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Decentralised Urban Governance in Punjab

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SINCE THE work of the government is of multi-dimensional nature, it cannot be done by the central or state governments effectively and efficiently, for these governments have no or little knowledge of diverse problems of local character. From this emerges the need for decentralisation—with political and administrative connotations—constituting a centrifugal movement aiming to entrust local organs, created in local area, with powers local in character, the presumption being that the people belonging to a locality know best and appreciate their own problems and needs and can effectively solve them.¹ It has been rightly remarked by Laski, “We cannot realise the full benefits of democratic government unless we begin by the admission that all problems in their incidence require decision at the place, by the persons by whom the incidence is most deeply felt.”²

Local government is the government which is the nearest to the population and is armed with the power and the authority to effectively deal with the problems of the local people and to adequately provide them with required amenities. The rural areas have been provided with the Panchayati Raj System and in the urban areas, the urban local bodies, in the form of Municipalities, have been working for quite sometime, for the proper management of affairs in their respective areas as also the welfare of their respective people. The governments, at the Central and the State levels, are rendered free from the burden of solving and devoting their precious time towards the solution of local problems as local authorities take care of these problems at their own level. The local bodies have the potential to be equal partners in national development by playing their legitimate role properly in their own arena. In the modern world, the duties and responsibilities of the local institutions have multiplied drastically and to cope with them, with due diligence, is the big challenge before them to face. It is required on the part of the central and especially the state governments that they support the local bodies and let them flourish and work freely with lesser external intervention and without unnecessary control.

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Decentralisation

Democratic institutions at the grassroots level cannot work efficiently and effectively unless provided with the powers to make decisions and implement them with the required amount of autonomy for the same. Though it is a universal phenomenon that all the powers to run the affairs of a nation are vested in the national government, and in a federal government units reserve a great number of subjects for themselves, but the local institutions are always at the mercy of both the upper levels the government for the decentralisation of powers and functions to them. It depends on the will and readiness of these governments whether to decentralise the various types of powers or not. Usually the strong urge to have everything under one's own control and command, unwillingness to share decision-making power and authority, perceived threat of being sidelined and overpowered by local leaders and authorities and strong bureaucratic clutches on the administrative and legislative policy formulation processes play the spoilsport in the way of decentralisation to local bodies. All these things have always denied the taste of real devolution of powers to the local institutions inspite of the fact that various legislations, for this purpose, have been in place in the countries of the world including India. There is a growing frustration among local body leaders and people towards bureaucracy, bureaucratic methods of work and culture which affect the efficiency of local administration. The planners, reformers, law-makers and civil society are convinced about the utility of devolution of powers and functions to urban and rural local institutions for debureaucratisation of development and to make development more relevant and effective, efficient. The decentralisation has emerged as basic instrument to the growth and development of local areas, institutions and the people of these areas. It is seen as an effective way of generating confidence, ownership, maturity in behaviour, autonomy and freedom to act in citizens at the grassroots level³ and to play active role in their own development.

Decentralisation is said to be the transfer of political, administrative and economic powers to local authorities. The concerned political aspects of decentralisation strengthen democracy, accountability and participation by bringing government closer to its citizens⁴; while administrative aspects bring more efficiency, effectiveness and relevance in the functioning of local bodies and economic aspects facilitate the better provision of services to the people. Decentralisation is defined as an act in which a central government formally cedes powers to actors and institutions at lower levels in a political administrative and territorial hierarchy. It has taken three

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major forms, one has been the deconcentration of responsibility for development functions to field agencies without giving them discretion or autonomy; the other has been delegation of functions to agencies that are outside the regular administrative system⁵, while devolution involves transfer of functions or decision making authority to legally incorporated local governments, i.e., districts, sub-districts, municipalities, etc.⁶

