be elected as pradhan vicharak, and the secretary of the anchal panchayat is to act as its secretary. The nyaya panchayat is to try petty cases within the jurisdiction of the anchal panchayat.

### **Statutory Functions**

(i) *Gram Sabhas*: The Act of 1956 allocates powers and duties to the gram sabha, the gram panchayat and the anchal panchayat. Of these, the gram sabha, which

<sup>6</sup> See ch. 2 above.

constitutes the electorate of the gram panchayat, has merely nominal powers. In conformity with the current philosophy of direct popular participation, it has been empowered (a) to consider the annual budget and annual report of the gram panchayat, and its work proposed for the following year, and (b) to give directions to the gram panchayat. In addition, every member of the gram sabha may ask questions about the administration of the gram panchayat.

(ii) *Gram Panchayats*: The gram panchayat alone is to be charged with the responsibility for providing local services, and the functions and responsibilities entrusted to it are legion. To the traditional municipal functions, the Act adds economic and social welfare activities, and classifies them all into two categories, viz: obligatory and discretionary.

*The obligatory functions* of a gram panchayat are to include the provision of sanitation; conservancy and drainage; the prevention of public nuisances; curative and preventive measures in respect of malaria or an epidemic; vaccination and inoculation; the storage and supply of drinking water, and cleansing and disinfection of the sources of supply of water; the construction and maintenance of public streets; the removal of encroachments on public places and streets; the protection or repair of gram panchayat buildings and other property; the management and care of public tanks, and common grazing grounds; the registration of births and deaths; and the mobilization of voluntary labour for community development works.

The Act makes it obligatory for a gram panchayat to perform such other functions as may be assigned to it by the State Government. These may relate to primary, social, technical or vocational education; rural dispensaries, health centres and maternity and child-welfare centres; the management of public ferries; irrigation; the grow-more-food-campaign; the care of the infirm and the destitute; the rehabilitation of displaced persons; the improvement of cattle stock and health; the provision of Government assistance to villages; the cultivation of waste and fallow land; the establishment and maintenance of village plantations; cooperative land and village management; and the implementation of land reform measures.

*The discretionary functions* of a gram panchayat are to be as numerous as the obligatory ones. These relate to street lighting; the planting and maintenance of trees on public streets and other places; the sinking of wells and excavation of ponds and tanks; the introduction and promotion of cooperative enterprises; the construction and regulation of markets, fairs, *melas* and *hats*, and exhibitions of local produce and products of local handicrafts and home industries; the allotment of places for storing manure; assisting and advising agriculturalists to obtain, distribute and repay State loans; the filling-up of insanitary depressions and reclaiming of unhealthy localities; the promotion and encouragement of cottage industries; the destruction of rabid or ownerless dogs; the regulation of the production and disposal of foodstuffs and other commodities; the construction and maintenance of *sarais*, *dharamsalas*, rest houses, cattle sheds and cart stands; the disposal of unclaimed cattle, corpses and carcasses; the establishment and maintenance of libraries and reading rooms, clubs and recreation centres; the maintenance of census records of the population, crops, cattle and unemployed persons, and of other statistical records; fire services; the prevention of

burglary and dacoity; and any other local work or service of public utility, or which is likely to promote the health, comfort, convenience or material prosperity of the public.

In addition, the Act gives wide sanitary improvement powers to a gram panchayat. It is to have control over all public streets and waterways within its jurisdiction which are not under the control of any other authority. It may construct, improve and control bridges, culverts, public streets and waterways, and may undertake irrigation projects, trim hedges and branches of trees, and protect sources of water supply for public use. In the event of an outbreak of an epidemic such as cholera, the gram panchayat is empowered to exercise emergency powers. Finally, the State Government or any other authority may transfer functions to the gram panchayat together with the funds necessary for their exercise.

(iii) *Anchal Panchayats*: The anchal panchayat is to be responsible for (a) the control and administration of the anchal panchayat fund; (b) the imposition, assessment and collection of taxes, rates, tolls and fees leviable under the Act; (c) the maintenance and control of dafadars, and chowkidars; (d) the proper constitution and administration of the nyaya panchayat established to try petty cases; and (e) the receipt of State grants, and the distribution of these and other revenue receipts among the constituent gram panchayats. It may also perform such other functions as may be assigned to it by the State Government.

### **Inter-Governmental Relations**

(i) *The State Government*: Like the other members of the panchayati raj system, the gram panchayat and anchal panchayat are creatures of the State Government which guides, controls and supervises them through various departments and field agencies. The Department of Local Self-Government and Panchayats is mainly concerned with their constitution, functions and jurisdiction, and its Directorate of Panchayats is directly responsible for the successful implementation of panchayati raj policies. Two other State departments are also intimately involved, namely, the Department of Development and Planning, and the Department of Agriculture and Community Development. As the panchayats are the agencies for executing development works at the village level, they have natural links with the Development and Planning Department which is responsible for the preparation of the State Five Year Plans, and for the coordination of the development schemes of the various State departments. In fact, the new panchayats are being set up by the Department of Local Self-Government and Panchayats in consultation with the Development and Planning Department.

In accordance with Union policy, rural local-government institutions are to be integrated with the community development programmes of each development block. Under a State Government decision, specific amounts of the block budget are to be allotted to each of the anchal panchayats, which are to be authorized to plan their programmes in the block areas. To quote the Development Commissioner's circular to the block development officers, "Panchayats are intended to provide an agency of administration at the village level on the elective basis which will also be responsible for planning, execution and maintenance of development works in the areas under

their charge. The National Extension Service and Community Development Programme also aims at a balanced and all-round development of the rural areas and wants to reach every family in every village. It is therefore essential that these two programmes should be properly integrated.”<sup>7</sup>

(ii) *The State Government: Divisional and District Officers:* As in the case of other rural local bodies, the panchayats are to be closely connected with the State’s field officers of the division, the district, the sub-division and the development block. For instance, the Divisional Commissioner is to act as the final appellate authority in certain cases, such as the removal of a member, adhyaksha or upadhyaksha of a gram panchayat, or a pradhan or upapradhan of an anchal panchayat. Similarly, the District Magistrate is to have authority to determine the number of dafadars and chowkidars, to fix and pay their salaries, and to recruit, punish and dismiss them. He is also to decide panchayat election disputes, and if a district panchayat officer should take disciplinary action against the secretary of an anchal panchayat on the basis of the report of its pradhan, the secretary may appeal to the District Magistrate.

The district panchayat officer is given wide powers of supervision over the panchayat institutions in his district. An anchal panchayat or a gram panchayat may appoint staff and fix their salaries and allowances only with his approval, and he is to be the final appellate authority in a number of cases, for instance, appeals against tax assessments by an anchal panchayat, and appeals from the staff of an anchal panchayat or gram panchayat. He is also to act as the drawing and disbursing officer in respect of payments of Government grants to anchal panchayats.

The Sub-divisional Officer is to assume some of the functions of the District Magistrate at the sub-divisional level. He is to invite applications for the posts of secretaries of anchal panchayats, and to recommend names of candidates to the director of panchayats.

The block development officer, who is replacing the circle officer, is to have close connections with the operations of the panchayats within his block. The block activities are to be executed through the panchayats, under the supervision of an extension officer (panchayats) in each block working in turn under the general control of the block development officer. The gram panchayat’s budget is to be submitted for approval to the block development officer, who is to act as the inspector of panchayats.

Further, the State Government is to retain the familiar techniques of control traditionally exercised by it over local authorities. Thus, it may inspect any department, property or work of an anchal panchayat or gram panchayat. It may suspend or cancel any resolution, licence, permission or act of these authorities. If an anchal panchayat or gram panchayat should fail to perform any duty, the State may direct it to undertake such duty within a specified period. In the case of continued default, the State may then appoint a person to undertake the duty. As an extreme measure against an incompetent anchal panchayat or gram panchayat, the State may order its reconstitution or supersession for a period not exceeding one year. All these State powers are to be exercised on its behalf by the District Magistrate and district panchayat officer.

<sup>7</sup> See Circular, August 26, 1957, from the Development Commissioner to the Block Development Officers, in *Panchayat Executive Instructions, Part I*, issued by the Government of West Bengal.

(iii) *Relations with other Local Authorities:* Naturally, local authorities comprising the panchayati raj system are to be closely interconnected. As the anchal panchayat and gram panchayat are located at the two lowest tiers in this system, however, their relationships with the higher-tier local authorities at the district and block levels have already been discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 above<sup>8</sup>.

### **The Work of the Anchal Panchayats and Gram Panchayats (Baruipur)**

(i) *Introduction:* The description of the constitution, powers, statutory functions and inter-relationships of the anchal panchayats and gram panchayats given above indicates that, unlike the higher-tier authorities of the panchayati raj system, they are to be strongly biased towards local self-government<sup>9</sup>. It thus appears that, in the Calcutta Metropolitan District, the panchayati raj system will tend towards local self-administration in its higher reaches, and towards local self-government in its lower reaches. In the former case, good government is likely to depend primarily, but by no means solely, on the competence of the State officers involved, on the effectiveness of the administrative machinery through which they operate, and on the quality of the advice they receive from elected and appointed representatives; given, always, that the available financial resources, primarily from State allocations, are adequate. In the case of the anchal and gram panchayats, however, good government is likely to depend primarily, but by no means exclusively, on the political interest and capacities of the members of the gram sabhas and their elected gram panchayat representatives, on the effectiveness of the political machinery operating formally and informally in the villages, and on the competence of the staff of the gram panchayats; given the adequacy of independent local sources of revenue and State financial assistance.

Since no zilla parishads or anchalik parishads have so far been established within the Calcutta Metropolitan District, no assessment of their operations can be attempted here beyond the general remarks made above. But, as anchal panchayats and gram panchayats have already been set up in the three police stations of Polba, Baruipur and Chakdah, an attempt may certainly be made to assess the actual operation of these newly-established local bodies in terms of rural self-government (as defined in Appendix B). A sample survey of the Baruipur police station has been undertaken for this study.

As shown in Table 7, four anchal panchayats and thirty-six constituent gram panchayats were established in 1960 within the Baruipur Development Block. None of the anchal panchayats listed in the table falls entirely within the Calcutta Metropolitan District, but they generally experience typically rural-urban problems. Because of these problems, and because they are no larger than unions in extent, there is good reason to suggest that their entire areas should be included within that District. But this is a matter to be dealt with in Chapter 8 below. Here, it is sufficient to indicate that they are situated within sixteen miles to the south of Calcutta, and are connected to it by an all-weather, metalled road and the Calcutta-Sonarapur-Lakshmikantapur railway line. In addition, they are located at the periphery of the two neighbouring

<sup>8</sup> See p. 32 and pp. 39-40.

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix B for an explanation of local self-government.



municipalities of Rajpur and Baruipur. In consequence, they are naturally very much exposed to urban influences.

(ii) *Anchal Panchayats: Membership and Elections:* Each of the four anchal panchayats has inherited almost the entire spatial jurisdiction of the union board it replaced. Their areas vary between six and seven square miles. The population statistics given in Table 7 indicate a very low density, averaging less than 2,000 persons per square mile. The number of members of the anchal panchayats varies between twenty-three and twenty-five, but, because of death or resignation, at the time of the field survey the anchal panchayats of Hariharpur, Kalyanpur and Shikharbali actually had twenty-one, twenty-two and twenty-four members respectively.

**Table 7**

**ANCHAL PANCHAYATS IN THE BARUIPUR DEVELOPMENT BLOCK: 1963-4**

Anchal Panchayat	Year Estd.	Area sq. miles	Population*	No. of Members	No. of Gram Panchayats
1. Dhaphdhabi	1960	6	15,575	24	10
2. Hariharpur	„	6.25	11,461	23	8
3. Kalyanpur	„	6	10,446	23	8
4. Shikharbali	„	7	12,743	25	10

\*As shown in the records of the anchal panchayats.

With the exception of Hariharpur, all the anchal panchayats experienced hotly-contested elections in 1960, in which the more familiar national and State-level political parties took part, i.e. Congress, the Praja Socialist Party and the Communist Party. For instance, at Dhaphdhabi, there were as many as thirty-nine contestants for the twenty-four seats. Even in Hariharpur, however, there was no political apathy, and the reason for its less intense struggle appears to have been the political homogeneity of the area, which is dominated by the Congress Party. The anchal panchayats surveyed do not seem to have had any special religious or caste bias in their party politics, but the *poundra kshatriyas*, who form the dominant caste, had to be reckoned with by almost every aspirant for a seat.

(iii) *Anchal Panchayats: Local Leadership:* At the time of survey there were actually ninety-one members of the four anchal panchayats. Table 8 reflects their educational qualifications, professions and commuting characteristics. It can be seen that most of the members are non-matriculいたes, agriculturalists and irregular commuters. Only about one-quarter have attained matriculation and higher standards of education, are engaged in non-agricultural professions, and commute daily to Calcutta and its neighbourhood. However, it is this educated, non-agricultural, commuting minority which exerts the most influence in anchal panchayat governments and all four pradhans belong to it. It is mainly due to its wishes that the panchayats arrange

their meetings mostly on Sundays, when the offices are also kept open. Moreover, as reflected in Table 8, most of the other members also commute to Calcutta, or to

**Table 8**

**ANCHAL PANCHAYATS IN THE BARUIPUR DEVELOPMENT BLOCK: MEMBERS' EDUCATIONAL AND OTHER CHARACTERISTICS**

Education		Occupations		Commuting to Calcutta*	
Non-Matriculates	Matriculates and Above	Agriculture	Others	Regular	Irregular
70	21	63	28	18	73

\*and Baruiপুর. Regular= daily.

near-by Baruiপুর municipality, at frequent intervals. As a result, it appears that most members have little time to attend to panchayat functions, and their interests tend to be wider than those of the limited locality in which they live. This aspect of rural-urban government is taken up below in Chapter 8.

Table 9 reflects the age, previous local-government experience, and voluntary public experience of members. It indicates that the village people probably place a certain premium on age, as there are more members in the higher age-group than in the lower age-group. Also, leaders in the higher age-groups have more experience of working in local bodies such as union boards, district boards and the like. Even voluntary organizations<sup>10</sup>, which are mainly concerned with recreation and welfare activities, have as their patrons predominantly elderly village leaders.

**Table 9**

**ANCHAL PANCHAYATS IN THE BARUIPUR DEVELOPMENT BLOCK : AGE AND EXPERIENCE OF MEMBERS**

Item	Age-Group 25-35 Years	Age-Group 35-45 Years	Age-Group Above 45 years
Number of members	15	22	54
Members with local-government experience	Nil	7	21
Members associated with voluntary organizations	1	16	24

(iv) *Anchal Panchayats: Meetings and Activities:* As indicated above, so far as their actual participation in panchayat business is concerned, the members' interest

<sup>10</sup> The existence of voluntary organizations in the rural-urban fringe areas is sociologically significant, as they indicate an articulation of specific interests, and a differentiation of organizations, characteristic of fully urbanized areas. See R. M. MacIver and C. H. Page, *Society*, London, 1962; p. 333.

does not seem to be very great, the average attendance at meetings being only about fifty per cent of the maximum possible. In the case of Dhapdhapi Anchal Panchayat, for instance, attendance is as low as forty per cent, which is hardly compatible with the keen election contests in that area.

All the anchal panchayats under survey have a secretary appointed by the State Government, which contributes his pay. In at least two anchal panchayats, however, the consequent dual control exercised by the State Government and the anchal pradhan over the secretary does not seem to be working well. Apparently, the pradhans are not happy over the divided allegiance of the secretary, and would like to have him under their complete control.

As regards their actual activities, all of the anchal panchayats concerned are exercising their statutory authority in respect of the levy and collection of taxes, the receipt and distribution of Government grants and contributions, and the maintenance of chowkidars and dafadars. Moreover, as the State Government is now bearing half the total cost of maintaining the rural police, there appears to be a definite potential for improvement over the former union board administration in this sphere, as the latter had to meet the entire police expenditure itself. The tax revenues are distributed among the constituent gram panchayats on the basis of the collections from each area, and a lump-sum State grant of Rs. 1,000 per anchal panchayat per year is similarly distributed by each anchal among its constituent gram panchayats equally. Such practices do not, however, take into account the special needs of an area, nor the actual performance of specific gram panchayats. Apart from these functions, the anchal panchayats maintain contacts with the Baruiপুর Development Block, the functional jurisdiction of which extends over the areas of all four anchal panchayats.

(v) *Gram Sabhas and Gram Panchayats: Distribution and Membership:* In aggregate, the four anchal panchayats under survey have thirty-six constituent gram panchayats. Corresponding to each gram panchayat, there is a gram sabha consisting of the qualified voters of a specified village area. Table 10 lists the distribution of gram sabhas and gram panchayats according to each "parent" anchal panchayat, and gives the number of members of each gram sabha and gram panchayat.

(vi) *Gram Sabhas and Gram Panchayats: Their Operation:* In spite of the statutory recognition accorded to the gram sabhas, almost all of the thirty-six under study hardly ever obtain a quorum in practice, and business must be transacted at adjourned meetings.<sup>11</sup> This finding is all the more surprising in that, on the "grass-roots" principle of direct democracy, the wider areas of the anchal panchayats have been parcelled out among this host of tiny<sup>12</sup> gram sabhas to evoke popular interest, and to ensure direct, public participation in development activities.

As shown in Table 10, the number of members of the gram panchayats under study varies from nine to fifteen. Their elections paralleled those of the "parent" anchal panchayats. That is, except in the case of elections to gram panchayats under the

<sup>11</sup> A quorum consists of one-tenth of the total membership. See also *Report of the Study Team on Panchayati Raj Finances*, 1963, op cit., Part II; p. 141, "Generally it becomes difficult to secure quorum in meetings and the required business is transacted in adjourned meetings, when no quorum is necessary."

<sup>12</sup> Table 10 indicates an average membership of 657.

