

Next Cabinet meeting to discuss proposal for amendment to Panchayat Raj Act

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The report submitted by the high power committee headed by former Speaker K R Ramesh Kumar that has recommended providing more powers to the Panchayat Raj Institutions through a comprehensive amendment to the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act 1993 will come for discussion before the state Cabinet in its next meeting, according to Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister H K Patil.

Talking to *The Hindu* in Kalaburagi city on Friday, Mr Patil said that the draft amendment bill prepared by the committee would also be placed before the Cabinet for its consideration. After getting the approval of the Cabinet, the amendment Bill would be sent to the law department for its perusal and acceptance before it is placed before the Assembly and Council for getting the approval.

Mr. Patil said by and large the mood of the people was for increased devolution of powers to the panchayat raj bodies and the state government was also committed to strengthening of the panchayat raj institutions.

On the recommendations of the committee to accord more powers to the Gram Panchayats, he said the ultimate aim of achieving the dream of Mahatma Gandhi of Gram Swarajya was empowering the Gram Sabhas to plan and fix priorities in the development of the villages. The committee had gone into all the issues and made these recommendations to plug the loopholes in the functioning of the panchayat raj institutions and making it accountable to the people.

Asked whether he agreed with another recommendation for fixing the term of the panchayat president for five years, Mr Patil said in his personal view if a person is given enough time without a break to perform, it will help in ensuring proper development of the institution. On his stand of providing powers to the President of the Zilla panchayat to write confidential reports of the topranking officials of the ZP, Mr Patil said that he was firm in his stand that it was a matter of relevance that the President has powers to write confidential reports of a person who works under him.

He said that he was only trying to introduce some checks and balance in the functioning of the panchayat raj institutions and he had no intention to take away the powers of the bureaucrats.