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MAPOLS-404

# Government and Politics in North East India

MA POLITICAL SCIENCE

1st Semester

**Rajiv Gandhi University**

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# GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

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**MA [Political Science]**

**First Semester**

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## RAJIV GANDHI UNIVERSITY

Arunachal Pradesh, INDIA - 791 112

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E-28, Sector-8, Noida - 201301 (UP)

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## About the University

Rajiv Gandhi University (formerly Arunachal University) is a premier institution for higher education in the state of Arunachal Pradesh and has completed twenty-five years of its existence. Late Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, laid the foundation stone of the university on 4th February, 1984 at Rono Hills, where the present campus is located.

Ever since its inception, the university has been trying to achieve excellence and fulfill the objectives as envisaged in the University Act. The university received academic recognition under Section 2(f) from the University Grants Commission on 28th March, 1985 and started functioning from 1st April, 1985. It got financial recognition under section 12-B of the UGC on 25th March, 1994. Since then Rajiv Gandhi University, (then Arunachal University) has carved a niche for itself in the educational scenario of the country following its selection as a University with potential for excellence by a high-level expert committee of the University Grants Commission from among universities in India.

The University was converted into a Central University with effect from 9th April, 2007 as per notification of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

The University is located atop Rono Hills on a picturesque tableland of 302 acres overlooking the river Dikrong. It is 6.5 km from the National Highway 52-A and 25 km from Itanagar, the State capital. The campus is linked with the National Highway by the Dikrong bridge.

The teaching and research programmes of the University are designed with a view to play a positive role in the socio-economic and cultural development of the State. The University offers Undergraduate, Post-graduate, M.Phil and Ph.D. programmes. The Department of Education also offers the B.Ed. programme.

There are fifteen colleges affiliated to the University. The University has been extending educational facilities to students from the neighbouring states, particularly Assam. The strength of students in different departments of the University and in affiliated colleges has been steadily increasing.

The faculty members have been actively engaged in research activities with financial support from UGC and other funding agencies. Since inception, a number of proposals on research projects have been sanctioned by various funding agencies to the University. Various departments have organized numerous seminars, workshops and conferences. Many faculty members have participated in national and international conferences and seminars held within the country and abroad. Eminent scholars and distinguished personalities have visited the University and delivered lectures on various disciplines.

The academic year 2000-2001 was a year of consolidation for the University. The switch over from the annual to the semester system took off smoothly and the performance of the students registered a marked improvement. Various syllabi designed by Boards of Post-graduate Studies (BPGS) have been implemented. VSAT facility installed by the ERNET India, New Delhi under the UGC-Infonet program, provides Internet access.

In spite of infrastructural constraints, the University has been maintaining its academic excellence. The University has strictly adhered to the academic calendar, conducted the examinations and declared the results on time. The students from the University have found placements not only in State and Central Government Services, but also in various institutions, industries and organizations. Many students have emerged successful in the National Eligibility Test (NET).

Since inception, the University has made significant progress in teaching, research, innovations in curriculum development and developing infrastructure.

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# SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE

## Government and Politics in North-East India

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**Unit 1: Traditional Self-governing Institutions (Village Councils and Chieftaincy)**

- Meghalaya
- Mizoram
- Nagaland

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**Unit 2: Political Development**

- Inner Line
- Excluded and Partially excluded Areas

**Unit 2: Political Development**  
**(Pages 29-46)**

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- N.E. Areas Reorganization Act, 1971

**Unit 3: Sixth Schedule**  
**(Pages 47-68)**

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**Unit 4: Movements for New States**

- Naga separatist Movement and Mizo Movements and accord
- Autonomous Hill State Movement of Meghalaya and Karbi Anglong
- Political parties and Electoral Politics

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**Unit 5: Political Parties and Pressure Groups**

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# INTRODUCTION

In comparison to other states of India, the North-Eastern states have fewer voters (3.8% of the country's total population). These states have been allocated 25 out of a total of 543 seats in the Lok Sabha (meaning 4.6% of the total number of seats). Recently, it has been broadly acknowledged by policy makers and financial analysts of the region that the key impediment to economic growth of the North-Eastern region is the inconvenient geographical location.