**Table 10**

**GRAM SABHAS AND GRAM PANCHAYATS IN THE BARUIPUR DEVELOPMENT BLOCK, 1963-4**

DHAPDHAPI A.P.**			HARIHARPUR A.P.**			KALYANPUR A.P.**			SHIKHARBALI A.P.**		
No.	No. of G.S. Members*	No. of G.P. Members*	No.	No. of G.S. Members*	No. of G.P. Members*	No.	No. of G.S. Members*	No. of G.P. Members*	No.	No. of G.S. Members*	No. of G.P. Members*
1.	474	9	1.	414	10	1.	666	10	1.	507	9
2.	476	9	2.	801	12	2.	736	12	2.	486	10
3.	708	12	3.	831	15	3.	675	13	3.	762	12
4.	469	13	4.	709	11	4.	457	9	4.	502	10
5.	504	9	5.	855	12	5.	659	12	5.	800	12
6.	645	9	6.	1,041	10	6.	551	12	6.	804	12
7.	619	11	7.	642	11	7.	659	12	7.	677	11
8.	750	13	8.	607	10	8.	905	15	8.	517	9
9.	761	11							9.	800	15
10.	435	9							10.	445	9

\*G.S.=gram sabha; G.P.=gram panchayat.  
 \*\*A.P.=anchal panchayat.  
 SOURCE: Field survey.

Hariharpur Anchal, which were wholly dominated by the Congress Party, most elections were contested. Under the Dhaphdhabi Anchal, contestants belonged to the Congress, Praja Socialist and Communist Parties. Under the Shikharbali Anchal, contestants were mainly Congress members with a few Communists. Under the Kalyanpur Anchal, most contestants belonged to the Congress Party again. Unfortunately, voting statistics were not available at the time of the field survey, so that no quantitative analysis can be made.

The average attendance at the meetings of the gram panchayats is about fifty per cent of the maximum possible, rising in a few cases to about eighty per cent. The average is thus a little better than that of the anchal panchayats. But none of the gram panchayats has any permanent staff, and the adhyakshas, upadhyakshas and certain other members look after the business of the panchayats in their spare time. Moreover, unlike a municipality with its central administrative building or a district with its cluster of head offices, the tiny gram panchayat usually has no concrete location which can easily be identified by the rural people. Usually, the adhyaksha keeps all official documents, maintains the accounts, undertakes the correspondence and arranges meetings in his own hut. In consequence, the gram panchayat is more like a personal possession than an impersonal institution, and, as a legal, corporate body, it floats almost unseen over the cluster of huts, dust and ditches of the village.

So far as their actual activities are concerned, the gram panchayats under survey nowhere undertake more than a fraction of the vast array of functions permitted to them by law. They construct and maintain some kutchra or non-metalled roads and a few metalled roads, re-sink a few tube-wells, undertake roadside drainage, clear jungle and thick vegetation, and occasionally make grants to needy students and organize voluntary labour for road construction and other community work.

One essential reason for this short-fall in performance is obviously a lack of funds. This aspect of panchayati raj in the Calcutta Metropolitan District is dealt with in Chapter 7 below, however, and attention may be focused here on the failure of the gram sabhas to meet, on the gram panchayats' lack of permanent staff, on the difficulty village people have in identifying a panchayat where it lacks a physical image, and on the tiny size of most gram sabhas. Formerly, the smallest unit of rural government was the union board. It is disconcerting to find that the new system is based on even smaller units, in spite of the rational, nodal principle upon which most of the union boards were delimited. If direct democracy were working well in the area surveyed, one could, nevertheless, accept the change as being politically sensible; but it is not working well, and at present does not look like working well, at the village level. Even at the level of the anchal panchayat, although the political machinery appears to have been well articulated at election time, and there is a permanent secretary, the lack of interest in meetings and the problems arising from the fact that the leading members are, by and large, daily commuters, suggest deep-seated difficulties. These, however, appear to be connected less with problems of size, staff and finance than with the circumstance that the area of the survey falls within a rural-urban fringe, in which forms of rural local government may already be anachronistic. This matter is taken up in Chapter 8 below.

(vii) *The Block Development Committee and the Panchayats:* The anchal and gram panchayats under survey are intimately connected with the operations of the Baruipur Development Block, which may themselves contribute to the poor performance of the panchayats, in that they partly duplicate the latter's statutory activities. To plan and implement the community development programme within the block, a block development committee has been constituted, of which the pradhan and one other member of each anchal panchayat are members. They attend the meetings of the committee, where local needs are ventilated and ways and means of coping with them are devised. The average attendance at such meetings in 1962-3 was about sixty per cent of the total number of members of the four anchal panchayats under survey.

The committee also provides a forum for local leaders to meet the officers of the State agencies concerned with development activities. This is one of its most important functions, and the block development officer, who is secretary of the committee, has a delicate task to perform at such confrontations. A subtle move may help him to carry the day, but a tactless one may land him in disaster; and, of course, it is ultimately the State Government's reputation and plans which are at stake. To an outside observer, therefore, the role of the block development officer appears to be a strange amalgam of administrative and political responsibilities. It is no doubt explicable in terms of local administration<sup>13</sup>, but this does not render the role less difficult. It merely emphasizes the quality of official leadership inherent in it, but nowhere statutorily defined and supported.

The general orientation of block operations is towards agricultural activities. The local areas under each anchal panchayat profit most through block provisions for improved seeds, fertilizers, village compost, irrigation facilities and other improved agricultural practices. Other block activities within panchayat areas relate to animal husbandry and veterinary services; pisciculture; the development of village and cottage industries; the construction of model houses; the establishment of co-operative societies; financial assistance to primary, basic and secondary schools; the running of social education centres; and the construction and improvement of village roads. In the sphere of public health and sanitation, the block operations are concerned with the provision of potable drinking water by the sinking of tube-wells, and with malaria control and allied public health measures.<sup>14</sup> Some of these activities clearly duplicate those permitted to the gram panchayats, and the block development officer is kept abreast of the myriad local problems in their areas by gramsevaks and gramsevikas. One each of these men and women village-level workers is appointed to each anchal panchayat area to act, *inter alia*, as a bridge between the block-level specialists and the villagers.<sup>15</sup>

Although the block development committee is not an organ of local self-government as defined in Appendix B, popular participation is, nevertheless, a characteristic of block activities. Every scheme is discussed at the committee's meetings, where the

<sup>13</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>14</sup> The information about block activities is based mainly on Baruipur Development Block, *Annual Report*, 1963.

<sup>15</sup> See Frank J. Tysen, *op.cit.*

panchayat leaders are asked to ensure the local people's contribution to it in cash, labour, materials and services. But popular enthusiasm for local development is not to be taken for granted. In most cases, the needs of an area are largely inarticulate, and the block officers themselves and a handful of local leaders often take the lead in sharpening a local demand. Yet, in view of the existing system of land-ownership, what a handful of village leaders wants may not represent the popular demand of an area.

It is not possible to say if such a divergence has been characteristic of the Baruipur Development Block, and further research would be necessary to discover to what extent corporate benefit, as distinct from individual benefit, has accrued to the people from block activities. All one can observe here is that, in spite of the operation of the block as a whole for about a decade, a considerable section of its population—about twenty-five per cent, according to an authoritative estimate<sup>16</sup>—still has to depend on the regular *ex-gratia* distribution of relief grants in cash and kind. Moreover, such relief measures, it is said, are often cited by the village people as concrete evidence of their incapacity to pay panchayat taxes. For, if a higher Government feed a man, how can a lower one fleece him ?

<sup>16</sup> Compared to twenty-seven per cent of the total rural agricultural population of the District of 24-Parganas shown as landless in the Indian Census of 1951.

## RURAL FINANCE: DISTRICT AND UNION BOARDS

**Administrative Procedures**

The rural local authorities under survey<sup>1</sup>, are subjected to elaborate and meticulous accounting and budgetary procedures laid down by the State Government. The statutes and rules provide for minute analysis of items of income and expenditure, custody of funds, control over financial transactions, and audit. Usually, financial transactions are made through Government treasuries or sub-treasuries, and the accounts are audited annually by a special staff. Union board and panchayat accounts are audited by the circle officer (replaced by the block development officer in development block areas), and district board accounts are audited by the Union Government audit staff of the Accountant General, West Bengal.

Before the commencement of the financial year, each local authority submits its budget estimates to a higher-level local authority or State official. Thus, union boards submit their budget estimates to the district board and District Magistrate concerned for approval and sanction. Gram panchayats submit their estimates to the anchal panchayats for approval and sanction, and the latter submit theirs to the block development officer (pending the establishment of anchalik parishads). The district boards submit their own estimates to the relevant Divisional Commissioners. None of these local authorities may incur expenditure under any head in excess of the budget for that head, without the previous sanction of the higher authority mentioned.

**District Boards**

(i) *Introduction:* As regards the finances of the district boards having jurisdiction within the Calcutta Metropolitan District, the following analysis is intended to highlight the salient features only. It is limited, firstly, in that the available statistics relate to the entire area of each district board, and not to that portion of its area included within the Calcutta Metropolitan District. Secondly, the statistics described cover no more than two years, viz: 1959-60 and 1962-3. Thirdly, since only nine square miles of the Nadia District Board area falls within the Metropolitan District, and concerns Kalyani, a State-developed township, the analysis is confined to the Districts of 24-Parganas, Hooghly and Howrah.

The total receipts and expenditures of these three district boards are closely related to their size in terms of area and population. As the statistics for 1959-60 and 1962-3 indicate<sup>2</sup>, the District Board of 24-Parganas, which is the largest of the three, has the highest income and expenditure; next comes Hooghly, and then Howrah, which is the smallest. In all three cases, however, the *per capita* total income is very

<sup>1</sup> District boards, union boards, anchal panchayats and gram panchayats only.

<sup>2</sup> See Tables 11 to 14, and 17 and 18 below.



low. Calculated on the basis of population as given in the 1961 Census of India, and financial returns for the year 1962-3, the *per capita* ordinary income and expenditure are as shown in Table 11.

Table 11

**DISTRICT BOARDS OF 24-PARGANAS, HOOGHLY AND HOWRAH : PER CAPITA  
ORDINARY INCOME AND EXPENDITURE, 1962-3**

District Board	Population* (1961 Census)	Total Ordinary Income Rs.	<i>Per Capita</i> Income Re.	Total Ordinary Expenditure Rs.	<i>Per Capita</i> Expenditure Re.
24-Parganas	45,81,715	8,31,672	0.18	7,23,737	0.16
Howrah	13,94,983	2,62,487	0.19	2,91,145	0.21
Hooghly	16,85,603	4,93,849	0.29	4,29,674	0.25
Totals	76,62,301	15,88,008	0.21	14,44,556	0.19

\*The population of each district board is calculated by subtracting from the population of the entire magisterial district the population of the municipal authorities. In addition, the population of Ichapore Defence Estate, Barrackpore Cantonment and the Dum Dum Aerodrome area is also subtracted in the case of 24-Parganas.

SOURCES: *Census of India*, 1961; Tables 14 and 18.

From this table it will be seen that *per capita* income and expenditure are lowest in 24-Parganas and highest in Hooghly. In Howrah, *per capita* expenditure is higher than *per capita* income, but this is presumably a temporary phenomenon. The average *per capita* income for all three district boards is Re. 0.21, which is to be contrasted with an average of Re. 0.50 for all district boards in West Bengal in 1948-9.<sup>3</sup> It is also strongly to be contrasted with the *per capita* municipal income within the Calcutta Metropolitan District. Even excluding Calcutta Corporation and Howrah Municipality, the average may be estimated at Rs. 10 in 1962-3, when the *per capita* income of individual municipalities ranged between Rs. 2.58 and Rs. 16.62.<sup>4</sup> It is true that union board income must be taken into account, but, judging from Tables 20 and 21, for any union area the combined income per head of the district and union boards must fall far short of the income per head of the smaller municipalities around Calcutta.

Using Table 11, one may arrive at very approximate statistics of total ordinary income and expenditure for those portions of each district board area falling within the Calcutta Metropolitan District. The results are shown in Table 12. They indicate that, while 24-Parganas District Board continues to have the highest income and expenditure, Howrah takes second place instead of Hooghly, which has a much smaller proportion of its area falling within the Metropolitan District.

<sup>3</sup> Government of India, *Report of the Taxation Enquiry Commission* (1953-54), Vol. IV (Evidence), Part III, New Delhi, 1955; p. 703.

<sup>4</sup> Abhijit Datta and David C. Ranney, 'Municipal Finances in the Calcutta Metropolitan District: A Preliminary Survey,' *Calcutta Research Studies* No. 3; Statistical Appendix.

Table 12

**DISTRICT BOARDS OF 24-PARGANAS, HOOGHLY AND HOWRAH : ESTIMATED  
ORDINARY INCOME AND EXPENDITURE OF THE DISTRICT BOARD AREAS FALLING  
WITHIN THE CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT, 1962-3**

District Board	District Board Population within C.M.D.*	Estimated Ordinary Income	Estimated Ordinary Expenditure
		Rs.	Rs.
24-Parganas	5,88,588	1,05,946	94,174
Howrah	2,74,634	52,180	57,673
Hooghly	90,126	26,137	22,532
<b>Totals</b>	<b>9,53,348</b>	<b>1,84,263</b>	<b>1,74,379</b>

\*CMD=Calcutta Metropolitan District.

SOURCES: Table 11 and *Census of India*, 1961.

Little more may be deduced from the table, however, because of its very approximate character and of the difficulty of isolating actual expenditures in such areas. Because of this same difficulty, the following analysis of district board income and expenditure refers to the entire area of each board, and cannot be limited to those portions falling within the Calcutta Metropolitan District.

(ii) *Income*: As indicated in Tables 13 and 14, local rates or cesses constitute the main source of district board revenues. In 1959-60, income from this source alone accounted for well over fifty per cent of the total ordinary income of the three district boards under review. In 1962-3, rate or cess income as a proportion of ordinary income was slightly lower in Howrah and 24-Parganas (over forty per cent), but amounted to more than seventy per cent in Hooghly. These local taxes comprise a road cess and a public works cess, which are generally referred to as local fund cesses. They are leviable under the Cess Act, 1880, at a rate not exceeding half an anna (about Re. 0.6) per rupee of annual value of land, or of annual net profits from mines and quarries.

The Local Finance Enquiry Committee, 1950<sup>5</sup>, recommended that the maximum permissible rate should be doubled, but no action has been taken to do so, and both cesses continue to be assessed<sup>6</sup> and collected together with land revenue by the District Magistrate for the State Government at the old maximum rate. The net proceeds are made over to the district boards in the form of general grants-in-aid. Whatever the merits of this system may be, it follows that cess revenues have been transformed into virtually a general purpose grant, and the boards have no control over the rate at which the cesses are levied.

<sup>5</sup> Government of India, Ministry of Health, *Report of the Local Finance Enquiry Committee* (1950), New Delhi, 1951; p. 141.

<sup>6</sup> In law, the road cess is to be assessed by the district boards, but in practice it is assessed by the State.

**Table 13****DISTRICT BOARDS OF 24-PARGANAS, HOOGHLY AND HOWRAH : INCOME, 1959-60**

Head	Howrah	Percentage of Ordinary Income	Hooghly	Percentage of Ordinary Income	24-Parganas	Percentage of Ordinary Income
	Rs.		Rs.		Rs.	
1. Local rates/cesses	1,48,061	52.45	1,71,668	55.49	4,18,827	54.32
2. Government grants & contributions	65,016	23.03	69,835	22.57	1,36,423	17.69
3. Civil works	47,965	16.99	51,802	16.74	1,32,447	17.18
4. Miscellaneous	21,228	7.53	16,048	5.20	83,332	10.81
5. Total ordinary income	2,82,270	100.00	3,09,353	100.00	7,71,029	100.00
6. Debt, deposits & advances	36,512	—	4,426	—	1,47,793	—
7. Total receipts (excl. opening balance)	3,18,782	—	3,13,779	—	9,18,822	—
8. Total receipts (incl. opening balance)	3,57,813	—	4,99,085	—	11,09,228	—

SOURCES: Howrah District Board Annual Accounts, 1959-60; Budget Estimates of District Boards of Hooghly and 24-Parganas, 1961-2 and 1960-61 respectively.

**Table 14****DISTRICT BOARDS OF 24-PARGANAS, HOOGHLY AND HOWRAH : INCOME, 1962-3**

Head	Howrah	Percentage of Ordinary Income	Hooghly	Percentage of Ordinary Income	24-Parganas	Percentage of Ordinary Income
	Rs.		Rs.		Rs.	
1. Local rates/cesses	1,22,110	46.52	3,53,183	71.52	3,65,205	43.91
2. Government grants & contributions	76,306	29.07	56,114	11.36	1,34,738	16.20
3. Civil works	49,713	18.94	65,810	13.32	1,98,277	23.84
4. Miscellaneous	14,358	5.47	18,742	3.80	1,33,452	16.05
5. Total ordinary income	2,62,487	100.00	4,93,849	100.00	8,31,672	100.00
6. Debt, deposits & advances	47,978	—	33,503	—	2,19,015	—
7. Total receipts (excl. opening balance)	3,10,465	—	5,27,352	—	10,50,687	—
8. Total receipts (incl. opening balance)	3,99,716	—	8,92,213	—	11,46,519	—

SOURCES: Howrah District Board Annual Accounts, 1962-3; Hooghly District Board Annual Administration Report, 1962-3; 24-Parganas District Board Budget Estimates, 1963-4.

he next important head of revenue in Tables 13 and 14 is grants and contributions from the State Government. In 1959-60, such grants and contributions amounted to about twenty per cent of the boards' total ordinary income. In 1962-3, they varied from over twenty-nine per cent in Howrah, to over sixteen per cent in 24-Parganas and eleven per cent in Hooghly. These percentages are high in themselves, but if the local cesses are added in virtue of their character as general Government subventions, more than seventy per cent of the total ordinary income of the three district boards is accounted for. To this very substantial extent, the boards are dependent for their income on *de facto* Government subventions over which they have no control.

