Meri Panchayat Application
A Watchdog of Rural Democracy

ЧMERi PANCHAYAT

The Meri Panchayat mobile app aims to provide residents of rural areas, village heads (Sarpanch), other elected representatives, government officials working in Panchayats, and all stakeholders of the Panchayati Raj system with easy, accessible, and user-friendly information, updates, and services related to their Panchayats in their preferred language.

*Ms. Sunita Jain

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj, in collaboration with various ministries, state bodies, and agencies, is working towards empowering Panchayats and aligning their efforts with the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.
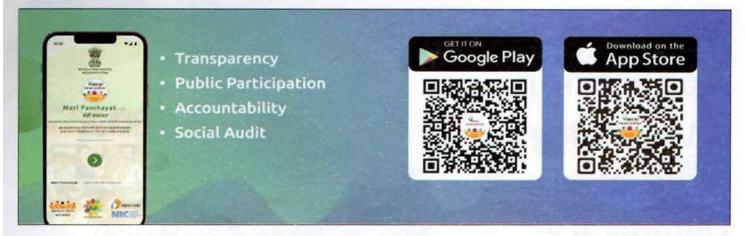
The Government of India and various state ministries, departments, and institutions are implementing numerous programs and schemes for the holistic development of Panchayat residents and rural areas. These initiatives encompass the provision of basic amenities, infrastructure development, construction activities, development projects, citizen services, and other activities. The planning, progress monitoring of implementation, social audits, and dissemination of information to the public were facilitated through different software and websites.

However, due to the absence of a common portal and mobile app, information and services related to Panchayats were not available on a single platform. Residents, public representatives, government officials, and other stakeholders had to visit multiple websites to access information and services related to their Panchayats, making it a challenging task.

In recent years, the easy availability of smartphones and the internet has significantly increased the digital awareness and aspirations of elected representatives, officials, and residents of Panchayats. They now seek to actively participate in the functioning of Panchayats by accessing all relevant information and services through their smartphones. In response to these aspirations and emerging needs, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj launched the *Meri Panchayat* mobile app to provide a platform that empowers citizens to actively participate in the functioning of their Panchayats.

The *Meri Panchayat* mobile app aims to provide residents of rural areas, village heads (Sarpanch), other elected representatives, government officials working

The author is Sr. Technical Director, NIC, New Delhi. Email: sjain@nic.in

- Transparency
- Public Participation
- Accountability
- Social Audit

in Panchayats, and all stakeholders of the Panchayati Raj system with easy, accessible, and user-friendly information, updates, and services related to their Panchayats in their preferred language.

The information available on the app, including decisions made by Panchayats, details of construction and development projects, and the utilization of Panchayat funds, is expected to generate public interest and awareness about Panchayat activities. This will encourage citizens to actively participate in Panchayat proceedings and contribute to their governance.

At the core of *Meri Panchayat's* mission lies a commitment to participatory governance, empowering residents to play an active role in shaping their Panchayat's development plan. Through this platform, residents have the opportunity to suggest projects and activities for inclusion in the plan, along with the added feature of uploading geo-tagged photographs of proposed work sites.

Additionally, residents can participate in reviewing and rating ongoing development projects, fostering greater transparency and accountability. They can further contribute by providing geo-tagged images to effectively track the progress of these projects.

How to Download the Meri Panchayat App

Citizens can easily download Meri Panchayat from Android or iOS platforms.

Registering on Meri Panchayat is extremely simple—one only needs to enter their mobile number and verify it with an OTP.

This process needs to be completed just once. After that, residents of the Panchayat can access all information and avail of services in their local language.

Unified Access to Panchayat Information

The 'Meri Panchayat' app consolidates various functions and information previously scattered across multiple portals into a single, user-friendly platform. Residents, elected representatives, and Panchayat functionaries can now access comprehensive details about their Gram Panchayats, including:

- **Panchayat Profile:** Information on population, area, and local governance structures.

- **Elected Representatives and Officials:** Contact details and roles of Sarpanchs, Gram Pradhans, and government officials associated with the Panchayat.

- **Development Projects and Financials:** Real-time data on ongoing and completed projects, fund allocations, expenditures, and bank account transactions.

By providing easy access to this information, in an intuitive manner, the app promotes transparency and encourages residents to engage more actively in local governance.

Citizen Participation and Social Audits

A core feature of the app is its emphasis on participatory governance. Residents can suggest projects and activities for inclusion in the Panchayat's development plans, uploading geo-tagged photos of proposed sites to support their suggestions. This participatory approach ensures that development initiatives align with the actual needs of the community.

Additionally, the app facilitates social audits by allowing citizens to monitor the physical and financial progress of development works. This feature fosters community oversight, enhances transparency, and holds local authorities accountable for development work implementation.

Enhanced Accessibility and User Experience

Recognizing the widespread adoption of smartphones and internet connectivity in rural areas, the 'Meri Panchayat' app is designed to be accessible and user-friendly:

- **Multilingual Support:** The app is available in multiple languages, catering to the diverse linguistic preferences of users across India.

- **Simple Registration:** Citizens can register using their mobile numbers, with a straightforward OTP verification process.

- **Location-Based Services:** The app provides accurate weather forecasts and other location-specific information, aiding residents in their daily planning and decision-making.

These features ensure that users can effortlessly navigate the app and access pertinent information about their Panchayats.

Promoting Good Governance

The 'Meri Panchayat' app serves as a pivotal tool in promoting good governance at the grassroots level by:

- **Enforcing Accountability:** By making information about fund utilization and project progress publicly available, the app holds Panchayat officials accountable for their actions.

- **Facilitating Public Participation:** The platform encourages citizens to actively participate in governance processes, from planning to execution and monitoring of development projects.

- **Ensuring Transparency:** Comprehensive access to Panchayat activities and financials ensures that residents are well-informed about local governance.

Through these mechanisms, the app strengthens the principles of transparency, accountability, and responsiveness within Panchayats, contributing to the broader goal of sustainable and inclusive rural development.

Conclusion

The 'Meri Panchayat' mobile application represents a significant advancement in leveraging technology to empower rural communities. By providing a unified platform for accessing information, facilitating citizen engagement, and promoting transparency, the app plays a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of Panchayati Raj Institutions and ensuring that development initiatives are attuned to the needs and aspirations of rural residents. ❑