The topic of dispute is the prevalent globalization that is dissolving territories and creating a world without borders, which is usually linked to economic integration. North-East India has better scope for development in the era of globalization, as it shares the major part of its borders with other countries. Consequently, a new policy developed among intellectuals and politicians that the North-Eastern region must be looked upon as the new venue for development and political integration with the rest of India and economic integration with the rest of Asia; more importantly, the East and Southeast Asia. This followed the reasoning that the policy of economic integration with the rest of India was not reaping the expected dividends.

Similar to other states of North-East India, Arunachal Pradesh also heavily relies on the Central Government's assistance. There are two constituencies in Arunachal Pradesh; Arunachal West and Arunachal East. The major political parties are BJP, INC, AC, AITC, SP, SAP, etc. Arunachal Pradesh has transitioned to an electoral democracy in a short period of time. The basic challenges facing the state today include that of secularizing governance and democratizing development. In Arunachal Pradesh, the biggest challenge in developing a fair-for-all framework for governance, without sacrificing the basic rights of the people, is setting right particularistic demand within the scaffold of collective standards. This, on any account, is a difficult task faced by the present and future decision-makers.

This book – *Government and Politics in North-East India* – has been designed keeping in mind the self-instruction mode (SIM) format and follows a simple pattern, wherein each unit of the book begins with an Introduction followed by Unit Objectives for the topic. The content is then presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner, and is interspersed with Check Your Progress questions to reinforce the student's understanding of the topic. A list of Questions and Exercises is also provided at the end of each unit. Summary, Key Terms and Activity further act as useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

This book is divided into five units:

**Unit 1:** Provides an overview of traditional self-governing institutions (village councils and chieftaincy)

**Unit 2:** Discusses political development of the North-East and Arunachal Pradesh

**Unit 3:** Focuses on the Sixth Schedule

**Unit 4:** Deals with the various movements for new states

**Unit 5:** Recognizes the role of political parties and pressure groups

## NOTES



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# UNIT 1 TRADITIONAL SELF- GOVERNING INSTITUTIONS (VILLAGE COUNCIL AND CHIEFTAINCY)

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*Traditional Self-  
Governing Institutions  
(Village Council and  
Chieftaincy)*

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### Structure

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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The success of democratic system depends on the extent of the participation of the citizens. No democratic system can flourish unless it appreciates the needs and aspirations of the community. Decentralization is inherent in the application of democratic ideals to the administrative organization and aims at widening the area of people's participation, autonomy, and authority through dispersion of powers from the top to the bottom. As Harold Laski puts, 'We must begin with the admission that all problems are not central problems, and that the results of problems not central in their incidence require decision at the place, and by the persons, where and by whom the incidence is most deeply felt.'

It is now widely accepted that grassroots democratic institutions at the local levels are essential for national growth and development and for effective participation of the people and they are integral and indispensable part of the democratic process. Grassroots democracy, based on a small unit of the government, enables the people to feel a sense of responsibility and to inculcate the values of democracy. These institutions strengthen the roots of democracy and the strength of a democratic government lies in the democratic consciousness of its people and their active participation in the affairs of the government. People's participation is sine qua non for development and it has been realized through the creation of various local bodies.

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In the wake of India's independence from British rule, the tribals of the country were allowed to have socio-political and economic institutions in accordance with their traditional (customary) laws and practices. This policy was adopted to preserve their cultural identities and interests, and dispel their fears of exploitation by the non-tribals. Hence, a number of institutions dominated by the traditional tribal culture with semi-autonomous and self-managing indigenous local institutions exist at different levels. Changes in these institutions have been introduced from time to time. These changes have been introduced mostly in response to the administrative needs of the various developmental policies of the Government of India. This unit presents an overview of continuities and changes in the traditional governing institution existing in the form of Village Authorities/Councils in the three north-eastern states, namely Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland. Though known by different names in these three states, they are the only institutions in the village level that still have a traditional ethos in modern local government setting.

