

**xiv. Development through Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs)/ Voluntary Organisations**

To pin the pillars of developmental efforts firmly in the ground, the base level organisations will have to be created wherever they are not in position and strengthened [like FMCs] wherever they exist weakly. In fact, much of the developmental efforts for the transformation of agriculture in West Bengal in the recent past could be attributed to the local level organisations like Panchayat Raj Institutions [PRIs] and other voluntary organisations that contributed substantially to the success of “operation borga”. In Assam, such organisations by the teaching staff of schools and colleges are already operating in certain areas like Barpeta. But many more will have to come forward to be instrumental in forming viable and efficient groups and coordinate their access to credit and non-credit inputs. Such organisations may also sensitise the farmers to the needs of processing packaging and marketing the agro-products through suitable technologies.

***Panchayat Raj and  
Common Minimum Programme***

*The UPA Govt. will ensure that all funds given to States for poverty alleviation and rural development schemes by Panchayats are neither delayed nor diverted. Monitoring will be strict. In addition, after consultation with States, the UPA Govt. will consider crediting elected Panchayats such funds directly.*

*Devolution of funds will be accompanied by similar devolution of functions and functionaries as ell. Regular elections to Panchayat bodies will be ensured and the amended Act in respect of the Fifth and Sixth Schedule Areas will be implemented.*

*The UPA Govt. will ensure that the Gram Sabha is empowered to emerge as the foundation of Panchayat raj.*