The grants and contributions from the State Government are broken down in Tables 15 and 16. They are all earmarked, except for an augmentation grant which is intended to increase the district boards' resources. The annual amount of this grant is more or less fixed and the District Boards of Howrah, Hooghly and 24-Parganas received Rs. 17,850, Rs. 26,216, and Rs. 52,000 respectively in 1959-60 and 1962-3. It will be observed that in neither year did 24-Parganas or Hooghly receive any grants for roads and buildings, in spite of their vast extent.

**Table 15**

**DISTRICT BOARDS OF 24-PARGANAS, HOOGHLY AND HOWRAH : GOVERNMENT GRANTS, 1959-60**

Head	Howrah		Hooghly		24-Parganas	
	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%
1. Roads & buildings	25,949	39.91	—	—	—	—
2. Medical & public health	8,375	12.88	19,023	27.24	63,157	46.29
3. Augmentation grants	17,850	27.45	26,216	37.54	52,000	38.12
4. Subventions for dearness allowances	12,842	19.76	24,596	35.22	21,266	15.59
Total	65,016	100.00	69,835	100.00	1,36,423	100.00

SOURCES: As for Table 13.

In Tables 13 and 14, amounts under "civil works" include, *inter alia*, ferry receipts, which constitute about fifty per cent of the total income under this head in the case of Howrah and Hooghly, and more than seventy-five per cent in the case of 24-Parganas.

Under "miscellaneous", the District Board of 24-Parganas levies a kind of pilgrim tax on every person attending the Gangasagar *mela* (outside the Calcutta Metropolitan District) under the Gangasagar Mela Act, 1953, and issues licences to brick-fields. The Board's receipts from these two sources amounted to Rs. 1,05,524 in 1962-3, and the *mela* receipts alone came to Rs. 52,139 in 1959-60. Similarly, Howrah District Board receives annual payments against a moiety share of surplus profits from the

Table 16

## DISTRICT BOARDS OF 24-PARGANAS, HOOGHLY AND HOWRAH : GOVERNMENT GRANTS, 1962-3

Head	Howrah		Hooghly		24-Parganas	
	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%
1. Roads & buildings	43,287	56.73	—	—	—	—
2. Medical & public health	2,300	3.01	6,900	12.30	62,102	46.09
3. Augmentation grants	17,850	23.39	26,216	46.72	52,000	38.59
4. Subventions for dearness allowances	12,869	16.87	22,998	40.98	20,636	15.32
Total	76,306	100.00	56,114	100.00	1,34,738	100.00

SOURCES: As for Table 12.

Howrah-Amta Light Railway<sup>7</sup>, which is located within the Calcutta Metropolitan District. In 1959-60, the Board received Rs. 20,498 on this account, but nothing was paid to it in 1962-3. This item is thus in fact irregular in character, and wholly dependent upon the profitability of the railway, which is a private undertaking.

Under the head "debt, deposits and advances" in Tables 13 and 14, are included Government loans, and advances and deposits from private parties. In Howrah and 24-Parganas, the sums involved are roughly comparable to those falling under "civil works", but they are much smaller in Hooghly.

(iii) *Expenditure*: Tables 17 and 18 show the most important single head of expenditure in both 1959-60 and 1962-3 to have been "civil works". The boards' individual expenditures under this head ranged from thirty-five per cent of total expenditure to nearly sixty-four per cent, and together averaged between forty-eight and fifty per cent in the two years. The items concerned were mainly buildings, communications, water supply and the public works staff (although neither Hooghly nor 24-Parganas received grants for such purposes).

Two other items next in importance are (a) medical relief and public health (including staff), and (b) general administration. In both years, the first of these items accounted for about twenty-seven per cent of the boards' combined total ordinary expenditure, and the second item accounted for about sixteen per cent. Expenditure on education was very low in both years, and obviously reflected the transfer of primary education responsibilities to the district school boards.

<sup>7</sup> See Abhijit Datta and M. M. Singh, 'Metropolitan Calcutta: Special Transport Agencies,' *Calcutta Research Studies (Occasional Report)*: 'Special Agencies in Metropolitan Calcutta: A Comparative Study,' *Calcutta Research Studies No. 8*.

Table 17

## DISTRICT BOARDS OF 24-PARGANAS, HOOGHLY AND HOWRAH : EXPENDITURE, 1959-60

Head	Howrah Rs.	Percentage of Ordinary Expendi- ture	Hooghly Rs.	Percentage of Ordinary Expendi- ture	24-Parganas Rs.	Percentage of Ordinary Expendi- ture
1. General administration	48,524	18.53	50,493	16.21	1,04,080	12.58
2. Education	2,819	1.08	19,850	6.37	46,241	5.59
3. Medical & public health	50,440	19.26	95,819	30.77	2,70,609	32.70
4. Civil works	1,52,574	58.26	1,21,114	38.89	3,87,912	46.88
5. Miscellaneous	7,513	2.87	24,160	7.76	18,645	2.25
6. Total ordinary expendi- ture	2,61,870	100.00	3,11,436	100.00	8,27,487	100.00
7. Debt, deposits and advances	32,172	—	36,112	—	69,067	—
8. Total expenditure	2,94,042	—	3,47,548	—	8,96,554	—
9. Balance	63,771	—	1,51,537	—	2,12,674	—
10. Grand total	3,57,813	—	4,99,085	—	11,09,228	—

SOURCES: Howrah District Board Annual Accounts, 1959-60; Budget Estimates of District Boards of Hooghly and 24-Parganas, 1961-2 and 1960-61 respectively.

Table 18

## DISTRICT BOARDS OF 24-PARGANAS, HOOGHLY AND HOWRAH : EXPENDITURE, 1962-3

Head	Howrah Rs.	Percentage of Ordinary Expendi- ture	Hooghly Rs.	Percentage of Ordinary Expendi- ture	24-Parganas Rs.	Percentage of Ordinary Expendi- ture
1. General administration	49,728	17.08	69,098	16.08	1,08,115	14.94
2. Education	2,970	1.02	25,311	5.89	54,583	7.54
3. Medical & public health	49,701	17.07	94,882	22.08	2,86,008	39.52
4. Civil works	1,86,254	63.97	2,21,538	51.56	2,55,073	35.24
5. Miscellaneous	2,492	0.86	18,845	4.39	19,958	2.76
6. Total ordinary expendi- ture	2,91,145	100.00	4,29,674	100.00	7,23,737	100.00
7. Debt, deposits and advances	39,302	—	21,764	—	2,01,192	—
8. Total expenditure	3,30,447	—	4,51,438	—	9,24,929	—
9. Balance	69,269	—	4,40,775	—	2,21,590	—
10. Grand total	3,99,716	—	8,92,213	—	11,46,519	—

SOURCES: Howrah District Board Annual Accounts, 1962-3; Hooghly District Board Annual Administration Report, 1962-3; 24-Parganas District Board Budget Estimates, 1963-4.

The pattern of expenditure thus clearly reveals and emphasizes the concentration of district board activities on civil works and medical relief and public health. Since expenditure on staff is included under both of these heads as well as under "general administration", the tables also indicate a heavy expenditure on establishment. It is interesting to compare this expenditure with that incurred in the urban areas. General administration charges in the municipalities (other than Calcutta Corporation) averaged fourteen per cent in 1960-61, and were estimated to amount to only a little over ten per cent in 1962-3<sup>8</sup> (as against the district boards' average of about sixteen per cent). By contrast, Hooghly District Board, with the most compact area of the district boards under review, incurred general administration expenditure equivalent to over eighteen per cent of ordinary expenditure in 1959-60, and to seventeen per cent in 1962-3. However, in both years, the lowest district board charges for general administration were those of 24-Parganas. The most extensive of the three boards, its expenditure under this head was almost the same proportionally as that of the municipalities, in spite of the contrast between its very dispersed administration and the latter's very compact character. Without further research, therefore, it is not possible to give a satisfactory explanation of these varying expenditures on general administration.

*Conclusions:* Financially, the district boards under survey are characterized by a very low *per capita* income. Of this income, from forty-four to seventy-two per cent accrues from local cesses the ceilings of which are very limited, and which are in practice *de facto* Government subventions. A further eleven to twenty-nine per cent of local income accrues from Government grants and contributions, which are mainly earmarked and apparently irregular except for a general augmentation grant, which is more or less fixed. In aggregate, from sixty to eighty-three per cent of local income thus accrues from Government-controlled sources, although the boards are in theory organs of local self-government needing substantial and independent local sources of revenue to operate effectively as such.

On the expenditure side, disbursements are limited mainly to civil works and public health. Apart from the low *per capita* expenditure consequent upon the low *per capita* income, the most significant result of the analysis is the high proportionate expenditure revealed on general administration, including staff. In the new panchayati raj system there are to be four tiers of rural local authorities. If such a disproportionate expenditure on staff and administration continues to characterize the new system, there will obviously be great danger of a substantial dissipation of limited resources merely to oil the wheels of Government.

### Union Boards

(i) *Introduction:* At this stage in their history, a study of the union boards' finances is doubly important. On the one hand, there will soon be no accounts available for analysis. On the other hand, in a few years' time it may be a valuable exercise to compare the finances of the anchal and gram panchayats with those of the institutions

<sup>8</sup> Abhijit Datta and David C. Ranney, *op.cit.*, Appendix Table 4.2.

they have replaced. With these ends in view, in this section attention is focused on the general features of union board finances and, in particular, on a sample of eleven out of the thirty union boards falling entirely within the Calcutta Metropolitan District. The names of the eleven boards selected for study are indicated in Table 19, which gives a complete list of the thirty union boards referred to, and, on the basis of their total ordinary expenditure in 1961-2, classifies them into three groups, viz: Class A, expenditure of Rs. 10,000 and above; Class B, expenditure from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 9,999; and Class C, expenditure below Rs. 5,000, during the year<sup>9</sup>.

As shown in Table 19, the sample includes three out of four boards appearing in Class A (Bally, Haltu and Santragachi); three out of eight boards appearing in Class B (Bakra Italgacha, Bandipur and Madhyamgram); and five out of eighteen boards appearing in Class C (Ichhapur Nilgunje, Ganipur, Chatta, Boinchola and Bilkanda). As the expenditures of these boards ranged from Rs. 2,220 to Rs. 32,527 during the year in question, and as two are located in the Magisterial District of Howrah and nine in that of 24-Parganas<sup>10</sup>, the sample selected is felt to be reasonably representative of the union boards located within the Calcutta Metropolitan District.

**Table 19**

**CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT: CLASSIFICATION OF UNION BOARDS‡  
ACCORDING TO TOTAL ORDINARY EXPENDITURE, 1959-60**

	Union Board	Magisterial District	Ordinary Expenditure
<b>Class A</b>			
(Rs. 10,000 and above)			Rs.
1.	Bally*	Howrah	32,527
2.	Makhla Noapara	Hooghly	27,356
3.	Haltu*	24-Parganas	23,738
4.	Santragachi*	Howrah	15,917
<b>Class B</b>			
(Rs. 5,000—Rs. 9,999)			
1.	Boral	24-Parganas	8,904
2.	Jagacha	Howrah	7,788
3.	Kodalia Debanandapur†	Hooghly	7,702
4.	Bandipur*	24-Parganas	7,157
5.	Madhyamgram*	24-Parganas	6,862
6.	Bansdroni	24-Parganas	6,139
7.	Chingripota	24-Parganas	5,918
8.	Bakra Italgacha*	24-Parganas	5,556
			(Contd.)

<sup>9</sup> Union board accounts are kept on the basis of the Bengali year, which starts in April. The all-India financial year begins on April 1.

<sup>10</sup> Of the thirty boards in Table 19, nineteen fall in 24-Parganas, nine in Howrah and only two in Hooghly.



The pattern of expenditure thus clearly reveals and emphasizes the concentration of district board activities on civil works and medical relief and public health. Since expenditure on staff is included under both of these heads as well as under "general administration", the tables also indicate a heavy expenditure on establishment. It is interesting to compare this expenditure with that incurred in the urban areas. General administration charges in the municipalities (other than Calcutta Corporation) averaged fourteen per cent in 1960-61, and were estimated to amount to only a little over ten per cent in 1962-3<sup>8</sup> (as against the district boards' average of about sixteen per cent). By contrast, Hooghly District Board, with the most compact area of the district boards under review, incurred general administration expenditure equivalent to over eighteen per cent of ordinary expenditure in 1959-60, and to seventeen per cent in 1962-3. However, in both years, the lowest district board charges for general administration were those of 24-Parganas. The most extensive of the three boards, its expenditure under this head was almost the same proportionally as that of the municipalities, in spite of the contrast between its very dispersed administration and the latter's very compact character. Without further research, therefore, it is not possible to give a satisfactory explanation of these varying expenditures on general administration.

*Conclusions:* Financially, the district boards under survey are characterized by a very low *per capita* income. Of this income, from forty-four to seventy-two per cent accrues from local cesses the ceilings of which are very limited, and which are in practice *de facto* Government subventions. A further eleven to twenty-nine per cent of local income accrues from Government grants and contributions, which are mainly earmarked and apparently irregular except for a general augmentation grant, which is more or less fixed. In aggregate, from sixty to eighty-three per cent of local income thus accrues from Government-controlled sources, although the boards are in theory organs of local self-government needing substantial and independent local sources of revenue to operate effectively as such.

On the expenditure side, disbursements are limited mainly to civil works and public health. Apart from the low *per capita* expenditure consequent upon the low *per capita* income, the most significant result of the analysis is the high proportionate expenditure revealed on general administration, including staff. In the new panchayati raj system there are to be four tiers of rural local authorities. If such a disproportionate expenditure on staff and administration continues to characterize the new system, there will obviously be great danger of a substantial dissipation of limited resources merely to oil the wheels of Government.

### **Union Boards**

(i) *Introduction:* At this stage in their history, a study of the union boards' finances is doubly important. On the one hand, there will soon be no accounts available for analysis. On the other hand, in a few years' time it may be a valuable exercise to compare the finances of the anchal and gram panchayats with those of the institutions

<sup>8</sup> Abhijit Datta and David C. Ranney, *op.cit.*, Appendix Table 4.2.

they have replaced. With these ends in view, in this section attention is focused on the general features of union board finances and, in particular, on a sample of eleven out of the thirty union boards falling entirely within the Calcutta Metropolitan District. The names of the eleven boards selected for study are indicated in Table 19, which gives a complete list of the thirty union boards referred to, and, on the basis of their total ordinary expenditure in 1961-2, classifies them into three groups, viz: Class A, expenditure of Rs. 10,000 and above; Class B, expenditure from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 9,999; and Class C, expenditure below Rs. 5,000, during the year<sup>9</sup>.

As shown in Table 19, the sample includes three out of four boards appearing in Class A (Bally, Haltu and Santragachi); three out of eight boards appearing in Class B (Bakra Italgacha, Bandipur and Madhyamgram); and five out of eighteen boards appearing in Class C (Ichhapur Nilgunje, Ganipur, Chatta, Boinchtola and Bilkanda). As the expenditures of these boards ranged from Rs. 2,220 to Rs. 32,527 during the year in question, and as two are located in the Magisterial District of Howrah and nine in that of 24-Parganas<sup>10</sup>, the sample selected is felt to be reasonably representative of the union boards located within the Calcutta Metropolitan District.

**Table 19**  
**CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT: CLASSIFICATION OF UNION BOARDS‡**  
**ACCORDING TO TOTAL ORDINARY EXPENDITURE, 1959-60**

	Union Board	Magisterial District	Ordinary Expenditure
<b>Class A</b> (Rs. 10,000 and above)			Rs.
1.	Bally*	Howrah	32,527
2.	Makhla Noapara	Hooghly	27,356
3.	Haltu*	24-Parganas	23,738
4.	Santragachi*	Howrah	15,917
<b>Class B</b> (Rs. 5,000—Rs. 9,999)			
1.	Boral	24-Parganas	8,904
2.	Jagacha	Howrah	7,788
3.	Kodalia Debanandapur†	Hooghly	7,702
4.	Bandipur*	24-Parganas	7,157
5.	Madhyamgram*	24-Parganas	6,862
6.	Bansdroni	24-Parganas	6,139
7.	Chingripota	24-Parganas	5,918
8.	Bakra Italgacha*	24-Parganas	5,556

(Contd.)

<sup>9</sup> Union board accounts are kept on the basis of the Bengali year, which starts in April. The all-India financial year begins on April 1.

<sup>10</sup> Of the thirty boards in Table 19, nineteen fall in 24-Parganas, nine in Howrah and only two in Hooghly.

Table 19 (Contd.)

CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT: CLASSIFICATION OF UNION BOARDS‡  
ACCORDING TO TOTAL ORDINARY EXPENDITURE, 1959-60

	Union Board	Magisterial District	Ordinary Expenditure
			Rs.
Class C (Below Rs. 5,000)			
1.	Duilya	Howrah	4,599
2.	Panchoor	24-Parganas	4,294
3.	Sankrail	Howrah	4,091
4.	Bilkanda*	24-Parganas	3,955
5.	Sewli	24-Parganas	3,661
6.	Nangi	24-Parganas	3,493
7.	Ichhapur Nilgunje*	24-Parganas	3,466
8.	Bauria	Howrah	3,443
9.	Ganipur*	24-Parganas	2,996
10.	Langalberia	24-Parganas	2,867
11.	Boinchtola*	24-Parganas	2,765
12.	Asuti	24-Parganas	2,675
13.	Maheshtola	24-Parganas	2,628
14.	Jhorehat	Howrah	2,431
15.	Chatta*	24-Parganas	2,220
16.	Krishnagar	24-Parganas	2,086
17.	Manikpur	Howrah	1,833
18.	Nalpur	Howrah	1,572

\* Included in sample survey.