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### 1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the structure and function of village councils and chieftaincy in Meghalaya
- Discuss the working and organization of village councils and leadership in Mizoram
- Describe the arrangement and function of the village councils and chieftaincy of Nagaland

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### 1.2 MEGHALAYA

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Meghalaya is located in the North-East region of India. It has the overall population of 2,964,007. It has a large rural population. In order to achieve distinct customs and traditions prevailing in the North-East region, it was essential to have a separate political and administrative structure in the region, such as the Panchayati Raj System. Some of the tribal communities in the region had their own traditional political systems.

All the three major ethnic tribal groups of Meghalaya, namely the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos, have their own traditional political institutions that have existed for hundreds of years. These political institutions were fairly well-urbanized and functioned at various tiers, such as the village level, clan level and state level.

The traditional political system of the Khasis had its own council, known as the *Durbar Kur*. It was presided over by the clan headman. The council or the Durbar managed the internal affairs of the clan. Every village had a local assembly known as the *Durbar Shnong*. The village Durbar or council was presided over by the village headman. These councils played an administrative role in matters of common interests, such as sanitation, water supply, health, roads, education and conflict resolution.

The inter-village issues were dealt with through a political unit. It covered adjacent Khasi villages. This political unit was known as the *Raid*. The raid had its own council called the *Raid Durbar*. It was presided over by the elected headmen known as *Basans*, *Lyngdohs* or *Sirdars*. Above the *raid* was the supreme political authority known as the *Syiemship*. The Syiemship was a congregation of several *raids*. It was headed by an elected chief known as the *Syiem* (or the king). The Syiem ruled the Khasi state through

## NOTES

the State Assembly. It was known as the *Durbar Hima*. Most of the elections were through adult male suffrage. No male was allowed to enter the Durbar (assembly) without a mustache. It was the rule of Khasi tradition. The Syiems and their 'courts'—Durbars [councils which traditionally deliberate on issues of concern (especially taxation, land rights, marriages etc.) with *myntris* (ministers) and headmen in attendance] function.

### Powers and functions of Durbar Shnong

The powers and functions of Durbar Shnong in Meghalaya were as follows:

- Developmental, such as construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, water sources and sanitation
- Establishment and maintenance of markets, including settlement of disputes and collection of dues
- Welfare works and community services
- Judicial powers to solve petty cases
- Initiation and organization of cultural festivals

In several urban areas, the Durbar Shnong works together with government agencies, functionaries and NGOs on local issues such as water supply, electricity, roads, schools, as well as tackling anti-social elements such as bootleggers and drug peddlers. It also collaborates with church organizations to construct churches and cremation grounds. Recently, the Khasi Jaintia Presbyterian (KJP) Synod, sponsored by the North-Eastern Council (NEC), was instrumental in bringing non-conventional solar energy to a few villages in West Khasi Hills. The Durbar Shnong is usually approached to implement other government programmes like adult literacy and non-formal education, public distribution system, navodaya vidyalayas, etc.

Legislative jurisdiction of Durbar Shnong includes rules and regulations to be followed by members of the village, such as compulsory participation in community service, and regulations concerning social conduct.

The Durbar Shnong has limited funds which are generally self-generated. These include the imposition of fines, contributions, duties from households to meet general expenses.

In addition, the two other traditional ruling systems of Meghalaya were the Dolois of the Jaintias and the Nokmas of the Garos.

The Dolois of the Jaintia Hills and the Nokmas, or traditional headmen of the Garos, are not as influential or well organized as the Syiemships, which still collect tithes, exercise their influence to arbitrate in disputes but have been marginalized in the political process by the State Legislature and the District Councils, especially the latter. It should be pointed out here that the Syiemships are a clan based political system more in the line of a feudal and monarchical political authority rather than tribal democratic traditions. The limited political participation available to the common tribal under the traditional system need not necessarily fulfill the political aspirations of newly-emerging, forward-looking tribal elites.

It could be cogently argued therefore, that in Meghalaya, there are not two but three competing systems of authority, each of which is seeking to 'serve' or represent the same constituency. The result has been confusion and confrontation, especially at the local level, on a number of issues.

