

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

LOCAL BOARDS—Receipts—Expenditure—Difficulties. MUNICIPALITIES—
Calicut municipality—Palghat municipality—Cochin municipality—
Tellicherry municipality—Cannanore municipality.

OUTSIDE the five municipalities of Calicut, Palghat, Tellicherry, Cannanore and Cochin, local affairs are managed by the District Board, taluk boards and panchayats. Originally there were five taluk boards—Tellicherry, Calicut, Malappuram, Palghat and Wynaad, corresponding to the revenue divisions of the same name. On the passing of the Local Boards' Act of 1920, seven taluk boards were constituted for the revenue taluks of Calicut with Kurumbranad, Ernad, Walavanad, Wynaad, Palghat, Ponnani, Chirakkal with Kottayam, but owing to mismanagement of their finances the administration of the latter area had to be taken over by the District Board.* The outlying pattsoms of Cochin originally directly under the District Board have been included in the taluk board of Ponnani. The Wynaad taluk has been under the direct control of the District Board since 1924.

The enclaves of Anjengo and Tangasseri, which were originally directly under the District Board, have now been transferred to the jurisdiction of the Tinnevely District Board. The three unions at Badagara, Ponnani and Chowghat have now become panchayats under the amended Local Boards Act of 1930. The District Board and the taluk and union boards have elected unofficial presidents.

Statistics of the income and expenditure of the local boards are given in the separate Appendix. As in other districts, they derive the greater portion of their income from the land-cess. The cess was originally levied under Act III of 1866 at the rate of 6 pies in the rupee of assessment; but when the Local Funds Act (Act IV of 1871) was introduced, the rate was raised, as in other parts of the presidency, to one anna in the rupee. In Malabar however the assessment was so light that the revenue thus raised proved wholly inadequate for the purposes of the Act. By 1877 entire insolvency had been reached under most heads of local fund expenditure, and financial difficulties

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Receipts.

* By a notification in the *Fort St. George's Gazette*, dated 21st June 1932, page 583, a taluk board has been constituted for each taluk except Wynaad.

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were staved off only by large annual grants from provincial funds, varying from Rs. 2,38,030 to Rs. 1,78,630. The rate was accordingly doubled by the Malabar Cess Act (Act I of 1878), and the cess was collected till 1902 at the rate of two annas in the rupee. In that year the Government of India expressed the opinion that the reasons for the specially high local rate would disappear with the introduction of the settlement, and suggested that the rates might be lowered to 1 anna 3 pies per rupee of the new assessment without sacrificing any portion of the revenue hitherto raised for local funds. The suggestion was adopted by the Government of Madras with some modifications necessitated by the working of the increment remission rules. As the actual land revenue demand for each fasli, on which the cess is calculated, is the settlement demand less the increment remission, the rate for each taluk is fixed so as to continue the income derived by the local funds before the settlement, and is being gradually lowered till the rate of 1 anna 3 pies fixed by the Government of India is reached. These arrangements are not in force in the Wynaad taluk, where the cess is still levied at the rate of two annas in the rupee. Tolls follow next in importance as a source of income. There are 42 toll-gates in the district at all of which, except two, full rates are imposed. Ferries also yield a large revenue but the income from markets, many of which are owned by private persons, is comparatively small. The incidence of local fund taxation per head of population was in 1903-04 As. 2-2 including and As. 1-8 excluding tolls. The average for the presidency for the preceding year was As. 3-3 and As. 2-10 respectively.

The important item of receipt continues to be the land-cess which under the Madras Local Boards Act, 1920, as amended in 1930, is levied throughout the district at one anna six pies in the rupee of assessment. Half of the cess is credited to the District Board (one-third under District Funds and one-sixth under the Village Development Fund) and one-third to the taluk boards and one-sixth of the cess raised in their areas to the panchayat boards. In areas where there is no taluk board the taluk board share is credited to the District Board and similarly where there are no panchayats the one-sixth due to panchayats is credited to the taluk board. Next to land-cess come tolls. There were 54 gates at which tolls were levied at the maximum rates allowed by the Madras Local Boards Act, 1920. Tolls on all vehicles were abolished by the Motor Vehicles Taxation Act of 1931, the loss to District Board being made good by a contribution from Government out of the Motor Vehicles Tax. Ferries yield to the District Board about a lakh of rupees a year. Taxes on companies and professions at maximum rates are levied by the local boards which also issue licences for dangerous and offensive

grades under the provisions of the Act and collect licence fees. The most important source of income to the panchayats is house-tax.

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Expenditure.