Decentralised Governance

The concept of governance is not new; rather it is as old as human civilisation. However, to simply put it, governance means “the process of decision-making and the process by which the decisions are implemented (or not implemented)”.⁷ The main aim of development is creating a suitable, and enabling environment for promoting long, healthy and creative lives. Governance, in any society, aims to ensure this through the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority. In the simplest terms, governance relates to the effective management of affairs of a country at all levels; guarantee its territorial integrity; and secure the safety and overall welfare of its the people.⁸ Governance encompasses a wide range of issues from concerns about context of bad governance due to inefficiency, corruption, etc. While arbitrary policy-making, unaccountable bureaucracies, unenforced or unjust legal systems, abuse of executive power, a civil society unengaged in public life, and widespread corruption are the characteristics of poor or bad governance, and the good governance entails the predictable, open, and enlightened policy-making, a bureaucracy imbued with professional ethos, acting in furtherance of public good, the rule of law, transparent processes, and a strong civil society participating in public affairs.⁹

The local government needs to be a democratic, decentralised government which is elected and responsive to the felt needs of people of limited area having legal, political, administrative functional and financial autonomy, and decentralised governance is transfer of authority by delegation to field level, or by devolution to local authorities or local bodies.¹⁰ Devolution of powers deepens democracy and enhances the legitimacy of political system, promotes representative and responsive grassroots level leadership and citizens find it easier to hold government accountable through voter information, participation, and monitoring and facilitates better service delivery.¹¹ Decentralisation serves as means of bringing about an urge and capacity in stakeholders to use this system as means to establish a system of good governance, taking the functions of planning, decision-

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making and implementation closer to the people with a view to free local administration from red-tapism, graft and corruption and make it citizen friendly.¹² It symbolizes democratic values as process of power sharing in decision making and is based on the principle that most decisions are taken by the people, who are affected by them. Decentralised governance ensures that the authority does not become the monopoly of a handful of individuals but is vested in the whole community for every citizen to take part in the governance and every section of the community, especially the deprived and marginalised people, could avail the resultant benefits.

Democratic decentralisation means empowering local public to elect their local representatives and hold them accountable and responsible for the functions performed or not-performed, with the aim to enhance the speed, quantity and quality of responses from local institutions.¹³ Local government is the nearest to the people and as such always have better information about the aspirations, needs and preferences of local public and the area. At its level it can efficiently and quickly take effective decisions, form plans, make arrangements of civic amenities and deliver them at the doorstep of those whom they are meant for. Democratically decentralised governance helps in mobilisation of the resources, both human and financial, required for the planning and development. By focusing on the efficiency, accountability, responsiveness, transparency and participation, the empowered local government can promote the improvement, welfare and equity and contain the corruption and indifference in the local administration by enlisting the support of people.

In urban areas, the cities and towns are governed by the local government institutions armed with decentralised powers. Urban governance is a great challenge for them to turn it into good governance. Good urban governance is the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage the affairs of a city in a manner that improves the public service by following the principle of providing access and participation in governance to each and every citizen. It is linked to the welfare of citizenry as a whole. Urban governance aims at providing access to necessities of urban life, like safe drinking water, sanitation, public safety, clean environment, nutrition, employment, adequate shelter, health and education, etc., to all men, women and children. The principles of good governance i.e. participation, accountability, predictability, equity, efficiency, civic engagement, sustainability and transparency are also the necessary elements of good urban governance. The social and economic planning and development of urban areas and especially of the people, is

possible only by ensuring good governance on the part of urban local bodies and to achieve this objective, people's interest and active participation in the functioning of these bodies is must.

