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Devolution of powers to local bodies not sufficient: CAG

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CHENNAI: Devolution of powers to local bodies in the State has not been satisfactory, according to the audit report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) for the year ending March 31, 2008.

The report, tabled in the Assembly on Monday, noted that of the 18 functions listed for devolution to urban local bodies, only 13 had been transferred to municipalities and municipal corporations, and 12 to town panchayats. The functionaries required had not been transferred both in the case of urban local bodies and panchayat raj institutions, the report said.

None of the 57 town panchayats (out of 561 in the State) test-checked by auditors prepared an annual action plan on developmental issues.

In the absence of local planning, the district development plan did not incorporate local needs in the development process, the audit report stated.

Total receipts in municipal corporations and municipalities showed an increasing trend during 2005-2008, while the Chennai City Municipal Corporation showed an increase in 2007-2008 to Rs. 713 crore after decreasing from Rs. 655 crore in 2005-2006 to Rs. 598 crore in 2006-2007.

The total receipts of town panchayats, however, increased from Rs.603 crore in 2005-2006 to Rs. 2,755 crore in 2006-2007 before falling to Rs. 809 crore in 2007-2008.

Delays

The report said that no reason had been assigned for the increase and discrepancies could be reconciled only on receipt of audited annual accounts from zonal offices. The audit showed delays in the release of Twelfth Finance Commission grants to urban local bodies and panchayats.

There were shortfalls in provision of various amenities by the Chennai, Coimbatore and Madurai municipal corporations and the audit of health, family welfare and sanitation activities of the Chennai city municipal corporation showed vacancies in posts of medical officers and non-availability of essential medicines.

Waste processing and disposal facilities, stipulated to have been set up by December 2003, had not yet been set up.

In the audit of panchayat raj institutions, six districts showed ineligible items amounting to Rs. 120.98 crore under the Anaithu Grama Anna Marumalarchi Thittam. Grama Sabhas in 26 village panchayats did not have the required public participation, the report said.