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### **District Councils**

It was felt that Panchayati Raj institutions may get into conflict with these traditional political systems. The Sixth Schedule was appended to the Constitution on the recommendations of a sub-committee formed under the leadership of Gopinath Bordoloi. The constitution of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) is provided in certain rural areas of the North-East including areas of Meghalaya. The Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council, the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council and the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council are the major councils of prime importance in the state.

The District Councils in Meghalaya are among the oldest in the country. They began at the time of undivided Assam. Essentially built to protect the hill groups from domination by the plains, there is a distinctly anomalous situation in Meghalaya today: the District Councils are dominated by the tribal communities. So is the legislature of the State and political leadership which are controlled by the three major tribes of Meghalaya: Khasi, Jaintia and Garo. So, certain questions arise: whose interests are the Autonomous District Councils protecting? Have they been effective in taking self-governance to the grassroots? If not, where have they fallen short?

It has been observed in Meghalaya, especially in recent years, political instability; floor crossings combined with abrupt changes of leadership have disrupted the functioning of the Councils. In addition, there appears to be a growing public perception that these groups have become a smaller version of the state government without giving a commensurate public benefit and politicians here appear to be preparing themselves for the next stage, i.e., elections to the state assembly instead of working for their constituents.

Given the small size of the hill states under the Sixth Schedule, a conflict of interest was bound to arise between the legislators to the state assembly and the District Councils. Thus, many local issues such as road repair, water and electricity supply, cutting of forests, disposal of waste, building licenses and fees come up not just before members of District Council but are taken up by the public with the local state legislator as well as the Members of Parliament. There is, therefore, an overlap of authority.

There is a long list of provisions for subjects and powers as far as all District Councils in the four States covered by the Sixth Schedule, viz. Articles 244 (2) and 275 (1). This is an extremely comprehensive list which covers subjects such as allotment, occupation or use, or setting apart, of land. Apart from land which is a reserved forest for the purposes of agriculture or grazing or for residential or other non-agricultural purposes, the list includes the regulation of jhum (shifting cultivation), establishment of village or town committees or councils and their powers as well as administration, town and village police, flood control, trade and commerce.

The rules of town administration under the Sixth Schedule are not necessarily in consonance with those of the 74th Constitutional Amendment. Indeed, there are proposals for amendments to the Constitution from the Meghalaya Autonomous District Councils which seek to do away with Municipalities because they are said to be 'not popular with the tribals'. Apart from Shillong, Jowai has a municipality under a Chief Executive appointed by the Government and the move to abolish the municipality will enable the ADC to re-establish a Town Committee under the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Village and Town Administration Act of 1974.

There have been differences of opinion on the relevance of even the implementation of the 74th Amendment with regard to Nagar Palikas or Municipalities, applicable in the case of Meghalaya to the city of Shillong. Indeed, the clash between a 'constitutional'

## NOTES

exigency and local views was most recently seen when elections could not be held for the Shillong Municipality because of pressure from some political parties, student organizations and other non-government groups. All this happened despite a Supreme Court ruling ordering the elections. A senior minister in the cabinet told a workshop that local people did not want elections to city administrations and that for small constituencies; they felt that the local state legislator who had been elected from these wards should do the job. Yet, in the case of Shillong, the municipality has a history of decades of functioning with 11 elections.

\* The District Councils in the Khasi hills have a unique history: although not barred by law, non-tribals have rarely contested and won elections here. There are charges that non-tribals are not encouraged to vote in these elections and that their names are frequently deleted from the rolls. The tribal and non-tribal divide appears more acute here than in other Sixth Schedule areas. This is not the case, for example, in the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council where there are non-tribal members.