74th Constitutional Amendment Act 1992

Some of the major provisions of 74th Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 are like proper constitution of local bodies, regular elections, fixed uniform tenure of five years, reservation of seats and representation to various sections of society including women, ward committees, district planning committee, state election commission, state finance commission, etc. as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1: 74th CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ACT PROVISIONS

Constitution of Municipalities (namely, Municipal Corporation, Municipal Council, and <i>Nagar Panchayat</i>) in every Indian State;
Constitution of Wards Committees within the territorial area of a municipality, to ensure people's participation in civic affairs at the grass-roots level;
Regular and fair conduct of municipal Elections by statutorily constituted State Election Commissions; no provision for supersession of municipal governments for more than six months;
Adequate representation of weaker sections (i.e., Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Backward Class) of the society and women in municipal governments through reservation of seats;
Specification by law, through the State Legislatures, of the powers (including financial) and functional responsibilities to be entrusted to municipalities and wards committees;
Constitution of State Finance Commissions, once in every five years, to review the financial position of municipalities and to make recommendations on the measures needed to improve their financial position;
Constitution of a District Planning Committee at the district level and a Metropolitan Planning Committee in metropolitan areas of every State, for the preparation and consolidation of development plans.

SOURCE: Constitutional Provisions Relating to Village Panchayats and Municipalities in India (1999).

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The Urban Local bodies (ULBs), now, work as an instrument of economic and social change and safeguard the interests of the inhabitants residing within their territory. The 74th amendment has provided the powers to these bodies for the inclusive growth and development of the urban area and urbanites as a whole without any discrimination on the basis of social or economic status of the inhabitants, rather the scales have been tilted in favour of the vulnerable sections of urban society. The decentralisation of powers to them aims at ensuring the good governance by way of bringing transparency, accountability and responsiveness in local administration through people's active participation in the decision-making, delivery of services and social audit. These institutions have their impact on each and every aspect of human life in urban areas now, right from: health, education, hygiene, environment, entertainment, social, cultural to even economic aspects. In this way these authorities of urban governance work as real agencies of grassroots democracy and in turn breeding grounds of ideal citizens as well as of state and national level leadership, that too with the full and active participation and support of the local public.

Decentralised Governance in Punjab

Punjab is located in northwestern India, and has an area of 50,362 km². It extends from the latitudes 29.30° North to 32.32° North and longitudes 73.55° East to 76.50° East. It is bounded on the west by Pakistan, on the north by Jammu and Kashmir, on the northeast by Himachal Pradesh and on the south by Haryana and Rajasthan. The state capital is Chandigarh. Major cities of the state are S.A.S. Nagar, Chandigarh, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Amritsar, Patiala and Bhaında. The present state was carved out of the combined Punjab in 1966 on lingual basis alongwith Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. The urban civilisation in Punjab is traced back to 1500 to 2500 B.C. when Municipal Administration of sort flourished in Harappa, it was also present during Mauryan, Mughal and Afghan periods, in one form or the other, but it was during British period, that the Municipal Administration of modern times began. The Punjab Municipal Act 1867, The Punjab Municipal Act 1873, The Punjab Municipal Act 1884 and finally The Punjab Municipal Act 1911, which still continues though with certain amendments as per requirement from time to time, were among a number of efforts made by the British in this direction. The Punjab Municipal Corporation Act was enacted in 1976 to establish and run the municipal corporations. Three corporations were set up under this Act at Ludhiana, Amritsar and Jalandhar. In 1999 the Government of

Punjab enacted a new Punjab Municipal Bill as per the present requirements but this bill has not yet been accorded sanction by the Central government. Hence at present in Punjab the municipalities are governed by the Punjab Municipal Act, 1911, the Punjab Corporation Act, 1976, as amended in 1994 to bring the two Acts in conformity with the 74th Constitution Amendment Act, 1992.

During the last decade, Punjab has been on a very fast urban growth path as is clearly shown by 2011 census data. Out of the total population of 2,77,04,236 (Male- 1,46,34,819, Female-1,30,69,417), the urban population increased to 1,03,87,436 at a growth rate of 25.72 per cent while the rural one increased to 1,73,16,800 at a rate of mere 7.58 per cent. These figures show that urban areas received three times more people than rural areas during years 2001 to 2011. This phenomenal increase indicates a rapid migration from rural to urban areas. 37.49 per cent of people now reside in the urban areas as 62.51 per cent are in rural areas.¹⁸ It also indicates a further rise in the number of urban centers, which have increased to 217 in the year 2011 from 157 in the year 2001, (as shown in the table below) as also more pressure on the services and space there, which is going to be a great challenge for the management of these new centers as well as of the existing ones. So the urban management seems to be the most important task to be faced by the state government and especially by the municipalities in the state.