† Figures for 1960-61.

‡ Falling wholly within the Calcutta Metropolitan District.

SOURCE: R. L. Sarkar and A. R. Chowdhury, *A Note on the Finances of the Calcutta Metropolitan District*, Economics Section, Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization, 1963 (unpublished).

(ii) *Income*: Tables 20, 21 and 22 reflect the income of the selected union boards in 1959-60 and 1961-2. Before analysing these tables, it should be mentioned that the boards are required to raise funds necessary to meet their probable expenditure during the ensuing year. Thus, it has been well said that “instead of cutting their coat according to their cloth, they have to obtain their cloth according to the size of their coat<sup>11</sup>.”

<sup>11</sup> *Report of the Taxation Enquiry Commission (1953-54)*, Vol. IV (Evidence), Part III, Government of India, New Delhi; p. 699.

**Table 20**  
**CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT: INCOME OF SELECTED**  
**UNION BOARDS, 1959-60**

Union Board	Union Rate	Grants and Contributions				Miscellaneous Receipts	Total Ordinary Income
		Govt. Grants	D.B.* Grants	Local Contributions	Total		
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
1. Bally	9,259	20,577	—	4,213	24,790	662	34,711
2. Bakra Italgacha	4,911	—	20	—	20	192	5,123
3. Bandipur	4,910	—	20	420	440	1,637**	6,987
4. Bilkanda	3,057	—	39	350	389	688	4,134
5. Boinchtola	3,300	—	20	—	20	1,179**	4,499
6. Chatta	2,145	—	20	—	20	121	2,286
7. Ganipur	3,036	—	20	—	20	54	3,110
8. Haltu	20,323	86	40	2,257	2,383	557	23,263
9. Ichhapur Nilgunje	3,008	—	20	—	20	220	3,248
10. Madhyamgram	6,662	—	20	—	20	68	6,750
11. Santragachi	6,830	4,233	150	4,410	8,793	70	15,693

\* D.B. = District Board.

\*\* Mainly fees and fines.

SOURCES: Budget Estimates of the Union Boards for 1368 B.S. corresponding to 1961-2 A.D.

**Table 21**  
**CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT: INCOME OF SELECTED**  
**UNION BOARDS, 1961-2**

Union Board	Union Rate	Grants and Contributions				Miscellaneous Receipts	Total Ordinary Income
		Govt. Grants	D.B.* Grants	Local Contributions	Total		
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
1. Bally	14,335	5,397	49	3,351	8,797	159	23,291
2. Bakra Italgacha	5,546	—	20	—	20	190	5,756
3. Bandipur	5,183	—	20	640	660	2,086**	7,929
4. Bilkanda	3,858	—	20	100	120	580	4,558
5. Boinchtola	3,900	252	—	—	252	2,144**	6,296
6. Chatta	2,454	311	20	—	331	42	2,827
7. Ganipur	3,445	—	—	—	—	276	3,721
8. Haltu	16,573	481	—	—	481	488	17,542
9. Ichhapur Nilgunje	3,811	—	20	—	20	92	3,923
10. Madhyamgram	8,641	—	20	—	20	40	8,701
11. Santragachi	9,365	2,132	74	3,155	5,361	169	14,895

\* D.B. = District Board.

\*\* Mainly fees and fines.

SOURCE: R. L. Sarkar and A. R. Chowdhury, op. cit.

The tables reflect the fact that the main sources of revenue available to the boards are (a) a union rate, (b) Government grants and contributions, and (c) miscellaneous receipts. Under Secs. 37 and 38 of the Bengal Village Self-Government Act, 1919, the union rate is a compulsory tax levied by each board on persons who are either owners or occupiers of buildings within its jurisdiction, according to their circumstances and the property they hold within the board's area. However, the amount assessed upon any person in a year cannot exceed Rs. 84, and although the boards assess and collect the rate themselves, the District Magistrate is empowered to revise their assessment. In addition, he may make provision for the imposition and collection of a supplementary assessment to meet the liabilities of a union board.

**Table 22**

**CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT: SELECTED UNION BOARDS:  
REVENUE SOURCES AS PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL ORDINARY INCOME,  
1959-60 AND 1961-2**

Union Board	1959-60				1961-2			
	Union Rate	Grants and Contributions	Miscellaneous Receipts	Total	Union Rate	Grants and Contributions	Miscellaneous Receipts	Total
1. Bally	26.67	71.42	1.91	100	61.55	37.77	0.68	100
2. Bakra Italgacha	95.87	0.38	3.75	100	96.35	0.35	3.30	100
3. Bandipur	70.28	6.29	23.43	100	65.37	8.32	26.31	100
4. Bilkanda	73.94	9.42	16.64	100	84.64	2.63	12.73	100
5. Boinchola	73.35	0.44	26.21	100	61.94	4.00	34.06	100
6. Chatta	93.86	0.86	5.28	100	86.81	11.70	1.49	100
7. Ganipur	97.62	0.63	1.75	100	92.58	—	7.42	100
8. Haltu	87.36	10.24	2.40	100	94.48	2.74	2.78	100
9. Ichhapur Nilgunje	92.63	0.61	6.76	100	97.15	0.51	2.34	100
10. Madhyamgram	98.70	0.29	1.01	100	59.31	0.23	0.46	100
11. Santragachi	43.52	56.03	0.45	100	62.87	35.99	1.14	100

SOURCES: Tables 20 and 21.

The tables also show that, in both years and in all cases except those of Bally and Santragachi, the union rate is by far the main source of revenue in the boards under review. In 1959-60 and 1961-2, the income from this source averaged about seventy-seven per cent and eighty-eight per cent respectively of their aggregate ordinary income. Four of the boards, viz: Bakra Italgacha, Ganipur, Ichhapur Nilgunje and Madhyamgram, derived more than ninety per cent of their income from the union rate

alone in both years. Two of these fall under Class B and two under Class C, and it is only in Class A that one finds the rate accounting for less than fifty per cent of a Board's income. The two board's of Bally and Santragachi fall into this category, and Table 20 shows that, in both cases, large Government grants accounted for their low reliance on the rate in 1959-60. It is noticeable that in 1961-2, their grant income was considerably reduced, and that in both cases rate revenue represented over sixty per cent of the board's ordinary income.

Because of this extremely high dependence on a single source of income, the procedure for assessing the rate and the efficiency of its collection have all along been crucial to the soundness or otherwise of the boards' finances. As regards assessment, in evidence to the Taxation Enquiry Commission<sup>12</sup>, the West Bengal Government stated it is generally believed that, for political and other reasons, there has been a tendency to under-assess and to permit undue remissions. As regards collections, Table 23 shows that, in 1961-2, they averaged nearly sixty-nine per cent of total demand. While such performance is by no means inferior to that of the municipalities, where collections averaged no more than fifty-nine per cent of total assessments in 1959-60 and 1960-61,<sup>13</sup> the Departmental<sup>14</sup> standard in the latter's case is at least eighty per cent, and this yardstick could no doubt be used to judge the union boards' performance.

**Table 23**

**CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT: SELECTED UNION BOARDS: CURRENT COLLECTION AS A PERCENTAGE OF CURRENT DEMAND, 1961-2**

Union Board (1)	Demand (2) Rs.	Current Collection (3) Rs.	Col. (3) as % of Col. (2) (4) %
1. Bally	19,646	14,335	72.97
2. Bakra Italgacha	7,533	5,546	73.61
3. Bandipur	6,186	3,643	58.89
4. Bilkanda	5,212	2,611	50.10
5. Boinchtola	3,900	3,900	100.00
6. Chatta	2,662	1,887	70.89
7. Ganipur	3,632	2,986	82.21
8. Haltu*	19,020	9,463	49.75
9. Ichhapur Nilgunje	7,427	2,766	37.24
10. Madhyamgram	10,494	7,217	68.77
11. Santragachi	9,759	8,815	90.33

\* Figures for 1958-9.

SOURCE: R. L. Sarkar and A. R. Chowdhury, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup> *Report of the Taxation Enquiry Commission (1953-54)*, Vol. IV (Evidence), Part III, Government of India, New Delhi; pp. 705-6.

<sup>13</sup> Abhijit Datta and David C. Ranney, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> Department of Local Self-Government and Panchayats, West Bengal.

Table 24

**CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT: SELECTED UNION BOARDS: GRANTS  
AND CONTRIBUTIONS AS PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL ORDINARY INCOME,  
1961-2**

Union Board	Govt. Grants	D.B.* Grants	Local Contributions
1. Bally	23.17	0.21	14.39
2. Bakra Italgacha	—	0.35	—
3. Bandipur	—	0.25	8.07
4. Bilkanda	—	0.44	2.19
5. Boinchola	4.00	—	—
6. Chatta	11.00	0.70	—
7. Ganipur	—	—	—
8. Haltu	2.74	—	—
9. Ichhapur Nilgunje	—	0.51	—
10. Madhyamgram	—	0.54	—
11. Santragachi	14.31	0.50	21.18

\*D.B.=District Board.  
SOURCE: Table 21.

As regards revenue from grants and contributions, some important features are revealed by the tables. As shown by Table 24, the items involved are grants from the State Government and district board, and local contributions. It appears that neither the State Government nor the district board has developed any regular system of grants-in-aid to the union boards, the items listed being apparently largely *ad hoc*. Under the provisions of the statute, the district board may place funds at the disposal of a union board in the event of a transfer of duties or work from the former to the latter. Also, there is statutory provision for discretionary grants-in-aid by a district board to the union boards within its jurisdiction. In actual practice, however, the parent district boards appear to have failed to establish any assured system of grants to their subordinate institutions. Moreover, the amounts appearing in the tables under the heading *D. B. Grants* are extremely small, totalling Rs. 20 or less a year in eight cases in 1959-60, and in nine cases in 1961-2. In fact, local voluntary contributions are often far higher, particularly in the cases of Bally, Haltu and Santragachi. These larger union boards, all falling within Class A, received voluntary contributions from local residents equal to, or larger than, Government grants in the two years under review, for the specific purpose of providing street lighting, water supply and similar services which could not otherwise be established and maintained.

The union boards also draw certain funds from miscellaneous receipts on account of pound rents and other fees and fines. As Table 22 indicates, these receipts constituted up to thirty-four per cent of total ordinary income in one case, they averaged five per cent for all the boards taken together in 1959-60, and over eight per cent in 1961-2.

(iii) *Expenditure:* Tables 25, 26 and 27 reflect the broad pattern of union board expenditure. Apart from administration, expenditure is incurred on the construction and repair of roads and culverts, on lighting and water supply, on measures for public health and sanitation (including drainage and conservancy), and on miscellaneous items such as fodder for pounded cattle, court fees and the like. As Tables 25, 26 and 27 indicate, however, more than forty-four per cent of the boards' total ordinary expenditure is incurred on administration. This item includes the expenses of the village police (the chowkidars and dafadars), as well as the normal establishment, and, for individual union boards, the expenditure rises as high as eighty per cent of total outlay. For example, in 1959-60, five of the eleven boards incurred more than sixty-four per cent of their total expenditure on administration. In 1961-2, at least two boards spent more than seventy-three per cent, and three more than fifty per cent, on this item; and in the latter year, no board spent less than Rs. 2,250 on administration. This amount was surpassed in the case of only seven out of the forty-two other items of expenditure listed in Table 26.

**Table 25**

**CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT: EXPENDITURE OF SELECTED UNION BOARDS, 1959-60**

Union Board	Adminis- tration	Roads	Light- ing	Public Health & Sanitation	Water Supply	Miscel- laneous	Total Ordinary Expendi- ture
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
1. Bally	2,339	11,404	401	3,626	13,479	1,278	32,527
2. Bakra Italgacha	2,467	1,044	729	36	795	485	5,556
3. Bandipur	2,564	1,825	—	489	1,302	977	7,157
4. Bilkanda	2,533	750	—	25	—	647	3,955
5. Boinchtola	2,075	30	—	500	—	160	2,765
6. Chatta	1,779	370	—	—	—	71	2,220
7. Ganipur	2,204	792	—	—	—	—	2,996
8. Haltu	3,621	4,284	6,514	398	5,053	3,868	23,738
9. Ichhapur Nilgunje	2,482	541	402	—	—	41	3,466
10. Madhyamgram	1,933	1,567	2,294	132	12	924	6,862
11. Santragachi	2,395	1,713	1,298	585	8,865	1,061	15,917

SOURCES: Budget Estimates of the Union Boards for 1368 B.S. corresponding to 1961-2 A.D.



Table 26

**CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT: EXPENDITURE OF SELECTED  
UNION BOARDS, 1961-2**

Union Board	Adminis- tration	Roads	Light- ing	Public Health & Sanitation	Water Supply	Miscel- laneous	Total Ordinary Expendi- ture
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
1. Bally	4,248	4,079	1,766	3,290	11,136	493	25,012
2. Bakra Italgacha	3,054	1,085	1,649	130	15	470	6,403
3. Bandipur	2,663	2,309	—	6	922	2,142	8,042
4. Bilkanda	2,425	1,129	—	321	475	477	4,827
5. Boinchtola	2,767	301	—	546	716	1,197	5,527
6. Chatta	2,253	620	—	—	—	—	2,873
7. Ganipur	2,461	694	—	200	—	—	3,355
8. Haltu	3,525	1,186	5,119	175	1,099	1,215	12,319
9. Ichhapur Nilgunje	2,357	1,644	—	—	—	34	4,035
10. Madhyamgram	2,543	1,471	3,674	236	40	88	8,052
11. Santragachi	2,830	3,900	1,442	1,000	4,718	634	14,524

SOURCE: R. L. Sarkar and A. R. Chowdhury, *op. cit.*

As stated in Chapter 2 above, there is clearly little money left over for expenditure on other local-government services. Out of the sample of eleven union boards surveyed, only five registered expenditures under all other heads, viz: roads, lighting, public health and sanitation, water supply and miscellaneous services. Of these five boards, three were Class A boards (Bally, Haltu and Santragachi, of which the two former relied very much on local voluntary contributions), and two were Class B boards (Bakra Italgacha and Madhyamgram). All are either classed as urban in the 1961 census, or are located on the borders of urban areas. Of the remaining six boards in the sample, all registered expenditures on roads in both years, three or four on public health and sanitation according to the year taken, one on water supply in 1959-60 and three in 1961-2, and one on lighting in 1959-60. In both years, at least one board spent nothing on any service other than roads (and general administration). Moreover, in all cases the amounts spent were often infinitesimal. In 1959-60, Madhyamgram spent Rs. 12 on water supply, Bilkanda Rs. 25 on public health and sanitation, Bakra Italgacha Rs. 36 on public health and sanitation, and Boinchtola Rs. 30 on roads. Less than Rs. 1,000 each was spent on twenty-four out of the fifty-two items of expenditure listed in Table 25. In 1961-2, Bandipur spent Rs. 6 on public

Table 27

**CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT : SELECTED UNION BOARDS : EXPENDITURE ITEMS AS PERCENTAGES  
OF TOTAL ORDINARY EXPENDITURE, 1959-60 AND 1961-2**

Union Board	1959-60							1961-62						
	Admini- stration	Roads	Light- ing	Public Health & Sanita- tion	Water Supply	Mis- cellane- ous	Total	Admini- stration	Roads	Light- ing	Public Health & Sanita- tion	Water Supply	Mis- cellane- ous	Total
1. Bally	7.19	35.06	1.23	11.15	41.44	3.93	100	16.98	16.31	7.06	13.16	44.52	1.97	100
2. Bakra Italgacha	44.40	18.80	13.11	0.65	14.31	8.73	100	47.70	16.95	25.75	2.03	0.23	7.34	100
3. Bandipur	35.83	25.49	—	6.83	18.19	13.66	100	33.11	28.72	—	0.07	11.46	26.64	100
4. Bilkanda	64.03	18.96	—	0.64	—	16.37	100	50.23	23.39	—	6.65	9.85	9.88	100
5. Boinchtola	75.04	1.08	—	18.08	—	5.80	100	50.06	5.45	—	9.88	12.95	21.66	100
6. Chatta	80.17	16.66	—	—	—	3.17	100	78.43	21.57	—	—	—	—	100
7. Ganipur	73.57	26.43	—	—	—	—	100	73.37	20.69	—	5.94	—	—	100
8. Haltu	15.25	18.05	27.44	1.68	21.29	16.29	100	28.62	9.63	41.55	1.42	8.92	9.86	100
9. Ichhapur Nilgunje	71.62	15.60	11.60	—	—	1.18	100	58.42	40.74	—	—	—	0.86	100
10. Madhyam- gram	28.17	22.83	33.44	1.92	0.17	13.47	100	31.61	18.28	45.66	2.93	0.50	1.02	100
11. Santragachi	15.05	10.76	8.16	3.67	55.69	6.67	100	19.48	26.85	9.93	6.89	32.49	4.36	100

SOURCES: Tables 25 and 26.

health and sanitation, Bakra Italgacha Rs. 15 on water supply and Madhyamgram Rs. 40 on water supply. Less than Rs. 1,000 each was spent on twenty-one out of the fifty-three items of expenditure listed in Table 26.

Of the items of expenditure in excess of Rs. 1,000, road construction and maintenance accounted for most in both years, and the boards incurred nearly twenty per cent of their total outlay on this item. But the general impression is one of irregular expenditure apart from general administration (including village police) and roads, except in the case of the Class A boards. This impression is reinforced by the fact that the boards are not empowered to levy either a water rate or a lighting rate, so that expenditure on these items must be met from the union rate (already burdened with the *prior* demands of the village police) or from Government grants and local voluntary contributions. Reliance on the latter source of funds for lighting and water-supply services in fact grows as the areas involved become urbanized and, apart from Government grants and exceedingly meagre district board grants (see Table 24), there is virtually no other source of revenue which can be tapped.

