

# New dispute settlement mechanism at Zilla Panchayat level proposed

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T. V. SIVANANDAN

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The draft Karnataka panchayat Raj act (Amendment) bill 2014 prepared by the high power Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act Amendment committee headed by former Speaker of the legislative assembly K.R. Ramesh Kumar has introduced a new clause for establishment of new dispute settlement mechanism in the form of District Panchayat Tribunal.

The proposed tribunal headed by a sitting or retired District Judge or a retired judge of the Karnataka Judicial Service has been given wide ranging powers to settle the disputes arising at the Panchayat level between the Panchayat and the people, inter-class or inter-community conflicts arising within a village in a panchayat and between two different panchayats within the Zilla Panchayat. The tribunal has also been given powers to settle disputes between one panchayat and another panchayat.

Official sources told "*The Hindu*" in Kalaburagi City on Friday that the tribunal would have the powers of a civil court to summon the parties or witnesses to appear before it and summon the requisite records from any office of the government. The tribunal would have powers to pass orders, award compensation and impose fines.

To ensure transparency and accountability in the functioning of the panchayats the amendment proposes that all the proceedings of the meetings of the Zilla, taluk and gram panchayats shall be videographed and kept on record for public inspection, keep the abstract of the subjects and the resolutions passed in the meeting for inspection by the general public. All the works expected by the panchayat should be video recorded.

All the Panchayats would have a website of its own in which all the particulars of the plans and estimates of all the works undertaken by the panchayat, before they are taken up for execution, the phase of execution of all works and the video recorded version of the recordings shall be uploaded and displayed in the website.

Sources said that the Gram, Taluk and Zilla Panchayats have also been entrusted with the responsibility of preparing a forward looking vision plan for the five years from the date of the new elected representatives take charge of the panchayat setting development benchmarks and this vision plan shall form the basis for constructing need-based annual plan for each year for the next five years of the term of the new elected body.