Growth of Urbanisation in Punjab

Year of Census	Total Population	Urban Population	Urban Population (%) of UAs/ towns	Total Population of number
1951	9,160,500	1,989,267	21.72	110
1961	11,135,069	2,567,306	23.06	106
1971	13,551,060	3,216,179	23.73	106
1981	16,788,915	4,647,757	27.68	134
1991	20,281,969	5,993,225	29.55	120
2001	24,358,999	8,245,566	33.95	157
2011	27,704,236	10,387,436	37.49	217

SOURCE: Census of India 1951,1961,1971,1981,1991,2001 and 2011.

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The municipalities, in the State of Punjab, have been organised into three categories, namely, *nagar panchayats* for transitional areas, municipal councils for smaller urban areas (further classified in to Class I, Class II, and Class III municipalities on the basis of their population and annual revenue generation capacity), and municipal corporations for the larger urban areas with a population of three lakh or more and a minimum revenue generation capacity as specified by the state government, from time to time by notification as below:

Sr. No.	Urban Local Bodies	Population	Revenue generated
1.	Municipal Corporation	3 lakh or above	Rs. 2 crore or above
2.	Municipal Council Class-I	50,000 to 3 lakh	Rs. 50 lakh to 2 crore
3.	Municipal Council Class-II	10,000 to 50,000	Rs. 15 lakh to 50 lakh
4.	Municipal Council Class-III	upto 10,000 Upto	Rs. 15 lakh
5.	Nagar Panchayat	5,000 and above Above	Rs.150 per head

In Punjab, at present, there are 140¹⁵ urban local bodies comprising five municipal corporations (Ludhiana, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Patiala and Bhatinda), 25 Class I municipal councils, 42 Class II municipal councils, 33 Class III municipal councils and 35 nagar panchayats. These municipalities are governed by the Punjab Municipal Act, 1911, the Punjab Corporation Act, 1976, as amended in 1994 to bring the two Acts in conformity with the 74th Constitution Amendment Act, 1992. The Government of Punjab at the time of amendments to the aforesaid Acts framed the rules for the determination of wards within the municipal limits, from where the members of the municipalities are to be elected, on the basis of the population of the area concerned. The method of reservation of seats, for the offices of councilors and reservation of the office of presidents/mayors, for scheduled castes and women including those belonging to scheduled castes was also determined at that time, which is also changed by the government, as per requirement, from time to time. A State Election Commission has been established for the conduct of elections to these local bodies in the state regularly after every five years. All the matters of disputes regarding the elections to the municipalities have been kept under the jurisdiction of this commission. If a local body is dissolved before the completion of its tenure of five years then a re-election is held within the period of six months of that date and no municipality is kept in the dissolved state for any longer.

Provided in the amended Acts, the municipalities in Punjab have been entrusted with the responsibilities which comprise public health,

water supply, sanitation, solid waste management, sewerage, drainage (underground or surface), fire services, slum improvement and upgradation, urban poverty alleviation, provision of urban amenities and facilities such as parks, gardens and playgrounds, burials and burial grounds, cremations, cremation grounds, electric crematoriums, slaughter houses, vital statistics including registration of births and deaths, cattle ponds and prevention of cruelty to animals, public amenities including street lighting, parking lots, bus-stops and public conveniences etc. They are required to plan and prepare the programmes and work for their speedy implementation. They are also to be in touch with the people to know their expectations and aspirations about the civic services and to find out the ways and means for the efficient delivery of these services in a transparent, accountable and responsible manner and to the satisfaction of the public. The Department of Local Bodies, The Directorate of Local Bodies and its regional offices guide and help the municipalities in their successful performance. The state government has set in place the State Finance Commission under the provision of Art. 243Y inserted by 74th amendment. Three state finance commissions have submitted their recommendations until now and the fourth one is going to submit its report in the near future. The government always submit the action taken report alongwith the report of the commission concerned while placing it on the table of the state legislature. The other institutional mechanisms provided by the said amendment are Wards Committees, Art. 243S, Committee for District Planning, Art. 243ZD and Committee for Metropolitan Planning, Art. 243ZE. Aiming at the empowerment of people especially the marginalised ones and their participation in the decision making for development planning and growth and with a view to secure the transparency, accountability, responsiveness, efficiency, effectiveness, better service delivery on the part of administration and eradication of corruption and alleviation of poverty, these committees have to be formed. The state government has established the district planning committees in all the districts of the state since 2008-09 with the aim of decentralised planning.