(iv) *Conclusions:* This analysis thus emphasizes the conclusion reached in Chapter 2 that the union boards have all along been primarily concerned with police functions; a conclusion previously reached partly on the facts that the District Magistrate not only controls the expenditure to be incurred on the police, but may also impose and collect a supplementary union rate if a board should fail to pay the police and its staff in any year. The analysis further emphasizes the paucity of local funds, and the need to ensure that the panchayats now replacing the union boards will have sufficient local revenues at their disposal to orientate their expenditures towards local-government services other than police and general administration. Quite clearly, the funds available to the union boards are wholly inadequate for the operation of regular local services; the district board's grants are infinitesimal; and Government contributions are irregular, *ad hoc* and only occasionally of substantial proportions. It remains to be seen if local sources of revenue and higher-level contributions made over to the new panchayats will rectify these defects.

## RURAL FINANCE UNDER PANCHAYATI RAJ

**Zilla Parishads**

(i) *Financial Control*: Like the district boards, the zilla parishads will be subjected to elaborate accounting rules and budgetary procedures prescribed by the State under the West Bengal Zilla Parishads Act, 1963, and subsequent rules. The zilla parishad fund is to be lodged with the District Magistrate, and is to be kept in the district's Government treasury. The parishad's accounts are to be audited by the Examiner of Local Accounts, in the office of the Accountant General, West Bengal, and its budgets are to be approved by the Department of Local Self-Government and Panchayats, West Bengal (instead of by the Divisional Commissioner as in the case of the district boards).

(ii) *Income*: Although no zilla parishads have yet been established (July, 1964), so that no analysis can be made of their finances in practice, the Act and rules published so far do give sufficient information for a preliminary appreciation. The Act provides for two major categories of income, (a) tax revenues and (b) non-tax revenues. As regards (a) *tax revenues*, these are to comprise a compulsory road cess, a permissive water rate and a permissive lighting rate. As in the case of district boards, the road cess will be assessed and collected by the State Government. Moreover, it is now provided that the District Magistrate will furnish the zilla parishad of his district with an estimate of the balance of the district road fund which is to be transferred to it. It thus appears that the zilla parishad's income from this source should continue to be regarded rather as a Government subvention than as revenue from a local tax.

Unlike the road cess, the levying of a water rate or a lighting rate, and of both rates, is to be optional to the zilla parishad. These rates will be new, and will replace the public works cess presently collected by the State Government on behalf of the district boards. The maximum rate permitted will in each case be three per cent of the annual value of a holding; provided, of course, that the service is in fact rendered by the parishad.

As regards (b) *non-tax revenues*, these are to comprise grants and contributions made by the Union and State Governments; grants and contributions made by anchalik parishads and other local authorities; contributions made by private persons; and miscellaneous receipts such as tolls, fees and fines. As there is no precedent for Union grants to district bodies, nothing can be conjectured about their size or regularity. But the Act does clearly provide for the grant of part of the land revenue collected in the district concerned, although it will not be obligatory for the State Government to make such grant, and the sum granted will be at its discretion. Moreover, each zilla parishad is to receive funds on the basis of the annual budget for the various development schemes of State departments relating to the district and allocated

to the parishad for execution. Other State grants and contributions will also be made during each financial year, although there is no information as to the system or principles involved.

Grants and contributions to be made by anchalik parishads and other local authorities, will undoubtedly be connected with the launching of collaborative projects involving financial contributions from the authorities concerned. Similar projects involving union boards and district boards, or municipalities and district boards, have previously been undertaken within the Calcutta Metropolitan District. As regards the other non-revenue sources of income listed above, apart from tolls in respect of ferry services, their yield is unlikely to be high, judging from past experience. The levies concerned will have their maximum rates fixed by the State (as in the case of the registration of vehicles or boats), and most fees will not be leviable by a zilla parishad if legally imposed by another authority.

(iii) *Conclusions:* In the final analysis, in spite of new optional sources of revenue—which are, in any case, service charges—the zilla parishad appears to be unlikely to be less dependent on State sources of revenue than the district board. Like the latter, it will be able to apply for loans from the Union and State Governments, and to raise loans with the State's approval. But, unless the zilla parishads' financial records are far better than those of the district boards, in practice these loan provisions will remain largely inoperative.

At present, therefore, the financial clauses of the Zilla Parishads Act, and of the rules subsequently issued, support the conclusion reached above in Chapter 3 that the zilla parishads will tend to be institutions of local self-administration as defined in Appendix B. They will not command independent sources of revenue sufficient for their establishment and maintenance as organs of local self-government. In such case, the establishment of a system of regular Government grants geared to the development needs of National and State planning, becomes of first importance. This conclusion is reinforced by consideration in the following section of the financial provisions applying to the anchalik parishads.

### **Anchalik Parishads**

(i) *Financial Control:* The anchalik parishad has been designed very much on the lines of the zilla parishad, and most of the rules and regulations and financial provisions applying to the latter also apply with minor variations to the former. Thus, the accounts of the anchalik parishad will be audited by the Examiner of Local Accounts, West Bengal; its fund will be lodged with the Sub-divisional Officer and kept in the State treasury in the sub-division; and its budget will have to be submitted for sanction and approval to the zilla parishad within whose jurisdiction it falls.

(ii) *Income:* As in the case of the zilla parishad, the West Bengal Zilla Parishads Act, 1963, provides the anchalik parishad with two major sources of income, (a) tax-revenues and (b) non-tax revenues; but the statute does not appear to provide for the compulsory levy of any local taxes. As regards (a) *tax revenues*, an anchalik parishad will be permitted to levy a water rate and a lighting rate, the maximum limit of which will be three per cent of the annual value of a holding. As these are service charges

leviable only when such services have actually been rendered by the anchalik parishad, there is thus virtually no provision for the imposition of local taxes by the parishad, and its main source of income for general purposes must be sought elsewhere.

Under (b) *non-tax revenues*, can be grouped the following sources of income:

- (a) grants and contributions by the Union and State Governments;
- (b) grants and contributions by the zilla parishad or any other local authority;
- (c) contributions from private individuals; and
- (d) miscellaneous receipts, including tolls, fees and fines.

Items (c) and (d) are unlikely to be lucrative sources of income. In the first place, private contributions have never been very substantial in the past and, in any case, a local body can hardly be expected to live on local charity. Secondly, the power of the anchalik parishad to levy fees for the registration of vehicles, for issuing licences for *hats*, markets and any offensive or dangerous trades, or for any other purpose, will be conditional and not absolute. Such power will not be exercisable if any other local authority has already made use of it. The anchalik parishad will only be able to levy tolls at toll-bars, and in respect of ferries, without such conditional restraint.

It appears, therefore, that the anchalik parishad will have to depend for most of its funds on grants and contributions from the Union and State Governments, and from the zilla parishad within whose jurisdiction it falls. But, the latter body will be able to offer substantial assistance only if it is itself assured of adequate resources. As the zilla parishad fund is now constituted, it may at best be expected merely to divert to the anchalik parishads some of the State grants received by it. In the absence of any fixed principle of grant distribution, there can be no certainty about the quantum of such grants. As the Study Team on Panchayati Raj Finances has recently pointed out, "There should be definite principles and criteria for distribution of funds to samitis (anchalik parishads) through Zilla Parishads."<sup>1</sup>

As regards Central grants, it is yet to be seen how such grants will be arranged. The Study Team has suggested that an annual average *per capita* grant of Re. 1 should be made to each samiti, to be shared equally by the State and Union Governments and to be earmarked for the maintenance of staff.<sup>2</sup> No official announcement has yet been made, however. Grants from the State Government would thus seem to be the major source of anchalik parishad funds. They will be of three types, viz:

- (a) general grants and contributions;
- (b) allotments made for the various development schemes of State departments relating to the block in question under the State Five Year Plan; and
- (c) allotments made under the schematic block budget<sup>3</sup>.

(iii) *Conclusions*: Even more so than in the case of the zilla parishad, which will enjoy the revenue from at least one local source of taxation, the statutory financial provisions applying to the anchalik parishad confirm the conclusion reached in Chapter 4 that it will belong rather to a system of local self-administration than to a

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Study Team on Panchayati Raj Finances*, 1963, op. cit., Part I; p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> *See The Calcutta Gazette (Extraordinary)*, June 16, 1964.

system of local self-government. Judged on this basis, its great dependence on State grants and contributions may be viewed as an asset rather than a liability, in that such dependence will help to ensure strong control over its development activities. By the same token, the recommendation of the Study Team on Panchayati Raj Finances<sup>4</sup> in favour of the establishment of a State finance corporation to make loans to, *inter alia*, anchalik parishads, appears to be somewhat misconceived (at least in so far as West Bengal is concerned). If the latter are to form part of the administrative apparatus of the State, it would be more appropriate for them to be given direct State grants earmarked for specific purposes. In that case, however, a grant system should be established based on clear principles and operating within the framework of the State's Five Year Plans.

### **Anchal Panchayats**

(i) *Financial Control*: As briefly explained in Chapter 6, under the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1956, the anchal panchayats are subjected to detailed accounting and budgetary rules and procedures laid down by the State Government. Annually, each anchal panchayat must make a separate budget estimate, and submit this, together with the gram panchayat estimates received and considered by it, to the block development officer for final approval. Anchal panchayat accounts are to be audited annually by the extension officer (panchayats), or panchayat supervisor, on behalf of the block development officer.

(ii) *Income*: The Act provides that each anchal panchayat fund is to consist of the following:

- (a) State Government contributions for general or special purposes;
- (b) taxes, tolls, fees, rates or other permitted impositions;
- (c) sums contributed by the district board and any other local authority;
- (d) loans raised, or gifts and contributions received, and income from endowments and trusts; and
- (e) other fines and penalties, and miscellaneous receipts.

Of the two authorities—the anchal panchayat and the gram panchayat—the former alone has the right to levy taxes or other impositions. The Act provides for the levy of a single compulsory tax on owners and occupiers of lands or buildings, or both, according to the value of the property of the persons on whom the tax is levied, and their circumstances.

The optional impositions are:

- (a) a tax on professions, trades or callings;
- (b) fees for the registration of vehicles;
- (c) fees for providing sanitary arrangements at places of worship or pilgrimage;
- (d) a water rate where arrangements for water supply are made by a gram panchayat;
- (e) a lighting rate where lighting arrangements are made by a gram panchayat;

<sup>4</sup> Which suggested the formation of State Panchayati Raj Finance Corporations for ensuring loans to panchayati raj institutions; *op. cit.*, p. 56.

Anchal Panchayat	1961-2								1962-3							
	Government Grants & Contributions		Taxes and Miscellaneous Fees				Total Ordinary Income		Government Grants & Contributions		Taxes and Miscellaneous Fees				Total Ordinary Income	
	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%
Kalyanpur	4,471	71	1,805	29	—	—	6,276	100	5,207	79	1,371	21	—	—	6,578	100
Hariharpur	3,319	50	3,328	50	36*	—	6,683	100	4,812	58	3,451	41	85*	1	8,349	100

\*Miscellaneous receipts.

SOURCES: Budget Estimates for 1963-4 and 1964-5.

Table 29

CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT : EXPENDITURE OF SELECTED ANCHAL PANCHAYATS,  
1961-2 AND 1962-3

Anchal Panchayat	1961-2								1962-3							
	General Administration		Grants to Gram Panchayats		Miscellaneous		Total Ordinary Expenditure		General Administration		Grants to Gram Panchayats		Miscellaneous		Total Ordinary Expenditure	
	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%
Kalyanpur	2,761	47	3,011	51	95	2	5,867	100	3,049	44	3,909	56	17	—	6,975	100
Hariharpur	2,714	56	1,892	39	237	5	4,843	100	3,066	47	2,105	32	1,330	21	6,501	100



(f) a conservancy rate where conservancy services are rendered by a gram panchayat; and

(g) fees for suits and cases before the nyaya panchayat.

In addition, each anchal panchayat is to receive from the State Government (i) a lump-sum grant of Rs. 1,000 per annum, (ii) an amount equivalent to the salary of the secretary, and (iii) fifty per cent of the salaries of chowkidars and dafadars<sup>5</sup>.

These various statutory provisions are reflected in Table 28, which summarizes for 1961-2 and 1962-3, the income of two of the four anchal panchayats discussed in Chapter 5 above, viz: Kalyanpur and Hariharpur, both of which fall within Baruipur Development Block. A comparison with Tables 20, 21 and 22 reflecting union board income, immediately shows very wide differences in the relative importance of various sources of income. In 1961-2, the total ordinary income of Kalyanpur and Hariharpur Anchal Panchayats was of the same order as that of the union boards of Bandipur, Boinchtola and Madhyamgram. But, whereas Kalyanpur received seventy-one per cent and seventy-nine per cent of its income in the form of State Government grants in 1961-2 and 1962-3 respectively, some of the union boards received nothing from the State Government in 1959-60, and Boinchtola received only Rs. 252 in 1961-2. On its part, Hariharpur Anchal derived fifty per cent of its income from State Government sources in 1961-2, and fifty-eight per cent in 1962-3. The three union boards, however, depended for between six-two and ninety-nine per cent of their income upon the union rate.

As regards the remaining income of Kalyanpur and Hariharpur, except for negligible miscellaneous receipts, it was derived wholly from taxes and fees in both years. The sums involved naturally fell short of the rate collections of the three union boards, except in the case of Boinchtola in 1959-60, but this board, like that of Bandipur, had large miscellaneous receipts in both years. Indeed, in 1961-2, Kalyanpur's income from taxes and fees was smaller than any union rate income recorded in Table 21.

Too much should not be read into these differences, however. Of the income of each anchal panchayat, the lump-sum Government grant of Rs. 1,000 is disbursed amongst the gram panchayats, and further Government grants received from the development block are disbursed in the same way. The income accruing to the anchal panchayat itself is thus composed of (a) Government grants to pay the secretary's salary and to meet half the cost of the salaries of the chowkidars and dafadars, (b) income from taxes and fees, the use of which is at the anchal panchayat's discretion, and (c) miscellaneous receipts. A true comparison with the union boards can thus be made only if the income of the gram panchayats is taken into account.

As regards tax revenues, both the anchal panchayats under study impose taxes on (a) owners and occupiers of lands and buildings, and (b) professions, trades and callings; and both levy fees on the registration of vehicles. Of these local revenues, (a) the holding tax, remains the main source, as in the case of the union boards, and its proper assessment and collection remains a major financial consideration.

<sup>5</sup> Although the grants for these purposes are discretionary and not compulsory.

(iii) *Expenditure*: Table 29, analysing the expenditure of the anchal panchayats of Kalyanpur and Hariharpur, in 1961-2 and 1962-3, clearly reflects the fact that their main concern is with tax collection, village police and allotment of funds to constituent gram panchayats. Apart from high miscellaneous expenditure by Hariharpur in 1962-3, which was incurred for its own office building and was thus a non-recurring item, Table 29 shows that, for all practical purposes, about half of the anchal panchayats' combined expenditure was accounted for by general administration. The other half represented grants to gram panchayats. General administration costs included expenditure on the secretary (fully grant-aided), on the chowkidars and dafadars (fifty per cent grant-aided) and tax collection. Grants to gram panchayats included mainly the Rs. 1,000 State Government lump-sum grant, and development funds allocated to particular gram panchayats by the development block. As will be shown below in connection with gram panchayat income, very little of the local tax revenues collected by the anchal panchayats was passed on to the gram panchayats. In the absence of definite principles of grant distribution, one would in fact expect the anchal panchayats to tend to spend most of such tax revenues for their own purposes.

Comparing these expenditures with those reflected in Tables 26 and 27 for the three union boards (Bandipur, Boinchtola and Madhyamgram) in 1961-2, it appears that the anchal panchayats' costs of general administration (including village police) formed a higher proportion of their total expenditure. The expenditure of the three union boards on this item ranged from thirty-one to fifty per cent of total expenditure, with an average of thirty-seven per cent. Kalyanpur and Hariharpur spent forty-seven and fifty-six per cent respectively on general administration in the same year. However, their actual average expenditure amounted to Rs. 2,737 as against Rs. 2,658 in the case of the union boards. The most that can be said, therefore, is that general administrative expenditures (including outlays on village police) were at least of the same order. Even this conclusion is significant, however, as the administrative costs of the gram panchayats have also to be taken into account for a correct comparison to be made.

### **Gram Panchayats**

(i) *Financial Control*: Each gram panchayat must compile an annual budget estimate which is to be submitted to the "parent" anchal panchayat for consideration, and thence passed to the block development officer for approval. Gram panchayat accounts are to be audited annually by the extension officer (panchayats), or panchayat supervisor, on behalf of the block development officer.

(ii) *Income*: The West Bengal Panchayat Act does not confer any power of taxation on the gram panchayats, whose sources of funds are mainly grants and contributions, gifts, and income from endowments and trusts. In fact, the gram panchayats are so constituted that they have no other alternative but to depend almost entirely on the financial allotments made by the parent anchal panchayat. Even grants and contributions from the State Government are to be channelled through the anchal panchayat, and are not to be received direct.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Report of The Study Team on Panchayati Raj Finances*, 1963, op. cit., Part II; p. 142.

These circumstances are reflected in Table 30, which analyses the accounts of a sample of five out of eight gram panchayats falling within the jurisdiction of Hariharpur Anchal Panchayat. From this table, it will be seen that in 1961-2, the gram panchayats enjoyed hardly any source of income other than grants and contributions from higher authorities. In fact, three of the gram panchayats, viz: Mallickpur-Ganeshpur, Petua-Auliapur and Panchghara-Faridpur, were wholly dependent on grants and contributions. The remainder, viz: Hariharpur-Khasmallick and Sultanpur-Beniadanga, both derived seventy per cent of their income from this source.