Schools, sanitation, medical institutions and vaccination are some of the objects upon which the boards spend their money, but as usual the greater part of their income is devoted to communications. The prescribed minimum to be spent on communications in the district is one-half the land cess plus the net receipts from tolls and ferries, Government in 1902 having ordered that the net receipts from ferries should be expended on roads in general and bridges in particular. Bridging is an expensive item in Malabar. In one year alone, for instance, (1902-03) 114 bridges were built or rebuilt and 162 repaired at an outlay of nearly half a lakh. The boards are fortunate however in deriving an income of more than Rs. 60,000 annually from ferries, an unimportant source of revenue in most districts. The District Board maintains nineteen secondary schools, of which two are for girls. Elementary education has made marked progress, as the number of schools at the end of each of the following years would show :—

1923-24	..	..	..	..	..	466
1925-26	..	..	..	..	..	774
1927-28	..	..	..	..	..	1,045
1928-29	..	..	..	..	..	3,336
1930-31	..	..	..	..	..	4,134

The schools were opened mostly with the aid of provincial grants, and some of the taluk boards notably Chirakkal, opened more schools than they could properly maintain. A cess is levied under the Elementary Education Act by all the local boards and it is utilized for the improvement of elementary education; and compulsory elementary education has been introduced in select areas under the Ponnani, Ernad and Malavanad taluk boards. There are still many secondary and elementary schools which stand in need of suitable buildings.

The struggle to make both ends meet is in Malabar more than usually hard and the difficulties with which the District and taluk boards have to contend are many. The fact that the houses are not as a rule collected in villages increases the difficulty and expense of supervising such matters as sanitation and vaccination; and in spite of the many navigable rivers and canals the conditions of the country necessitate an immense system of roads, which owing to the heavy rainfall it is impossible to keep in order except at a great cost. On the East Coast village roads and tracks fit for bandy traffic can easily be improvised over the dry wastes which intervene between the layouts of the different tanks. In Malabar with its broken laterite surface and deep closely cultivated valleys, where in the

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words of Ibn Batuta, as true to-day as when they were written 'every one has a garden, and his house is placed in the middle of it and round the whole is a fence of wood,' it is difficult to ride across country for any distance, and usually impossible to make even a short road without undertaking much expensive earthwork, constructing innumerable culverts, and building one or two bridges of considerable span. The Wynaad taluk, where the expenditure invariably exceeds the income by nearly half a lakh, is a constant drain upon the resources of the District Board, which for lack of funds has had to hand over to the Public Works Department of Government the maintenance of the two most important roads in the district, the Calicut-Mysore and Tellicherry-Coorg roads, and many ruins are to be seen of important bridges which the Boards cannot afford to rebuild. Nevertheless in the last half century the mileage of made roads has increased from 133 miles to more than 1,700, and of late their condition has steadily improved. In the same period the number of travellers' bungalows has been trebled; medical relief has been brought within comparatively easy reach of every part of the district; and the local boards are in part responsible for the proud position which Malabar holds in education among the districts of the presidency.

MUNICI-
PALITIES.

All the five municipalities which were originally constituted under the Town Improvements Act of 1865 are now governed by the District Municipalities Act of 1920, as amended by Act X of 1930. (Statistics of their income and expenditure will be found in the separate appendix.)

Calicut
municipality.

The largest and most important municipality in Malabar is that of Calicut, the headquarters town. With an income amounting to upwards of two and a half lakhs of rupees, derived mainly from taxes, the municipality administers an area of about 13 square miles with a population of nearly a lakh and maintains 70 miles of road.

The municipality has had a chequered career. In 1882 the rate-payers were allowed for the first time to elect one-half of the councillors, and in 1886-87 the full complement of elected councillors, viz., 18 out of 24, was secured, and the privilege of electing its chairman was conferred upon the council. The experiment, however, was not a success, and the administration of the municipality, never good, went from bad to worse, till in 1890, in view of the 'discreditable and unsatisfactory' administration of the previous year, both privileges were withdrawn. A paid chairman held office for two years, and subsequently the Revenue Divisional Officer was *ex-officio* chairman till 1901. The privilege of electing one-half of the councillors was restored in 1896-97, and since 1901 the council has once more been permitted to elect its own chairman. Subsequently, the council became entitled to elect three-fourths of its members, the remaining one-fourth being

accounted by Government. The official element in the strength of the council was gradually withdrawn and with the coming into force of Act V of 1920, the nomination of Government officials was completely stopped and the strength of the council rose from 24 to 32, composed entirely of non-officials. The council continues to elect its own chairman and vice-chairman. Under Act X of 1930 now in force the nomination by Government of one-fourth of the total strength of the council has ceased altogether and the council is composed of purely elected members. In recent years there has been considerable improvement in the administration.