District Planning Committees (DPG)

In compliance with the provision of Article 243ZD of the 74th Constitutional Amendment, 1992, District Planning Committees (DPCs) are mandatory to be constituted in each state of the country for the purpose of preparing a Draft District Development Plan (DDDP) at the grass root level. The Punjab District Planning Committees Act, 2005 was enacted to provide for the constitution of

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the DPCs with a view to consolidate the plans prepared by the Panchayats and the Municipalities in the districts and to prepare the draft development plans for the districts as a whole in the state. The Punjab DPCs Procedure of Transaction of Business Rules were also notified in 2006. The revised guidelines for holding elections for electing 4/5th members of the DPCs from amongst the elected members of *Zila Parishads* and ULBs were issued to all the districts in 2008. The state government has constituted the DPCs for all the 20 districts of the State.

Composition of the District Planning Committees

1. The total number of members of the DPCs may be 15, 24 and 40 on the basis of the population of the district as below:
 - i. Districts having population not exceeding 10 lakh; = 15 Members
 - ii. Districts having population exceeding ten lakh = 24 Members but not exceeding 20 lakh; and
 - iii. Districts having population exceeding 20 lakh = 40 Members
2. Not less than 4/5th of the total number of the members of the Committee shall be elected by and from amongst the elected members of the Panchayat at the district level and of the Municipalities in the district in proportion to the ratio between the population of the rural areas and of the urban areas in the district.
3. 1/5th of the total number of the members of the Committee, which may include the Members of Legislative Assembly and other persons also, shall be nominated by the State Government.
4. The Chairperson of the Committee shall be chosen from amongst the members of the Committee by the State Government by nomination.
5. The Deputy Commissioner of the district shall be the *ex-officio* Secretary of the Committee.
6. The Additional Deputy Commissioner (Development) of the District shall be the *ex-officio* Additional Secretary of the Committee.
7. The Deputy Economic and Statistical Advisor of the district shall be the *ex-officio* Joint Secretary of the Committee.

The Committee shall exercise the powers and perform the

functions as mentioned below: (a) To prepare the DDDP keeping in view the matters of common interest between the urban and rural population including spatial planning, sharing of water and other physical and natural resources, the integrated development of infrastructure and environment conservation, the plans prepared at the grass root level by the concerned Panchayat and the extent and type of available resources whether financial or otherwise; (b) To prepare priority-wise list of schemes and programmes taking into account the resources available with the Committee and the resources provided by the State Government; (c) To take appropriate measures for proper implementation of the development schemes, programmes and projects; (d) To monitor the progress of projects; (e) To encourage the Panchayats and the Municipalities to take up and expedite the implementation of development projects; (f) To make efforts to generate additional resources for developmental works with the cooperation of people, Non-Government Organizations and Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and other agencies; and (g) To perform such other additional functions relating to district planning, coordination and monitoring of the activities of different departments of the State Government, as may be assigned to the Committee by the State Government.

8. While preparing the DDDP, the Committee may consult such institutions and organisations, as may be specified by the State Government from time to time.

9. The Chairperson shall forward the District Development Plans prepared by the Committee under clause (a) of Sub-section (1) to the State Government.

Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM)

In 2005 the Government of India launched Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) as a time bound programme to be in operation till 2012 by initially selecting 63 cities, to be extended to other cities in the due course, with the objective of integrated development of infrastructure services in the cities and to secure the effective linkages between the assets creation and effective management. A city development plan was to be prepared to implement various components of the mission to eliminate the constraints and improve and augment social and economic infrastructure, provision of basic services to the people. Two cities of Punjab i.e. Ludhiana and Amritsar, were selected in the beginning, followed by S.A.S. Nagar and other towns. Out of total funds of Rs. 50000.00 crore for this programme, Government of India has allocated

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Rs. 1272.62 crore to the Punjab State for 2005-12 under the mission.¹⁶ The programme has following four components - (i) Urban Infrastructure and Governance, (ii) Basic Services to Urban Poor, (iii) Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns, (iv) Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme.

For integrated urban development, Government of Punjab has prepared and implemented various central and state level schemes and programmes in its urban areas. Some of these programmes are *Suvarn Jayanti Shehri Rojgar Yojana*, National Urban Information System, Integrated Low Cost Sanitation Programme, Strengthening Fire and Emergency Services, *Rajiv Awaas Yojana*, Urban Development Fund, etc.

Decentralised Governance Issues in Punjab

The issues for urban governance in Punjab may vary from one institution to another according to their inherent position and requirements. Some of the common issues among them are detailed as follows:

Institutional

Most of the provisions of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 have been implemented by the state government and the local bodies are trying at their level best to perform their given functions and duties well to serve their people better. Their establishment, composition and structure are all governed by the Acts of the state legislature duly amended in accordance with the constitutional amendment. The state government has reserved the right to establish, abolish, re-establish or change the status of an urban local body to itself, though in compliance of the provisions of the concerned Acts, but at times the decisions made in this regard are arbitrary and beyond the legal framework e.g. the decision of the government to raise the status of the Municipal Councils of S.A.S. Nagar, Phagwara, Pathankot and Moga to Municipal Corporation in the year 2011 solely on political considerations, as these towns do not fulfil the condition of required population for this purpose and all the notifications in this regard had been stayed by the Hon'able Punjab and Haryana High Court.

Other institutions provided for in the said amendment brought in force by the state government are The State Election Commission, State Finance Commission and District Planning Committees in all districts under the respective legislations. The State Election Commission and State Finance Commission have now been working

for quite some time and that too very successfully, but there had been undue delay in the formation of the DPCs and the state had lagged behind other states to source central government funds till 2008. Though these committees are now working in the state but achievement of the targets of grassroots planning, participation and development and effectively sourcing and utilising central funds for the welfare of the local areas and general public, is yet to be seen on the ground.

The Wards Committees and Metropolitan Development Committees are also part of the constitutional provisions for local institutions in urban areas which are required to be set up in the appropriate areas for people's participation in planning and development but it is disappointing to note that the government has not paid due attention towards this important people oriented mechanism necessary for the success of the decentralised urban local governance.

Functions and Powers

The urban local bodies (ULBs) have been empowered and entrusted with appropriate functions and powers. All the 18 functions categorised in the Twelfth Schedule to be transferred to these bodies had been so given to them through the amendment to the State Acts concerned in 1994, but on paper, as notification has been issued in case of only a small number of functions to hand them over to municipalities, like primary education, health dispensaries, some social welfare functions, etc. A number of functions which are required to be performed by local bodies have practically been kept either under the direct control of Government departments or those of the para-statal agencies like Director of Local Government, Punjab Water Supply and Sewerage Board, Punjab State Power Company Limited, Punjab Public Works Department, Punjab Urban Development Authority, Punjab Town Planning Department, Greater Mohali Area Development Authority, Greater Ludhiana Area Development Authority, Patiala Development Authority, etc.