As indicated above, these grants and contributions comprised part of the lump-sum grant of Rs. 1,000 given to the anchal panchayat for gram panchayat use, funds from the development block allotted against requisitions of the gram panchayats for development purposes, and part of the tax revenue raised by the anchal panchayat. Since the lump-sum grant is divided equally amongst the eight gram panchayats falling under Hariharpur Anchal Panchayat, each received Rs. 125 for the year. The remaining amounts—Rs. 514, Rs. 260, Rs. 104, Rs. 76 and Rs. 42 respectively—thus represented development block grants and anchal panchayat subventions. In the last two cases, however, it appears that no such subventions were made<sup>7</sup>.

As regards income, the most salient feature of Table 30 is undoubtedly the extremely low sums available to the gram panchayats, varying from Rs. 167 to Rs. 639 a year. Table 31 emphasizes this poverty by indicating that their *per capita* incomes ranged from Re. 0.12 to Re. 0.46, with an average of Re. 0.25. In the light of these statistics, the vast range of functions, both obligatory and discretionary, described in Chapter 5 as being entrusted to the gram panchayats, appears to be illusory and pointless.

(iii) *Expenditure*: This conclusion is fortified by an examination of expenditures in Tables 30 and 31. The gram panchayats in fact spend their money on administration and roads. But as none of these bodies maintains any regular staff, administrative (or establishment) costs are low, averaging thirteen per cent of total expenditure in 1961-2, varying from Rs. 11 to Rs. 28 for the year, and aggregating Rs. 95 all told. Apart from three very small outlays on water supply, aggregating Rs. 80, one expenditure of Rs. 26 on conservancy and one expenditure of Rs. 30 on education, all the rest of the gram panchayats' income was spent on roads, a total of Rs. 1,246. In this respect, they are merely following in the footsteps of the union boards, as a comparison with Table 27 will confirm. Other local-government functions are thus being neglected at least as much as under the old system of district and union boards, which panchayati raj is replacing in the interests of "grass-roots" development.

One further point arises. While the gram panchayats' administrative expenditures are individually low, in aggregate they form the second highest outlay. This outlay has to be added to the administrative costs of the anchal panchayat in order to make a fair comparison with union board expenditure on this item. The result is to confirm that, as might be expected, the administrative costs of a multiplicity of local-government bodies are more than likely to be higher than that of the single body they replace.

<sup>7</sup> *The Study Team on Panchayati Raj Finances*, 1963, points out that, in West Bengal, the major portion of the income of the anchal panchayats is spent by themselves; *op. cit.*, p. 143.

Table 30

## CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT : INCOME AND EXPENDITURE OF SELECTED GRAM PANCHAYATS, 1961-2

Gram Panchayat	INCOME						EXPENDITURE											
	Grants & Contributions		Miscellaneous		Total Ordinary Income		Establishment		Roads		Water Supply		Conser-vancy		Education		Total Ordinary Expenditure	
	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%
1. Mallickpur-Ganeshpur	639	100	—	—	639	100	11	2	598	94	—	—	—	—	30	4	639	100
2. Hariharpur-Khasmallick	385	70	164	30	549	100	18	4	336	77	58	13	26	6	—	—	438	100
3. Sultanpur-Beniadanga	229	70	100	30	329	100	27	22	94	78	—	—	—	—	—	—	121	100
4. Petua-Auliapur	201	100	—	—	201	100	18	9	167	82	18	9	—	—	—	—	203	100
5. Panchghara-Faridpur	167	100	—	—	167	100	21	28	51	67	4	5	—	—	—	—	76	100

SOURCES: Budget Estimates for 1963-4.

Scarce funds, which could otherwise be used for development purposes, are being dissipated over numerous local authorities which are financially exceedingly weak. As Table 31 shows, in the gram panchayats under review, *per capita* expenditure for all purposes ranged from Re. 0.05 to Re. 0.46 in 1961-2, with an average of Re. 0.20 only.

**Table 31**

**CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT: PER CAPITA INCOME AND EXPENDITURE OF SELECTED GRAM PANCHAYATS, 1961-2**

Gram Panchayat	Total Population*	Total Income Rs.	Per Capita Income Re.	Total Expenditure Rs.	Per Capita Expenditure Re.
1. Mallickpur-Ganeshpur	1,396	639	0.46	639	0.46
2. Hariharpur-Khasmallick	1,904	549	0.29	438	0.23
3. Sultanpur-Beniadanga	1,719	239	0.19	121	0.07
4. Petua-Auliapur	984	201	0.20	203	0.20
5. Panchghara-Faridpur	1,438	167	0.12	76	0.05

\* Population statistics taken from the records of the Hariharpur Anchal Panchayat within the jurisdiction of which these gram panchayats fall.

*Conclusions:* Owing to the very recent establishment of anchal and gram panchayats in the Calcutta Metropolitan District, it is too early to reach any final conclusions about their actual financial performance. Nevertheless, interim conclusions may already be drawn pointing up certain salient, emergent features. The first of these conclusions is that the establishment of a multiplicity of rural local authorities is tending to raise the costs of administration at the expense of development. Whether or not this increased expenditure on oil for the wheels of government is justified, depends on the success such machinery will have in developing the political consciousness of the people involved. So far, the gram sabhas have failed to obtain a quorum. This failure may well be in part attributable to the paucity of funds at the disposal of the institutions established for such political ends. It may also be attributable to the divorce between the taxing authority (the anchal panchayat) and the executing authority (the gram panchayat), and the parallel divorce of responsibilities. The gram panchayats, which are the only directly-elected authorities, and which have a vast range of obligatory and discretionary functions, must depend for their existence on hand-outs channelled through the anchal panchayat. The latter, which has very limited functions of tax collection, village police and grant allotments, holds the few purse strings permitted to these local self-governing tiers of panchayati raj.

A second major conclusion is that the present extraordinary financial weakness of the gram panchayats stands in striking contrast to their role as the foundation stones of the new structure. Even considered together with the anchal panchayat as a single

tier of government, they are no better placed than the former union boards; except in so far as there has been a marked increase in their grant income. But, it may be asked, is local self-government compatible with grants totalling more than sixty per cent of local income, which are mostly earmarked for specific purposes ?

A third major conclusion is that, as the panchayat's income and expenditure indicate, they are no more capable than the union boards of coping with the problems set by urbanization. And the union boards have already been shown to be quite inadequate instruments for controlling the orderly development of urban areas. From the financial standpoint, therefore, the institutions of panchayati raj appear to be anomalies within the borders of the Calcutta Metropolitan District. As presently constituted and endowed, the anchal and gram panchayats are incapable of meeting the challenge of urban growth.

## PERI-URBAN GOVERNMENT

**Introduction**

The last two chapters confirm the opinion, first expressed in Chapter 2, that existing and proposed forms of rural government cannot cope with the problems of urbanization arising within the Calcutta Metropolitan District but outside the boundaries of the municipal authorities. Of the Metropolitan District's total area of about 450 square miles, the urban local authorities (consisting of two municipal corporations, thirty-three municipalities and one cantonment at the end of 1963) have administrative jurisdiction over about 177 square miles. Except for a few small pockets, the rest of the area is administered by a multiplicity of rural local authorities. As of December, 1963, these consisted of four district boards, sixty union boards, seven anchal panchayats and some fifty-six constituent gram panchayats. The consequent maze of local governments is portrayed in Figures 1, 2 and 3, pp. viii, ix and x, which omit only the tiny gram panchayats.

Briefly to recapitulate, the district boards were established towards the close of the nineteenth century, and the union boards were set up within a decade of the passage of the Bengal Village Self-Government Act, 1919. Since then, they have continued to function in areas contiguous to the Hooghly industrial belt, which comprises the core of a closely-knit conurbation and is governed locally by a chain of municipal institutions established prior to 1900 and lying along both banks of the River Hooghly. Figure 4 illustrates this municipal chain and the boundary of the conurbation<sup>1</sup>. In the last twenty-five years, the increasing activities of the industrial belt and successive waves of refugees from East Pakistan have combined to produce a progressive overflowing of population from the municipal areas into their fringes, and have extended the conurbation boundary in Figure 4 to well beyond the municipal limits. The problems of peri-urban government have thus begun to mount. Uluberia and Bauria in the District of Howrah emerged as urban towns in the census of 1951; and as many as thirty-two areas were declared to be new towns in the census of 1961. Yet, except-

<sup>1</sup> The conurbation boundary shown in Figure 4 was determined by the Study Group of Geographers, Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization, and is reproduced with the permission of that Organization. A conurbation is usually defined as an area occupied by a continuous series of dwellings, factories and other buildings, harbours and docks, urban parks and playing fields, etc., which are not separated from each other by rural land. In this instance, because of the material differences between living conditions in West Bengal and Western Europe, the Study Group defined the Calcutta conurbation as the continuous urban tract extending in all directions from the two cities of Calcutta and Howrah. The boundary was determined by mapping (a) municipal tracts, (b) all mouzas with more than sixty per cent of the population dependent on non-agricultural occupations in 1951, (c) all tracts with a density of more than 2,000 persons per square mile in 1951, and (d) all settled areas, including built-up areas (and not distinguishing between urban and rural settlement because factory labour was found to be residing in villages as well as towns). Outside this boundary there are, of course, other urban tracts within the area of the Calcutta Metropolitan District.

## CALCUTTA CONURBATION

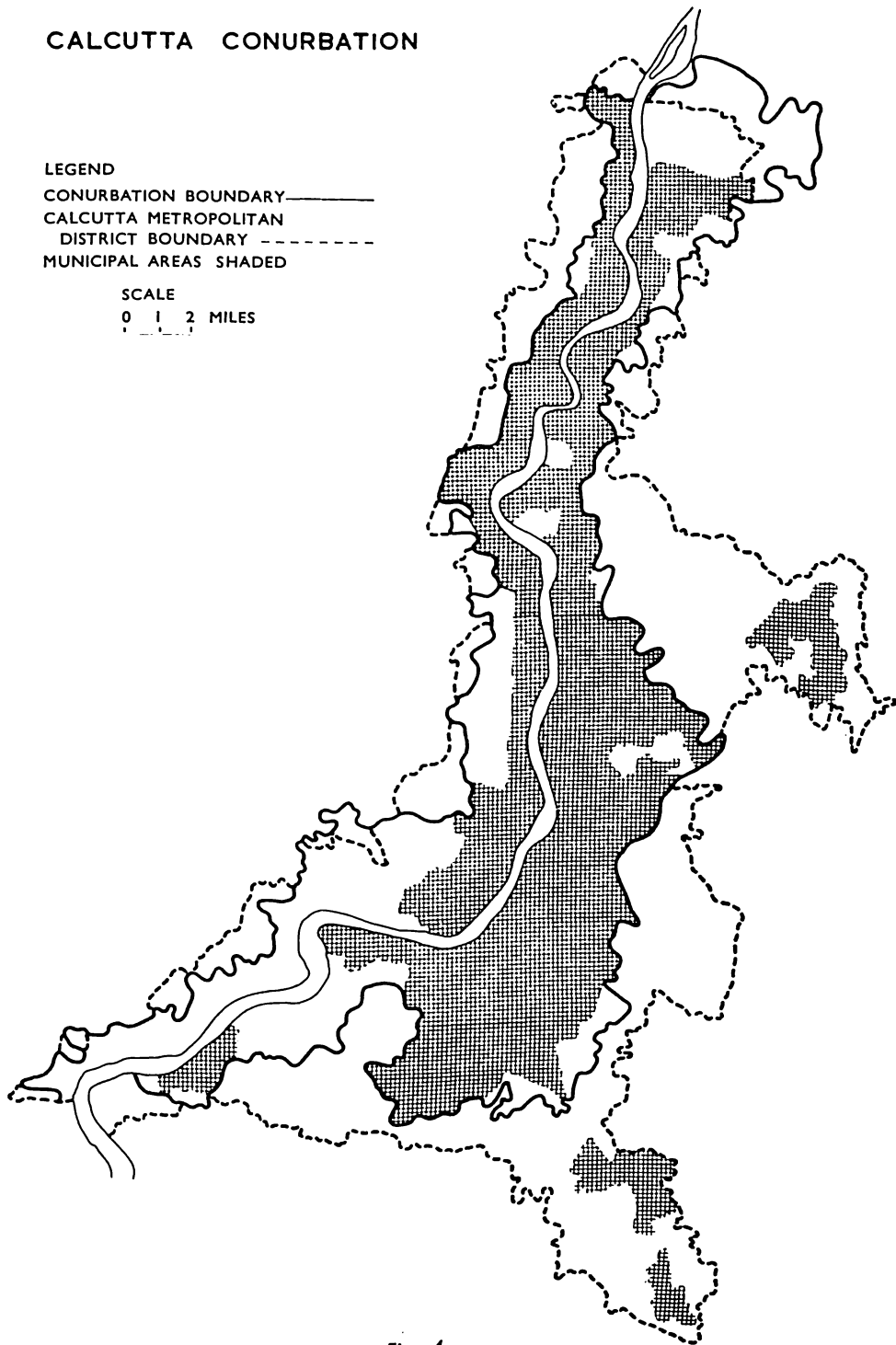


Fig. 4



ing the Ichapore Defence Estate and the Dum Dum Aerodrome Area, which are administered by Union Government agencies, all these newly-born urban areas are still being administered by the old rural authorities, or by the new panchayat system taking their place.

Apart from these new towns, which together comprise nearly 57 square miles, some 200 square miles of rural areas are included in the Calcutta Metropolitan District. Situated on the periphery of the old and new urban areas, these rural tracts are shown in Figure 4 to be narrow and almost lineal in the west, and wide and radial in the east near the Municipality of Barasat and in the south around the three Municipalities of Budge Budge, Rajpur and Baruipur. The closer they lie to the urban areas, the more they feel the pull of urbanization.

Thus, the peri-urban areas of the Calcutta Metropolitan District fall into two separate, but connected, categories, viz:

- (a) areas which are already classified as towns, but have no form of municipal government; and
- (b) areas which are classified as rural<sup>2</sup>.

### **Alternative Forms of Peri-Urban Government**

There is no magic formula that may readily be applied to solve the governmental problems of these two broad categories of peri-urban areas. One may at best weigh the pros and cons of a number of alternative methods, and see where, on balance, the advantage lies.

Assuming that neither the Union nor State Government is going to take over the functions of local government within the Calcutta Metropolitan District, the four orthodox alternatives<sup>3</sup> for the administration of the peri-urban areas appear to be as follows, viz:

- (i) the retention of the rural local authorities (panchayati raj);
- (ii) municipalization;
- (iii) the establishment of a metropolitan authority (or authorities) for the whole of the Calcutta Metropolitan District, including the peri-urban areas; and
- (iv) the institution of special local authorities.

Obviously, there can be several variations of each of the above alternatives, and preference for a particular form would have to be based on its relative superiority over others. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to discussing the possibilities of each alternative, in an attempt to indicate the direction in which a solution might most feasibly be sought.

<sup>2</sup> A rural area is one which is not an urban area, and, in defining the latter, the census criteria have been followed. See *Census of India, Paper No. 1 of 1962, 1961 Census, Government of India, xxxvii.*

<sup>3</sup> The alternatives fall broadly into two classes; (a) changes that do not fundamentally interfere with the existing form of local authorities, and (b) changes that envisage fundamentally new arrangements. Thus alternative (i) falls under class (a) and the rest fall under class (b). See, in this connection, the discussion on possible forms of government in a metropolitan region by L. P. Green, 'Johannesburg,' *Great Cities of the World*, 2nd ed., (W. A. Robson, ed.), 1957.

### (i) Retaining Panchayati Raj

Although there are two categories of peri-urban areas under survey—(a) town areas, and (b) rural tracts—so far, the State Government's policy has been to retain rural local authorities in all areas. In continuation of that policy, panchayati raj institutions are now being set up in both towns and villages within the Calcutta Metropolitan District<sup>4</sup>. As far as the rural tracts are concerned, a *prima-facie* case can be made out for the retention of village local authorities. But, it must be remembered that these rural areas are not like their counterparts in the rest of West Bengal. They are situated on the periphery of the densely-populated portions of the Calcutta Metropolitan District, and are thus most susceptible to urban influences. Moreover, they are very likely to be affected by urban development policies and plans for Calcutta and the Hooghly industrial belt, as they contain most of the sparsely-populated, developable land within that District. In fact, they have been included in the Metropolitan District by the Planning Organization because of their development potential.

In such circumstances, the areas falling under this category have to be viewed from the standpoint of the overall needs and potential development of Greater Calcutta. And, in that event, at least three changes in their government seem to become necessary. First, steps will have to be taken against uncontrolled urbanization within the rural areas. Secondly, the areas of the rural local authorities involved will have to be suitably rearranged so that they fall entirely within the Calcutta Metropolitan District. At present, the areas of about thirty union boards are only partly included in the Metropolitan District, and, as the anchal panchayats follow closely the boundaries of the union boards they replace, the problem of their partial inclusion will remain unsolved. Moreover, since anchalik parishads are going to be set up in the existing development block areas, it would appear that entire block areas should, if possible, be included in the Metropolitan District.

Thirdly, to avoid a multiplicity of authorities and divided interests, and to ensure a due emphasis on growing urban problems, it may forcibly be argued that the jurisdiction of the four zilla parishads over the rural areas falling within the Metropolitan District should be extinguished. On the one hand, urbanization leading to municipalization must in any case eventually involve the eclipse of zilla parishad authority, and many of the rural areas within the Calcutta Metropolitan District are undoubtedly destined sooner or later to elude the zilla parishads' grasp in this way. On the other hand, under the new legislation of 1963, the latter's operations will be confined to schemes extending over more than one development block, and they are to function mainly as coordinators and supervisors. For the rural areas falling within the Metropolitan District, it is clear that, sooner or later, either the State Government itself, or some special authority, will have to assume these responsibilities within the framework of *metropolitan* planning and development (as distinct from *rural* planning and development). Indeed, municipal areas already fall outside development block activities.

