

The 73rd Constitution Amendment Act

- Village panchayats existed in India long before the act was passed in 1992, but the system had inherent weaknesses like the inability to be a people's government responsive to their needs. This was due to a variety of factors like a lack of financial resources, no regular elections and inadequate representation of the weaker sections like scheduled castes/tribes and women.
- The Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution of India lays down in Article 40 that the government shall facilitate the establishment and smooth functioning of the gram panchayats.

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- In order to address these issues and strengthen the local self-governments in India, the central government brought about the 73rd Amendment Act in 1992. The act was passed in both houses and entered into force from 24th April 1993.
- This Act added a new chapter into the Constitution called 'Part IX: The Panchayats'.

Features:

- This Act made the Panchayati Raj institutions in the country constitutional bodies.
- Under Article 243-B, it has become compulsory for every state to establish panchayats in their territories.
- Article 243-G makes it mandatory for the state governments to devolve powers, responsibilities and authority to the panchayats.
- The gram panchayats have a fixed tenure of 5 years.

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- State election commissions have been provided with the mechanism to conduct independent elections to the village panchayats.
- Article 243-D gives provisions for the due representation of women and SC/STs.
- The State Finance Commission should also evaluate the financial position of the panchayats every five years.

Result of the 73rd Amendment

- The passing of the 73rd Amendment has improved local self-government in the country vastly.
- In order to celebrate this and further give impetus to the institutions, the central government in 2010 decided to observe 24th April every year as **National Panchayati Raj Day**.
- Today, the formalised Panchayati raj functions in three levels namely, the Gram Panchayat (at the village level), the Mandal Parishad/Panchayat Samiti/Block Samiti (at the Block level), and the Zila Parishad (at the district level).