Even otherwise the strong urge, on the part of national and state level political leaders and bureaucrats, to have everything under one's own control and command, unwillingness to share decision making power and authority, perceived threat of being sidelined and overpowered by local leaders and authorities and strong bureaucratic clutches on the administrative and legislative policy formulation procedures and processes play the spoilsport in the way of

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decentralisation to local bodies. That is why the political leaders and bureaucrats make every effort, on their part, not shed any bit of powers in their charge and prove hard nuts in this regard. These obstacles stop them even from giving away the decentralised powers to the local bodies, what to talk of the decentralisation of the other powers and such is the case with the ULBs in Punjab.

Representation and Participation

Representation and reservation had been given to various sections of urban society including scheduled castes- according to percentage of their population in the area; women- reservation of 1/3rd of the total seats which includes scheduled women also, and other backward classes on the discretion of the state legislature. Offices of the president and mayor are also reserved for these sections by rotation. In this way, appropriate mechanism for the participation of wider and large number of stakeholders in the decision making for inclusive growth has been ensured. The expected results on this front are not visible, as either these sections lack the ability to assert and push their views or do not have the required weight to get their voice heard. The municipal representatives from affluent sections always dominate the proceedings of the house and manipulate the municipal working into their interest. Hence, the expected popular representation and participation in urban governance, for decentralised planning and inclusive development, becomes meaningless.

Information and Communication Technology

Citizen's right to seek information is a universal phenomenon which has been extended to the Indian citizens now for transparency, accountability and responsiveness of the urban administration to achieve good urban governance. The current service delivery mechanism for most of the business and citizen services (93.1%) is manual and only for 6.9 per cent of services there are some computer intervention for delivery of the services. And none of the services are delivered in complete online mode or through Kiosk delivery model. In Punjab, the Information and Communication Technology infrastructure in Municipal bodies is very meek and has a need of appropriate volumes of procurement. Need for stable and reliable security algorithms/ system regarding data ownership is ascertained in the present study. Processing speed of the applications seems to be torpid which is learnt from the filled up questionnaire and one to one meetings. Inception of information dissemination through web has already initiated in few urban bodies. Various issues which hold good

weightage in the current situation at Department and ULBs are mostly related to technology (internet technology is not exploited fully). Current MIS is in initial stage. Updation of information is also an issue due to lack of trained manpower to manage data. All processes across different ULBs do not enjoy complete uniformity. Awareness and persuasion of citizens in utilising their right to information is an issue in this context.¹⁷

Capacity Building

The capacity of urban local institutions in Punjab needs to be enhanced through adoption of various capacity building measures because their working lacks efficiency and effectiveness. Urban governance institutions need a multidimensional approach that addresses legal-institutional framework, organisational structure, rules and procedures, incentives and disincentives facing stake-holders and issues of human resource development and management. An agenda for capacity building for citizen governance should include preparation and implementation of Citizen Charters for all urban institutions, including municipalities, institution of participatory and transparent service delivery processes, developing and implementing an anti-corruption strategy, improving citizen interface by simplifying complicated citizen-involving processes, implementing Right of Information Act and instituting an effective grievances/complaints tracking and redressal system linked to a Call Centre arrangement.¹⁸ The urban local bodies could be able to work as institutions of good governance only by taking aforesaid measures. Hence, capacity building needs to be assigned top priority by the state government as well as by the local bodies themselves.

CONCLUSION

Since governance at the local level has become a primary responsibility of the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), it is important for them to focus on, improving their governance systems and methods which could be profitably used to usher high levels of internal efficiency and effectiveness; to bring about better levels of transparency, accountability and responsiveness in decision-making and delivery of services to the urban population; to encourage and enable the local popular representatives to be accessible, courteous, receptive, involving and encouraging towards the residents of their own wards and to be punctual, participative, initiating, contributory and vigilant towards their role in the working of the local body; and to inculcate the professional values of performance, transparency, responsiveness,

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accountability and citizen service among the officials. Such developments in the urban governance institutions by themselves or a helping hand by other agencies including central and state governments would empower and enable them to strive for the achievement of real decentralised governance by way of working for social and economic planning and inclusive development.

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