As regards the peri-urban areas which have already been classified as towns by the

<sup>4</sup> The company towns such as Batanagar, it is understood, are being excluded from the jurisdiction of the panchayati raj institutions.

1961 Census, for such classification they must each possess, *inter alia*, the following characteristics:<sup>5</sup>

- (a) a density of not less than one thousand persons per square mile;
- (b) a total population of at least five thousand;
- (c) three-fourths of the working population should be engaged in non-agricultural activities; and
- (d) the area should have some pronounced urban characteristics.

Under the Bengal Municipal Act, 1932, the State Government takes into consideration the very same characteristics for the purposes of municipalization.

Thirty-four non-municipal towns within the Calcutta Metropolitan District fulfil all of these criteria. Another important feature is that, instead of growing up in isolation, most of the towns have developed in clusters. They have appeared in one or more of the following ways:

- (a) non-municipal towns *within* the Calcutta Metropolitan District have developed adjacent to municipal towns *within* the District;
- (b) non-municipal towns *within* the Calcutta Metropolitan District have developed adjacent to other non-municipal towns *within* the District;
- (c) non-municipal towns *within* the Calcutta Metropolitan District have developed adjacent to other non-municipal towns *outside* the District; and
- (d) single towns have developed in isolation.

Table 32 reflects all four types of urban growth. It can be seen that, under Category A, three non-municipal town-groups now cluster around the three municipalities of Bally in Howrah District, and Garden Reach and Barasat in 24-Parganas District. The three town-groups in Howrah District can be distinguished by their high proportion of industrial workers, which rises to eighty-seven per cent, eighty-six per cent and eighty-two per cent respectively at Fort Gloster, Manikpur and Banupur. Of the two town-groups in 24-Parganas, one presumably owes its origin to the suburban growth of the company township at Batanagar; while the other group, comprising seven suburban towns of Calcutta, has grown up mainly because of settlement by overspill population from that city. In fact, these seven towns might well be included under Category A.

The peculiarity of the two town-groups under Category C is that these groups comprise non-municipal towns situated both within and without the Calcutta Metropolitan District. Both the town-groups have developed in Howrah District. In one case, two non-municipal towns inside the Metropolitan District, namely, Chengail and Uluberia, have teamed up with Banitabla, which falls outside it; while, in the second case, Mahiari, which falls inside the Metropolitan District, has formed a group with the three outside towns of Domjur, Kolara and Nibra. The percentage of industrial workers is quite high in these towns, even rising to eighty-three per cent in the case of Chengail. Lastly, under Category D are included the isolated towns each growing up on its own. Of the six towns under this category, one, Kalyani, in Nadia District, is maintained by the Development and Planning Department of the Government of

<sup>5</sup> *Census of India*, op. cit.

Table 32

## CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT: NON-MUNICIPAL TOWNS, 1961

Name	District	Population
<b>Category A.</b>		
Non-municipal (NM) towns growing up with municipal (M) towns.		
1. (a) Bally (M)	Howrah	1,01,159
(b) Bally (NM)	"	29,737
2. (a) Garden Reach (M)	24-Parganas	1,30,770
(b) Panchoor (NM)	"	25,131
3. (a) Barasat (M)	"	29,281
(b) Madhyamgram (NM)	"	18,483
(c) Nabapally (NM)	"	13,857
<b>Category B.</b>		
Non-municipal towns growing up in clusters within the Calcutta Metropolitan District.		
1. (a) Andul	Howrah	4,690
(b) Banupur	"	5,654
(c) Jhorehat	"	6,438
(d) Manikpur	"	7,844
(e) Sankrail	"	11,844
(f) Sarenga	"	10,704
2. (a) Bauria	"	8,492
(b) Burikhali	"	5,703
(c) Fort Gloster	"	13,785
3. (a) Jagacha	"	4,758
(b) Santragachi	"	8,701
(c) Unsani	"	6,635
4. (a) Batanagar	24-Parganas	9,664
(b) Nangi	"	30,992
5. (a) Bansdroni	"	9,139
(b) Garfa	"	8,892
(c) Jadavpur	"	5,928
(d) Kasba	"	16,080
(e) Purba-Putiari	"	4,063
(f) Rajapur	"	9,405
(g) Santoshpur	"	9,428
<b>Category C.</b>		
Non-municipal towns inside the Calcutta Metropolitan District (ICMD) growing up with non-municipal towns outside the District (OCMD).		
1. (a) Banitabla (OCMD)	Howrah	4,979
(b) Chengail (ICMD)	"	14,831
(c) Uluberia (ICMD)	"	18,509
2. (a) Domjur (OCMD)	"	8,670
(b) Kolara (OCMD)	"	8,495
(c) Mahiari (ICMD)	"	7,079
(d) Nibra (OCMD)	"	6,599
		(Contd.)

Table 32 (Contd.)

## CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT: NON-MUNICIPAL TOWNS, 1961

Name	District	Population
<b>Category D.</b>		
Isolated town growth.		
1. Nabagram Colony	Hooghly	8,866
2. Deulpara	24-Parganas	17,797
3. Dum Dum Aerodrome Area*	„	4,712
4. Ichapore Defence Estate*	„	12,382
5. New Barrackpore	„	20,871
6. Kalyani**	Nadia	4,616

\*Administered by Union Government agencies.

\*\*Administered by the Development and Planning Department of the Government of West Bengal.

SOURCE: *Census of India, Paper No. 1 of 1962.*

West Bengal, and two, Dum Dum Aerodrome Area and Ichapore Defence Estate, fall under the administrative jurisdiction of Union Government agencies. Of the remaining three towns, Deulpara, with about one-third of its working population engaged in manufacturing industries, and New Barrackpore, inhabited mostly by service people, are located in the District of 24-Parganas; while Nabagram Colony, with its working population engaged almost equally in manufacturing industries and other services, is situated in Hooghly District.

These new town areas pose two general sets of problems:

- (i) Of the thirty-four towns, two (Dum Dum Aerodrome Area and Ichapore Defence Estate) are administered by Union Government agencies, one (Kalyani) is maintained by the Development and Planning Department of the Government of West Bengal, and one (Batanagar) is a privately-managed company township. The remaining thirty towns fall within the administrative jurisdiction of rural local authorities, and their continuation under panchayati raj poses the first major set of problems.
- (ii) Another important set of problems, relating mainly to the towns in Category C, also has wide implications for the Calcutta Metropolitan District. The growth of non-municipal towns within the Metropolitan District in association with similar towns outside the District entails (a) the redelineation of the Metropolitan District to incorporate the adjacent new towns in the fringe areas, and (b) the adoption of well-thought-out and flexible machinery for controlling the development of this moving frontier.

As regards the first set of problems, the main arguments against retention of the jurisdiction of rural local authorities over the non-municipal towns are as follows:

- (a) Whatever may be the statutory provisions of the relevant legislation on rural local authorities, in practice the latter are structurally, functionally and financially ill-suited to the undertaking of major urban services such as water supply, lighting, drainage and conservancy, public health and sanitation<sup>6</sup>. Admittedly, these services are needed in both rural and urban areas, but urban services are to be contrasted rather than compared with rural services, which are far more elementary in nature, and far less demanding in terms of men, money and materials. The rural local authorities command hardly enough of such resources<sup>7</sup> to attend to the marginal civic problems of villages, let alone the rising needs of growing urban areas. Their continued existence in the latter areas is not a witness to their suitability, but to the general inability of governmental institutions within the Metropolitan District to keep pace with changing circumstances. And the efforts made by some of the rural local authorities to provide water-supply, lighting, and drainage services by means of voluntary contributions from local residents, are clear instances of such inability.
- (b) The new panchayat institutions, which, as the preamble to the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1956, states, are being established to provide for matters connected with rural areas, are most unlikely to provide a better answer to the problems of urbanization. The mechanism of a gram sabha, with all the adult population of a village attending to the business of government; of a tiny gram panchayat, entrusted with development and civic services in a very limited area; and of three tiers of superior local authorities—the anchal panchayat, anchalik parishad and zilla parishad—paralleled by three tiers of administrative officers at the block, sub-divisional and district levels—is a dubious solution to the governmental problems of peri-urban areas.

Indeed, fragmentation of authority, which has always bedevilled rural local government in West Bengal, has been carried to its maximum extent under panchayati raj. Apart from the district school board in charge of primary education, the government of a particular rural area now falls under four local-government institutions and three tiers of State Government officers, whose numbers and complex relationships are described in detail in 'District Administration in Metropolitan Calcutta,' by Frank J. Tysen<sup>8</sup>. It is yet to be seen how these institutions will operate in practice in the rural areas around Calcutta, and what relationships with the State administration will eventually result. But the indications given in previous chapters suggest that responsibilities will be widely diffused and divergent, and that institutional staff and resources will be minimal. Undoubtedly,

<sup>6</sup> See Chapters 1-5 above.

<sup>7</sup> See Chapters 6 and 7 for discussion on the finances of rural local authorities.

<sup>8</sup> *Calcutta Research Studies No. 4.*

there is every reason to believe that this machinery of government will be ineffective, inefficient and, most probably, inoperable in urban and semi-urban areas, whatever may be its performance in rural areas.

- (c) Finally, the retention of rural local authorities in newly-formed towns and town-groups renders the statutory provisions for urban local authorities redundant. These provisions are made in recognition of the peculiar needs and requirements of urban areas, and in recognition of the fact that such needs and requirements cannot be met by rural local authorities. Not to apply the statutory provisions for urban authorities to areas which are already urban, is to deny the validity of existing legislation without establishing something in its place. The questions thus arise as to the possibility of municipalization, and of some alternative form of urban government if municipalization is not in fact a valid solution to the problems of the urban fringe areas.

### (ii) **Municipalization**

Since the peri-urban areas under study, both urbanized and rural, lie close to the municipalities and municipal corporations of the Calcutta Metropolitan District, one is tempted to advocate their annexation by the latter institutions. There are enabling provisions in the relevant municipal legislation, such as the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951, and the Bengal Municipal Act, 1932, in terms of which the municipal limits may be extended to include a contiguous non-municipal area. Moreover, it has been pointed out in an earlier study that no important changes have been made in municipal boundaries since 1900<sup>9</sup>. One might, therefore, suggest that at least the non-municipal towns within the Calcutta Metropolitan District which lie close to neighbouring municipal areas should, wherever possible, be annexed to such areas. The argument for annexation could further be strengthened by citing references to cases (Table 32, Category A) where non-municipal towns have formed natural clusters with adjacent municipal areas. Also, where a number of non-municipal towns are grouped together (Table 32, Category B), the constitution of a new municipality might well be considered.

Although there is no institutional impediment to the current municipalization of many of the peri-urban areas, either through annexation or the constitution of new municipalities, there are, however, considerable disadvantages. In the first place, the limited financial resources of the municipal authorities within the Calcutta Metropolitan District are already strained<sup>10</sup>, and annexation of peripheral areas might well entail a further strain which could not be supported. It has been the general experience, in other countries as well as India, that newly-incorporated fringe areas cost more in terms of service expenditures than what they yield in terms of tax revenues. In the second place, the residents of annexed fringe areas invariably oppose increases in taxation,

<sup>9</sup> M. M. Singh, 'Municipal Government in the Calcutta Metropolitan District: A Preliminary Survey,' *Calcutta Research Studies* No. 2.

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed discussion of the finances of the municipal authorities, see Abhijit Datta and David C. Ranney, *op. cit.*

but demand all the usual municipal services for which such revenue is needed. Under these circumstances, wholesale annexation, like the proverbial last straw on the camel's back, might very well precipitate a financial crisis in the municipal authorities within the Calcutta Metropolitan District.

Likewise, the idea of constituting new municipalities has to be carefully considered. First, it has to be remembered that, over the years, the peri-urban areas have grown into a single continuum which, in many governmental matters, and especially in its planned development, can hardly be treated piecemeal through the contrivance of discontinuous and autonomous municipal entities. This continuum is quite clearly, shown in Figure 4 by the boundary of the conurbation falling within the Calcutta Metropolitan District.

Secondly, a multiplication of municipal authorities would further complicate the existing labyrinth of governmental authorities within the Calcutta Metropolitan District. Some idea of the intricacy and extent of this labyrinth may be obtained from the information given in 'Government in Metropolitan Calcutta; A Manual,' *Calcutta Research Studies No. 1*, by Mohit Bhattacharya, M. M. Singh and Frank J. Tysen. Any reorganization of the machinery of government in the Metropolitan District should obviously have as a first objective a reduction in the number of authorities involved, and not an increase. Thirdly, the administrative performance of existing municipal authorities does not inspire confidence in municipalization as a solution to problems of peri-urban government<sup>11</sup>. All indications point to a need for thorough municipal reform in Greater Calcutta.

Last but not least, an increase in the number of municipalities would involve a greater dissipation of financial resources in general, and on administration in particular, than obtains even now. Reorganization should aim to conserve scarce resources, to reduce the burden of administrative charges, and to concentrate finance in order to employ it as effectively and efficiently as possible in an attack upon major urban problems. These problems, which undoubtedly include the servicing and controlled development of the peri-urban areas, are not confined to the limited areas of particular towns. They are common to many, if not all, parts of the conurbations' urbanizing fringe.

### (iii) A Metropolitan Authority

If current municipalization of the new towns and contiguous areas by annexation or otherwise is virtually ruled out by these considerations, an alternative answer to the peri-urban problem may well be the establishment of a metropolitan authority (or authorities). Such authority (or authorities) could be set up for the entire area of the Calcutta Metropolitan District, including the peri-urban fringes.

For example, in 1959, a team of consultants from the World Health Organization proposed the creation of a metropolitan authority to develop, maintain and manage area-wide systems undertaking such functions as water supply, sewage disposal and drainage for the metropolitan complex as a whole<sup>12</sup>. A special-purpose body already

<sup>11</sup> See M. M. Singh, op. cit., Datta and Ranney, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup> See H. F. Cronin, Luther Gulick, R. Pollitzer, Abel Wolman, *Assignment Report on Water Supply and Sewage Disposal, Greater Calcutta WHO Project*, WHO Regional Office for South East Asia, 1960.



set up is the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization, which is charged with the responsibility of framing a master plan for the whole of the Metropolitan District, or any part thereof; and suggestions have recently been made for the establishment of a metropolitan traffic and transport authority, and a parks and recreation authority.

There are obvious and distinct advantages in the setting-up of one or more metropolitan authorities having a District-wide jurisdiction. Common action may be taken to meet common problems; costs may be reduced through economies of scale derivable only from large-scale undertakings, especially in the engineering and technical fields; metropolitan regional matters may be attended to that might otherwise be ignored for lack of a metropolitan regional organization to recognize and deal with them; financial resources may be conserved, instead of being dissipated over numerous institutions; better qualified staff may be employed and more effectively used, than in the case of a multiplicity of smaller units each confined to a limited area of jurisdiction and a limited budget; and political power may be concentrated in the interests of decisive government.

Nevertheless, as Figure 4 illustrates, and as has been emphasized above, the controlled development and local government of peri-urban growth is not a problem common to the whole of the Metropolitan District. It is peculiar to the District's moving frontiers. It is a *special* problem demanding *special* machinery for its solution. Moreover, before a metropolitan authority can be established to concentrate political power for metropolitan decision-making, it must run the gauntlet of institutional and public criticism. In other countries, most proposals for metropolitan-wide government have either foundered or been drastically modified in the face of such criticism. It is probably not without significance that the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization was established by a resolution of the Department of Health, West Bengal, instead of by legislative enactment; that the Council of Coordination for the Development of the Calcutta Metropolitan Area set up in October 23, 1962, has met but once; and that a Calcutta metropolitan water and sanitation authority has not yet been created (1964), although the West Bengal Government assured the Union Government, the WHO and the United Nations Special Fund that it would attempt to do so before the end of 1963.

Finally, none of the metropolitan authorities so far established or proposed for Greater Calcutta has, or would have, as its objectives *both* the local government in general of the non-municipal areas falling within the Calcutta Metropolitan District, *and*, in particular, the controlled development of such areas. And any authority having such objectives must be able to extend its boundaries as urban growth spreads. For these reasons, and especially because the peri-urban areas present distinctive problems of outward-spreading development, the immediate solution to the question of their government may well lie in directions other than the establishment of a metropolitan authority or authorities. One further orthodox alternative might thus be to set up special local authorities to deal with special problem-areas.

#### (iv) **Special Local Authorities**

Under this alternative, the peri-urban areas would be placed under the administra-

tion of specially-constituted local authorities not having metropolitan-wide jurisdictions. Such an arrangement would have two distinct advantages. First, it would permit special treatment of the myriad but related problems of the rural-urban fringe. Secondly, it would escape the financial problems inherent in municipalization. It would also follow a well-established precedent, some State Governments in India having already sought to deal with the problems of urbanization and municipal services in specific local areas by the introduction of special bodies known as notified area committees or authorities.

For example, under the Bihar and Orissa Municipal Act, 1922, notified area committees have been set up in Jamshedpur and Jugsalai (Bihar). Each of these committees consists entirely of State Government nominees, and functions as a *de facto* municipal institution. Similarly, in West Bengal itself, under the Bengal Municipal Act, 1932, the State Government may create a notified area authority for rendering municipal services in respect of the following areas:

- (a) any area not fulfilling the conditions for being constituted as a municipality;
- (b) any area which falls within a newly-developing town; or
- (c) any area in which new industries have been or are being established.

Like its counterpart in Bihar, a notified area authority consists wholly of State Government nominees, and functions almost as a municipal institution in respect of the area under its jurisdiction<sup>13</sup>. Unlike the Bihar committee, however, the only notified area authority so far set up in West Bengal (at Durgapur) is assisted by a local development authority (the Durgapur Development Authority)<sup>14</sup>. The latter's function is to develop a specific area and to hand it over to the notified area authority for administration.