This brief history of the constitution of the council is a commentary upon its work. Till the year 1890 its administration was condemned by Government with unflinching regularity but in the last ten years there has been a gradual improvement and in the latest municipal review Calicut was one of the towns selected for honourable mention. The municipality's record, however, during its 38 years' work has been characterised by apathy and lack of enterprise, and compares unfavourably with that of Palghat. For a municipal town the roads are bad. The town is still without a regular system of water-supply or drainage, and owes to its municipality few public improvements. A few wells, the new buildings for its civil hospital, the new Mappilla and Christian burial grounds, the promotor and reservoirs erected to preserve the water of the Mananchira tank from pollution and the footpath over the Kallayi railway bridge are its most important additions to the town. The incidence of municipal taxation per head of the population has averaged Rs. 1-12-6 in the last five years. Most of the roads are metalled and are in fair condition in spite of the heavy monsoons. The town is still without a protected water-supply or modern system of drainage. The water-supply schemes suggested were too costly to be taken up. The Mananchira tank continues to supply drinking-water to a large part of the town, almost throughout the year. Public wells have also been sunk in many places. The headquarters hospital which was originally maintained by the municipality has been taken over by Government. One Ayurvedic and three allopathic dispensaries are maintained by the council. Elementary education for boys is compulsory in the municipality from 1925 and there are now 42 elementary schools maintained by the council which has also opened a free reading room and public library. Electric lighting under private licence has been introduced in the town. Of the markets belonging to the council, the most important one is the central market on the Court road. The small French settlement (called the French *loge*) in the heart of the town is amenable to the municipal laws. The incidence of taxation in 1929-30 was Rs. 2-6-3

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Palghat
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pality.

Next in importance comes the municipality of Palghat with an area of 10 square miles, a population of 44,177, and an income only slightly less than that of Calicut. Here the experiment of local self-government has proved a decided success, and in its annual review Government have rarely had occasion to find fault with the general administration of the municipality. No doubt the conditions of the town are favourable to the growth of municipal institutions. Its situation on the railway in the middle of a rich taluk, with roads converging upon it from every direction, enables the municipality to levy contributions in the shape of tolls upon a large volume of trade passing through the town, and in spite of the share of the receipts paid to the local boards, the council's income from this source is nearly double that of Calicut where so much of the trade is sea-borne. Continuity of administration however has also contributed to the success of the municipality which for the past fourteen years has been presided over by the same chairman. The chairman is nominated by Government and of 20 councillors 15 are elected. The council was given the privilege of electing its chairman in 1912 and under the Act of 1930 councillors will all be elected. The bridge over the Kannadi river at Yakkara known as the Cardew bridge (costing 1.32 lakhs of rupees) has rendered communication with the rural parts of the taluk easy.

The council has been peculiarly successful in its educational policy, and for many years under the administration of Mr. C. M. Barrow, the Victoria College, which is referred to in Chapter X above, yielded a handsome profit to the municipality. The college was provided with new buildings in 1890 at a cost of Rs. 15,169 and further additions were made in 1894 and 1902 at a total outlay of Rs. 7,000. Among the many other improvements in Palghat, which are due to municipal enterprise, may be mentioned the Dance Market opened in 1897, the new municipal office and slaughter house, and two branch dispensaries, and it is to large contributions towards the expenses of construction made by the municipality and local boards, that the public owe the convenience of using for passenger and wheeled traffic the Kalpati railway bridge between Olavakkod and Palghat. The Sanitary Commissioner however has condemned the water-supply of the town as unsatisfactory and its drainage as deficient. The council maintains upwards of 60 miles of roads. The Victoria College has since been taken over by Government and raised to a first-grade college. Water-supply and drainage continue to be unsatisfactory.

Cochin
Municipi-
pality.

In Cochin municipal administration has always been fairly satisfactory considering the small income at the council's disposal and the difficulties with which it has to contend.

