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# Daily Mains Answer Writing (Day - 63)

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The strength sustenance of local institutions in India has shifted from their formative phase of 'Functions, Functionaries and Funds' to the contemporary stage of 'Functionality'. Highlight the critical challenges faced by local institutions in terms of their functionality in recent times.

### Structure-

- This question asked in UPSC 2020, in every sense is a very difficult one, so in case you had a tough time attempting this one, do not worry we all are in the same boat.
- One of the paramount things that you need to be aware of the difference between Functions-Functionaries and Funds. (Will explain it in the Video solution also).

**Intro** - Brief Introduction about Local Governance System and at the end attach the demand of the question to Intro - this will impart a sense of flow and continuity to your answer.

**Body** - Talk about the basic problems that are being faced by the local Governance structures - this is the real demand of the questions, and you have to mould these in the keywords of Functions and Functionality.

**Conclusion** - Give appropriate measures that needs to be taken, in order to resolve the Issues.

### Answer –

In order to increase the democratic decentralisation, Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Governments were set up through the 73rd & 74th Amendment Act. Today in 2021, there are many issues which have rendered the 3rd tier of government in a state where it has more responsibility but less power and resources. While traditional challenges in terms of funds, functions and functionaries (3Fs) remain quite relevant even today, we cannot lose sight of challenges being faced in terms of “functionality” such as-

- **Emergence of Parallel Governance System at Local Level:** example - a Special purpose vehicle for the execution of the city development under Smart Cities Mission. Thus, creating a parallel institution vis-a-vis Urban local government.
  - This functional overlapping may eventually lead to weakening of local bodies.
- **Top-Down Approach:** NITI Aayog's Aspirational District plan envisages top-down development of these districts, which not only undermines the role of local governments but also goes against the spirit of Democratic decentralisation.
  - One-size-fits-all approach also affects the functionality of local governments.
- **Lack of Effective Devolution:** Local government being a state subject, the devolution of power and authority to panchayats and urban local governments has been left to the discretion of states.
  - Most states in India are yet to provide adequate functional autonomy to the local bodies.
- **Structural Issues:** Some of the Gram panchayats or urban local governments do not have their own building or they exist but without basic facilities like toilets, drinking water, and electricity connection.
  - Moreover, there is a lack of support staff and personnel in local bodies such as secretaries, junior engineers, computer operators, and data entry operators, affecting their functioning and delivery of services.
- **Corruption:** Local bodies are marred by corruption. Due to this, local bodies are not able to function properly and subsequently affect the development process.

In order to maintain the sustenance and functionality of Panchayati Raj Institutions, need of the hour is –

- **Activity Mapping:** The 2nd ARC had recommended that there should be a clear-cut demarcation of functions of each tier of the government.

- **Ensuring Principle of Subsidiarity** and central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level, According to II ARC.
- **Ensuring Fiscal Federalism:** As functionality also depends on finances, fiscal autonomy accompanied by fiscal accountability can provide a long-term solution to the problems faced by local bodies.
- **Effective Auditing:** Audit committees may be constituted by the State Governments at the district level to exercise oversight of the integrity of financial information, adequacy of internal controls, compliance with the applicable laws and ethical conduct of all persons involved in local bodies.
  - In this pursuit, the initiative of the Meghalaya government to make social auditing mandatory is worth emulating by other states.

The governments should make adequate efforts to devolve funds, functions, and functionaries to local bodies so that they can effectively plan economic development and social justice schemes.