The attraction of such special procedure for the development and local government of non-municipal areas undergoing industrialization and urbanization has, it is understood, already led to a firm proposal to set up a notified area authority at Kalyani within the Calcutta Metropolitan District. As observed above, this Government town has been developed by the State through the Development and Planning Department, West Bengal, and its administration by a notified area authority could thus set a precedent for the remainder of the peri-urban areas falling within the Metropolitan District. Apart from establishing special organizations to deal with the problems of special areas, the procedure ensures more adequate finance than would be provided by municipalization; it makes possible the appointment of competent staff; in conjunction with local development authorities or the Development and Planning Department, it ensures planned control over urban growth; and it permits the State Government to exercise supervisory power if and when necessary.

What this procedure does not do is to reduce the vast number of agencies already concerned with the government and administration of the Metropolitan District. The complex pattern of authorities would be still further complicated by the introduc-

<sup>13</sup> For a fuller account of the notified area authorities and committees of Bihar and West Bengal, see M. M. Singh and Abhijit Datta, 'Metropolitan Calcutta: Special Agencies for Housing, Planning and Development' *Calcutta Research Studies, Occasional Reports*, Institute of Public Administration, New York, 1964: pp. 144-72.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 154.

duction of a series of notified area authorities, probably accompanied by a parallel series of development authorities<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, the procedure does not involve the local community in its own planning and administration<sup>16</sup>. It provides a piecemeal approach to peri-urban problems which, on the contrary, demand a coordinated attack along extensive and unbroken fronts. It establishes a number of authorities each of which, like a municipality, has jurisdiction over a fixed and limited area beyond which urban sprawl can continue to grow without interruption, unless each authority is given extra-territorial control of land use for a certain distance beyond its boundaries<sup>17</sup>. Even with such extension of control, however, the authorities will still lack the power of *local government* over urbanization beyond their limits, unless their areas are continually expanded, or new authorities are established further to increase the number of agencies involved.

These considerations suggest that, in spite of the attractions of the notified area authority procedure, it has serious drawbacks as a solution to the growing peri-urban problems of the Calcutta Metropolitan District. These demand a more integrated, less complicated and more responsive approach; and, in particular, the adoption of well-thought-out and flexible machinery for controlling the development of the District's moving frontier. They thus suggest that attention should be directed towards the possibility of a *single*, special authority with special powers, procedure and machinery. The solution must, in that case, be unorthodox, as none of the orthodox alternatives appears to be able to satisfy these requirements.

#### (v) A Peri-Urban Areas Development Authority

The Government of Bihar has recently (1964) decided to constitute a State Industrial Areas Development Authority for the coordinated and planned development of selected industrial areas. Translating this principle into terms of urbanization, we may arrive at the unorthodox idea of a State peri-urban areas development authority for West Bengal to promote, guide and govern current development of the urban-rural fringe areas on a coordinated and planned basis, until they are ripe for municipalization (or some other form of urban local government).

The question of the feasibility and possible performance of such an unorthodox authority can in part be settled by reference to two existing institutions which have been in operation for two decades in Natal and the Transvaal<sup>18</sup>. Admittedly established in the very different political climate, the experience of the Natal Local Health Commission and Transvaal Peri-Urban Areas Health Board nevertheless proves that the problems raised by peri-urban development can be attacked effectively, flexibly, and

<sup>15</sup> The establishment of two organizations for each area in itself poses problems of administration. See M. M. Singh and Abhijit Datta, op.cit., pp. 145-54, in respect of Durgapur.

<sup>16</sup> In Bihar there is a growing opinion in favour of substituting a municipal corporation for the combined areas of Jamshedpur and Jugsalai notified area committees (including Adityapur industrial estate). See M. M. Singh and Abhijit Datta, op.cit., pp. 171-2.

<sup>17</sup> See *Public Administration Problems of New and Rapidly Growing Towns in Asia*, United Nations, New York, 1962; pp. 11-12.

<sup>18</sup> See D. R. Donaldson, 'Local Health Commission (Natal)', *Report of the Proceedings, 8th Annual General Meeting and Conference*, Institute of Town Clerks of Southern Africa, 1955; pp. 196-239.

in an uncomplicated manner by a provincial or state-wide institution set up especially for such purpose. Their experience also proves that the attack can be planned and coordinated by such means, that local people can be involved in the attack by nomination or representation, and that areas thus locally developed and governed can eventually be municipalized without the difficulties usually encountered in such process.

It is suggested that a peri-urban areas development authority could be established in West Bengal with jurisdiction extending over any area or areas in the State proclaimed as falling under its control and administration.<sup>19</sup> Attached to an appropriate department of the West Bengal Government, its functions would be:

- (a) on behalf of the department, to keep a close watch on any area located on the periphery of established municipalities or other urban local authorities, or elsewhere in West Bengal, which is experiencing urbanization or is immediately susceptible to urbanization; and
  - (b) to promote, plan, manage, regulate and control urban development and urban services for any area proclaimed by the State Government to be a local development area under the authority's jurisdiction;
- provided that the authority might not exercise jurisdiction in the area of any municipality or municipal corporation<sup>19</sup>.

Such a development authority could function as a central State agency armed with all necessary planning, development and local-government powers, and equipped with a central pool of well-trained and experienced staff whose services could be made available to any proclaimed area under its jurisdiction. The authority's board could consist of a small number of paid State nominees; it could have the power to levy local taxes, but would necessarily depend to a very large extent on State funds; and, under a scheme of local self-administration, it could associate local residents with its work by constituting local area committees, either by nomination or election (or both), according to local circumstances.

Not only would such machinery avoid the disadvantages of the orthodox alternatives to rural local government previously discussed, but it would enjoy many of the advantages claimed for those alternatives. On the negative side, financial resources would not be so limited as in the case of municipalization. The peri-urban areas of the Calcutta Metropolitan District would not be controlled by discontinuous and autonomous entities. The number of local-government agencies having original statutory powers would not be multiplied, but would be increased by only one which, as shown below, would in fact take the place of a complex system of rural government. Municipalities would not be forced to take over bankrupt peripheral areas. Inhabitants of the peripheral areas would not be faced with sudden and steep increases in taxation owing to municipalization. Resources of men, money and materials would not be

<sup>19</sup> In Natal, "if in respect of any area not being or forming part of an area controlled by one of the orthodox forms of local authority, the Administrator is of opinion that by reason of the density of population, or its class or character, or the sanitary conditions prevailing, it is necessary that special provision should be made for the proper management, regulation and control of matters affecting the health of that area, he may by proclamation in the Gazette declare such area to be a public health area, whereupon the local health commission automatically becomes the local authority." D. R. Donaldson, *op.cit.*, p. 204.

dissipated over a large number of local institutions. The pitfalls inherent in attempts to establish metropolitan authorities would not be present, especially in so far as existing municipalities and municipal corporations need not be affected other than favourably (although they might initially fear a powerful body established on their doorsteps).

On the positive side, the proposed development authority would have the advantages of being especially established to deal with a distinctive set of problems; of concentrating governmental power, and human and financial resources; of coordinating and integrating efforts to cope with peri-urban problems; of having an area of jurisdiction that could be extended (or reduced) by a relatively simple process; of watching urban development, and of controlling it from its inception; and of providing for local self-administration by means of locally-representative area committees. Moreover, the development authority would be able to divide its area into technically efficient circles or districts, each with its own circle officers, who would be available to assist and implement the decisions of local area committees wielding powers delegated to them by the authority in respect of, e.g., local by-laws, local works and local services.

The adoption of such a scheme would naturally entail a fundamental modification to the existing pattern of rural government in the peri-urban areas of the Calcutta Metropolitan District. Both district administration and the institutions of panchayati raj would be affected. As regards the latter, in line with conclusions reached earlier in this report, the gram sabhas and gram panchayats would cease to exist in the proclaimed areas, but the anchal panchayats could be retained to serve as the local area committees under the jurisdiction of the development authority. The anchalik parishad and zilla parishad would naturally cease to operate in such areas.

As regards district administration, the powers and functions of the Divisional Commissioner and District Magistrate would presumably be reduced to those exercised now in relation to municipalities, except in connection with annual administration reports (which would be matters internal to the development authority). But the block development officer and his subordinates would necessarily be excluded, as already in the case of municipal areas, and the benefits of community development funds and services would be withdrawn. In their place, however, would be established a new pool of urban development personnel (possibly absorbing some of the officers thus excluded), and a new organization and service for *urban* community development would be substituted by the peri-urban areas development authority, likewise financed largely by the State (and by the Union Government, in so far as the latter is concerned to promote urban community development).

This reorganization would have two further distinct advantages over the orthodox alternatives discussed in this chapter. Firstly, peri-urban development anywhere else in West Bengal could be watched and controlled by the same authority, acting in consort with any planning organizations set up similar to that of the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization. Like the latter, these organizations—for example, the Asansol and Siliguri Planning Organizations—are advisory, and lack regulating and controlling powers. A State-wide, peri-urban areas development authority concentrating on new urbanization could be of great assistance to such organizations in their

endeavours to plan the future growth of West Bengal's major towns and cities. Secondly, while this authority took care of peri-urban problems in the Calcutta Metropolitan District itself, breathing-space would be given in which to reorganize the existing municipal system by amalgamations, fiscal reforms and administrative overhauls, and to establish any desired new metropolitan authority or authorities for special or general purposes.



## APPENDIX A

## THE MUNICIPALITIES OF THE CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT, 1964

Name	District	Area sq. miles	Name	District	Area sq. miles
1. Baidyabati	Hooghly	3.50	22. Kanchrapara	24-Parganas	3.50
2. Bansberia	"	3.50	23. Khardah	"	1.50
3. Bhadreswar	"	2.50	24. Naihati	"	1.68
4. Champdany	"	2.50	25. North Barrackpore	"	3.25
5. Hooghly-Chinsurah	"	6.01	26. North Dum Dum	"	7.50
6. Konnagar	"	1.67	27. Panihati	"	7.50
*7. Kotrung	"	2.00	28. Rajpur	"	8.10
8. Rishra	"	1.25	29. South Dum Dum	"	5.98
9. Serampore	"	2.27	30. South Suburban	"	11.73
*10. Uttarpara	"	0.80	31. Titagarh	"	1.25
11. Baranagore	24-Parganas	2.75	32. Bally	Howrah	4.56
12. Barasat	"	5.50	33. Howrah	"	11.13
13. Barrackpore	"	4.50	34. Calcutta Corporation	Calcutta	36.92
14. Baruipur	"	3.50	35. Chandernagore Corporation	Hooghly	3.73
15. Bhatpara	"	4.62	36. Barrackpore Cantonment	24-Parganas	1.43
16. Budge Budge	"	3.00	Total 35 Municipalities		175.55
17. Dum Dum	"	1.12			
18. Garden Reach	"	5.00			
19. Garulia	"	1.50			
20. Halisahar	"	5.50			
21. Kamarhati	"	4.23	Grand Total		176.98

\*Amalgamated in August, 1964, to form the Municipality of Kotrung-Uttarpara.

NOTE: In so far as the areas of the Municipalities are concerned, this table replaces those appearing in Appendix I of 'Municipal Government in the Calcutta Metropolitan District: A Preliminary Survey,' *Calcutta Research Studies No. 2*, by M. M. Singh, and in Appendix Table I of 'Municipal Finances in the Calcutta Metropolitan District: A Preliminary Survey,' *Calcutta Research Studies No. 3*, by Abhijit Datta and David C. Ranney.

SOURCE: *Census of India, 1961, Vol. XVI, Part II A, General Population Tables of West Bengal and Sikkim.*



## APPENDIX B

## A NOTE ON PRINCIPLES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

A fully-fledged, coherent theory of local government has yet to be written. The following excerpts from an unpublished memorandum prepared by Dr. Leslie Green in 1954 are quoted in order to explain the references to local government, local self-administration and local self-government contained in this study.

"The term Local Government can mean two quite different processes; either Local Self-Administration or Local Self-Government. . . . In most countries, systems of local self-administration and of local self-government will be found side-by-side, or overlapping, or so integrated as to appear as a single system with a bias towards either self-administration or self-government. Such confusion is due to history; for the evolution of political institutions is continuous. . . .

**Local Self-Administration**

Local (Self-)Administration begins to arise where, as in France under Napoleon I, for the sake of administrative convenience, the territory of a State is divided into local areas and local agents are appointed directly or indirectly by the State to administer such areas on its behalf. In even the most unitary of States, some administrative decentralization will become increasingly necessary as government activities develop in volume and variety. Indeed, as any undertaking grows it must increasingly divide its labour amongst specialist groups and then develop some administrative decentralization, if it is not to suffer from apoplexy at the centre and ultimately break down altogether.

In the case of local administration, the composition of the local agency to which administrative activities are decentralized is almost immaterial. Powers may be vested in one man or a body of men; so long as all appointments are controlled from above and a clear line of command runs from the centre to the locality. But it is often considered best to devolve authority on to a single individual; on the argument that this pin-points responsibility, makes for decisive action and ensures effective control. And the agent can always seek advice about his duties from local persons and associations either elected or appointed for the purpose. When he does so, local administration begins to give way to local self-administration.

Whether these advisory persons or associations are elected or appointed appears to be largely immaterial from the standpoint of central control. As long as they are solely advisory and are given no administrative powers, any question of local control cannot arise. If, in the course of time, they are given some administrative powers, from the standpoint of control again, election may be less wise than appointment; but this is not an essential principle. Always, the essential principle is that the exercise of such power continues to be controlled by the local agent or agency of the State; the elected or appointed representatives only resolve to use such powers and do not carry their resolutions into effect. . . .

As increasing administrative duties are given to the elected or appointed representatives, there will be a greater measure of local self-administration. And if all the representatives are elected, a considerable degree of representative government will arise. But this government does not become locally *responsible* as well as locally *representative*; so long as the division of functions remains effective, and the agent or agency of the State continues to control the execution of local administrative powers on its behalf.

**Local Self-Government**

Local Self-Government implies a local-government organ responsible to as well as representative of the people living in the locality; and yet responsible also directly or indirectly to the State. Such organs of government may have actually preceded the State, as in the Swiss Confederation; or they may owe their existence to the State, as in Canada. But they do not form part of the State administration and, always, the essential principle of their organization is that control over the execution of the administrative powers vested in them rests in the hands of representatives elected by the people of the locality concerned. It is these representatives who are responsible collectively both to the locality and to the State for the performance of permissive and obligatory powers devolved upon the local-government unit.

This form of government springs from the concept of *libertas*, by which word Cicero translated the Athenian privilege of citizenship. For *libertas* implies not merely freedom from restraint. It

implies the specific right<sup>1</sup> and duty to participate in the government of one's own community. And, to-day, the validity of one's right and duty to participate in *local* government rests upon the sociological fact that a nation is a community of communities. To participate only in the government of the nation is therefore not enough. One has the right and duty to participate in the government of any other community or association of persons to which one belongs, local or provincial, or economic or otherwise; directly by public meeting or indirectly by elected representatives. . . .

Self-government is a process enlisting the minds and wills of the governed; and its quality must ultimately be determined by the political capacities of the governed. . . . This does not mean that (it) should not make use of trained administrative and technical experts. The production of results depends very much on their continuous use; but on tap and not on top."

<sup>1</sup> In practice, the representation may be universal, or limited according to age, literacy, property held, race, sex or income received; or it may be limited to members of one or more political parties. Such restrictions may apply both to the right to vote and to the right to represent. In Athens, for instance, such rights were denied to slaves and foreigners, and were thus reserved to a minority of the population.

## APPENDIX C

## RURAL LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN THE CALCUTTA METROPOLITAN DISTRICT, 1963

Note. Compiled from information kindly collected by Mr. Frank J. Tysen in connection with field investigations for *Calcutta Research Studies No. 4.*

## UNION BOARDS

Name	District	Name	District
1. Kalisani Bighati	Hooghly	*31. Boinchtola	24-Parganas
* 2. Kodalia Debanandapur	"	*32. Boral	"
3. Magra	"	33. Chandigarh Rohonda	"
* 4. Makhla Noapara	"	*34. Chatta	"
5. Piarpur	"	*35. Chingripota	"
6. Rajyadharpur	"	36. Chota Jagulia	"
7. Andul	Howrah	37. Fartabad	"
* 8. Bally	"	*38. Ganipur	"
9. Bankra	"	*39. Haltu	"
*10. Bauria	"	*40. Ichhapur Nilgunje	"
11. Beldubi	"	41. Jetia Majhipara	"
12. Chengail	"	42. Joka	"
*13. Duilya	"	43. Kadambagachi	"
*14. Jagacha	"	44. Kaikhali Hatiara	"
*15. Jhorehat	"	45. Kemia Khamarpara	"
16. Mahiari	"	46. Khiadah	"
*17. Manikpur	"	47. Khilkapur	"
*18. Nalpur	"	*48. Krishnagar	"
*19. Sankrail	"	*49. Langalberia	"
*20. Santragachi	"	*50. Madhyamgram	"
21. Uluberia	"	51. Madrail Narayanpur	"
22. Jagdishpur	"	*52. Maheshkola	"
23. Lilua	"	53. Mahishbathan	"
24. Kanchrapara	Nadia	*54. Nangi	"
*25. Asuti	24-Parganas	55. Nischintapur	"
26. Bamanghata	"	*56. Panchoor	"
*27. Bandipur	"	57. Pujali	"
*28. Bakra Italgacha	"	58. Rahuta	"
*29. Bansdroni	"	*59. Sewli	"
*30. Bilkanda	"	60. Shibdaspur	"

\*Union Boards falling wholly within the Calcutta Metropolitan District.

## ANCHAL PANCHAYATS

1. Sugandha	Hooghly	5. Kalyanpur	24-Parganas
2. Saguna	Nadia	6. Maderhat	"
3. Dhaphdhabi	24-Parganas	7. Shikharbali	"
4. Hariharpur	"		

## DISTRICT BOARDS

1. Hooghly	3. Nadia
2. Howrah	4. 24-Parganas

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