Ideally, the Government should consider the creation of non-tribal voters' constituencies, to be delimited not in geographical terms but only in the manner of a specific number of seats earmarked for the purpose in a people-proportionate manner. In such a situation, the non-tribals, for example, in the Khasi Hills could vote for a non-tribal candidate in a non-tribal, non-geographical constituency. If, however, for purposes of political exigency, it is not possible to create such constituencies, the Governor should be empowered to nominate a maximum of five and a minimum of three non-tribal members. In such a case, the Government may also consider increasing the strength of the ADC to either 35 or 33, as the case may be. Such a provision might help defuse the problem arising out of the political confrontation between tribals and non-tribals, without jeopardizing the legitimate political aspirations for self-governance of the tribal population.

It may be noted that the powers of the District Councils do not extend to all of the city areas of Shillong. However, opinion is divided on the future of the District Councils: senior officials and politicians in the State Government say that the District Councils have outlived their utility and view them as a drain on scarce public resources and should be dispensed with, especially with the existence of the State Legislature. This is strongly opposed by various sections of society in Meghalaya, not least by the District Council members themselves. Indeed, such a drastic step is unlikely to have extensive support and could instead lead to further alienation of a new segment of society in Meghalaya.

Trends towards militancy in the State can be discouraged through measures leading to self-governance. For this to happen, the traditional systems of governance will have to be included and given specific roles and opportunities, instead of being marginalized as they have been for decades.

It is, therefore, to be considered whether an intermediary tier be placed under the existing Autonomous District Councils (which can be called by another name, if so desired, be divided). This tier could be representative of existing village councils and traditional systems as the first tier of self-government where such institutions are functional and strong. This may be called the Durbar in the Khasi Hills and by the local nomenclature elsewhere and may comprise elected members of each village from the community/traditional systems. There should not be more than 15 members.

The situation needs to be assessed realistically. Such institutions were extremely influential but can they go back in time and hold those powers of the pre-independence period? This is unlikely. Compromises will have to be struck by all sides with a great deal of flexibility and vision for the sake of the immediate and the long-term future.

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It is suggested that provisions for decentralization in any form should always take into account the need for democratization and gender justice. In Meghalaya, five members of each of the three Autonomous District Councils should also be elected from the first tier. This should include the traditional chiefs/rajas (Syiems).

The details of subject and power sharing can be worked out but it would suffice to suggest here that those facilities/powers which affect village communities—village roads, births and death registry, marriages, property alienation and divisions, power, water bodies, forests, education, agriculture, preservation of animal stock and cattle pound, etc. (all at the village level)—should be in the hands of the village-level system. At the international border, they will be associated with assisting border security agencies and help both in identification and settlements, etc.

Larger issues and subjects can go to the second tier - i.e., the amended District Councils. The State Legislature in this case is the third tier of governance, an overall supervisory and policy-making body that constitutionally delegates powers—as in the case of the 73rd Amendment—to local governing bodies but is not associated with the daily running of detailed projects. That may be left to the first and second tiers.

The lacunae in the functioning of the District Councils lies in their lack of financial powers and their subsequent dependence on State Governments. This dependence can be reduced with the appointment of a State Finance Commission (although these are now currently appointed in Sixth Schedule States and are required to be set up in those States following the 73rd Amendment; however, this is no reason why such Finance Commissions should not be set up in the Sixth Schedule States, thereby making them beneficiaries of the 73rd Amendment. The life of the State Finance Commission should be renewed at the end of every five-year term) which can authorize the division of the funds necessary for the smooth functioning of the newly-structured Councils. The State Finance Commission should report directly to the Governor and should make recommendations on the net proceeds of the taxes, duties and tolls and fees leviable by the state, grants-in-aid to the District Councils, etc. from the consolidated fund of the state. This is not a new suggestion but needs to be given legal status.

Such a commission should lay down that the monies should go to the Councils as a matter of course and, as in the case of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills, with detailed plans drawn up by the Councils and the traditional institutions in consultation with the State Government. A group of technical and financial advisors, under the overall supervision of the Executive Council, should help draft these proposals. The budgets can be a part of the annual State budget and should be passed with as few changes as possible.

The role of the Governor needs to be examined, especially as he has powers to hold up legislation passed by the District Councils. It should be made mandatory for the Governor to pass legislation proposed by the Council, if he does not respond within six months. There have been cases in Meghalaya where proposals by a Council have been held up for more than 10 years.