The conditions of the place are, as Government pointed out in its review of the administration report of 1872, favourable to the working of municipal institutions. The town is compact, and the population largely of a class to be reached by taxation. But the very compactness of the town renders the problems of water-supply and sanitation peculiarly difficult. This is inevitable in a crowded eastern town with a population of 1,574 and 2,639 occupied houses, cramped into a strip of land between the back water and the sea measuring barely a square mile. The wells which are used by the poorer classes are polluted by infiltration of sewage and drainage water and the health of the town is usually bad. Water for the better classes is conveyed in casks from the Alwaye river; but the supply is in the hands of private contractors, and its purity cannot be depended on. Various schemes for the improvement of the water-supply have been taken up by the municipality. Iron tanks for the storage of rain water were imported in 1882 and in 1893 an unsuccessful attempt was made to bore an artesian well at a cost of nearly Rs. 5,000. Another proposal, broached in 1895, to convey water to the town from the Hill Bungalow of the Cochin Raja at a cost of 8 lakhs also fell through. The drainage problem is also still unsolved. There are nearly 21,000 feet of masonry drains in the town, but the Sanitary Commissioner has condemned them as practically useless. The crowded and insanitary Mappilla quarter of Kalvetti is a standing menace to the health of the town, and the cholera and small-pox epidemics that periodically ravage Cochin all originate here. The council's income is small and barely suffices for the ordinary objects of municipal expenditure. Notable improvements to the town effected by the municipality are therefore few. Among them may be mentioned the reclamation of the Kalvetti swamp and the revetment with granite of the canal. Fires are a danger that has to be specially guarded against in Cochin; and since the last great fire of 1889 thatched houses have been forbidden in the crowded quarters of the town, and a loan of Rs. 2,300 was advanced by Government to enable the poorer inhabitants to roof their houses with tiles. The municipality maintains only 9 miles of road. There is considerable vehicular traffic in the town owing to its proximity to Mattancherry in the Cochin State. The management of the Vypeen ferry has now been transferred to the Cochin Port Conservancy Board together with the Victoria Jubilee jetty which was reconstructed by the municipality. The strength of the council is 20, all of whom are elected. Its chairman and vice-chairman are elected. Compulsory elementary education was introduced in this municipality in 1924 and the council maintains thirteen elementary schools—seven for boys (of which two are for Mappillas) and six for girls. Several tube wells have been sunk by the council in various

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Tellicherry
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parts of the town and the water from them is purer than that from wells ordinarily used by the people. The population of the town rose to 20,637 in 1921 and to 22,818 in 1931.

The working of the Tellicherry municipality, which like the others was constituted in 1866, does not call for any special remarks. Its administration, without being in any way brilliant, has usually been efficient. The chairman however is nominated by Government, the privilege of election having been withdrawn in 1898 'owing to the unsatisfactory state of municipal affairs.' The rate-payers are allowed to elect half of the 18 members of the council. Besides attending in the usual way to the lighting and sanitation, the council has enriched the town by a Jubilee market completed in 1889 at a cost of over Rs. 11,000 and by the Chalil branch dispensary; and has of late years managed the Brennen College with such success that, instead of costing the council more than Rs. 5,000 per annum for its upkeep, as it did in the year they took over charge, it now yields an annual profit of more than Rs. 1,000. For its water-supply the town is still dependent on wells public and private, but the water is reported to be excellent and the best on the coast. The health of the town is usually good; but cholera, small-pox and recently plague are prevalent in the crowded and insanitary Mappilla and Mukkuvan quarter of Chalil. The whole council are now elected and elect their own chairman. Chalil continues to be the black spot in this otherwise fairly healthy town.

Cannanore
municipi-
pality.

Unlike the other municipalities, Cannanore is not a centre of thriving and progressive trade. Apart from the bay which affords some shelter to small native craft, the town which is not situated upon a river or backwater offers few natural advantages to trade. Its strong fort however and the healthy open plain around it make it an ideal site for a cantonment and Cannanore was for many years the head-quarters of the Malabar and South Canara brigade. A regiment of Native infantry and a company of British troops are all that remain and the reduction of the garrison was a severe blow to the town. Much of the trade hitherto attracted to Cannanore by its populous cantonment was diverted to its natural outlet at Tellicherry, and the income of the municipality suffered in consequence. The population of the town dwindled from 31,170 in 1871 to 27,811 in 1901, whereas that of Tellicherry increased from 20,504 to 27,883 in the same period. The extension of the railway to the town has given a welcome impetus to trade, and the income of the municipality which for many years was almost stationary has shown a satisfactory increase in the last few years. Poverty however aggravated by inefficient administration has prevented the council from embarking upon any ambitious schemes of town improvement; and beyond maintaining medical and educational

institutions and attending to conservancy and sanitation, the municipality has done little for the town. Its roads however which are upwards of 23 miles in length are well maintained, and are the best municipal roads in Malabar. The population rose from 27,705 in 1921 to 34,236 in 1931; and the mileage of roads maintained from 23 miles in 1901 to 30-miles in 1931, the difference being due to the transfer to the council of roads previously maintained by the military department.

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The old wooden bridge connecting the Payyambalam with the beach has been replaced by a strong bridge with iron girders. The culverts on the busy roads have now been rebuilt with ferro-concrete slabs. The council maintains a high school and a town middle school in addition to several elementary schools. The hospital has been taken over by the Government, but the council has opened a Maternity and a Child Welfare Centre and also a free Ayurvedic dispensary. Protected water-supply has been provided for a small portion of the town. The Edward Memorial Town Hall opened in October 1930 was built largely with municipal funds.

Owing to want of funds the council has been unable to extend the water-supply to other parts of the town, to complete the drainage for the whole town or to introduce free and compulsory elementary education.