Some District Councils, both in Assam and Meghalaya, have been characterized by political instability caused by defections and efforts to oust the Chief Executive Councilor. The provisions of the anti-Defection Act should be made applicable here and in other States under the Sixth Schedule.

An extremely sensitive issue in Meghalaya is the possibility of a political role for women in the District Councils and traditional institutions. There is considerable opposition to the suggestions of reservations of one-third of all seats for women, as in the panchayats

and nagar palikas. The matrilineal system of inheritance and controls on society in Meghalaya has made this a difficult political and social question. But while reservation may not be acceptable, local governing systems should accept the basis of gender representation and if necessary by way of nomination as in other district councils. Thus, the State Governor should be empowered to nominate women to not less than three seats in each District Council. Some traditions are good for all time; but any legislation or tradition which discriminates is undemocratic and unacceptable in today's society. In Meghalaya, public opinion is growing in favour of women's participation in politics and adoption of principles of modern liberal democracy. This progressive trend may be strengthened with Constitutional recognition of the Durbars on the basis of the arguments developed above.

## NOTES

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1. Why were Panchayati Raj institutions set up?
2. On whose recommendation was the Sixth Schedule appended to the Constitution?
3. What was the traditional council of the Khasis known as?

## 1.3 MIZORAM

Before the advent of the British in Mizoram, administration of village was centred on the hereditary chief. The chief was assisted by the council of elders called *Upas*, who were appointed and dismissed by him. The Chief was a benevolent ruler, guardian, leader and defender of the people. The chief was the supreme authority over the villagers whose word was law within the limits of his jurisdiction. The recognition and honour given to the position of a chief enabled him to enjoy certain privileges.

Although all power was theoretically in the hands of the chief, practically speaking, he would never try a case without consulting his *Upas*. In dealing with cases, the chief and *Upas* were guided by established customs. The way the chief ran his administration certainly contained some elements of democracy and social justice for all the members of the village community.

The village occupied the most important place in the traditional administrative system. Every village was autonomous and led a community life. The people of the village lived on the basis of self-sufficiency in matters of food, clothing, and shelter. As far as possible, the villagers avoided any dependence on outside assistance. People belonging to different clans mutually help each other in their day to day life. The village had a close knit village community, well organized and ordered life which contributed to their tranquility and happiness. The main source of strength of the village community was derived from the strong social and economic bases developed by them with their own efforts, manpower, resources, and commitments.

When Mizoram came under the British Administration in 1890, it did not bring any drastic change in the administration of the chiefs. The village administration under the chief was carried on, under the overall supervision of the Superintendent or the Sub-Division Officer (S.D.O.). The chiefs continued to carry on all internal and local administration in their respective villages with hardly any interference from either the superintendent or S.D.O., unless a certain matter was specifically brought to their notice.

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But the annexation of the British resulted in certain changes in the liberties of the chiefs. The chiefs were divested of some of their autocratic powers including right to impose capital punishment, seize food stores and properties of the villagers, to tax traders doing business in their jurisdictions, right to freedom to make their sons chiefs under their own jurisdiction etc.

In 1898, the superintendent issued orders which laid down certain duties of the chiefs. In 1937, the Government modified the powers and duties of the chiefs and issued fresh order. The steps taken by the Government resulted in a gradual increase in the number of chiefs. The British followed the policy of the internal control of the villages by their own leaders, the chiefs. The aim was to interfere as little as possible between the chiefs and their people and to impress upon the chiefs their responsibilities for the maintenance of order in their villages.

After India's Independence, the Constituent Assembly set up a sub-committee, known as the North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Committee, to recommend an institutional framework for governance of the hill areas of Assam. The Subcommittee was headed by Gopinath Bordoloi, the Chief Minister of Assam and popularly known as the Bordoloi Committee. The Bordoloi Committee recommended that in each of the Hill District, a district Council should be formed to promote and regulate the tribal way of life, according to their own genius. The recommendations were accepted and incorporated into Article 244(2) and included in Part A of the Table appended to paragraph 20 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India.

Under the Sixth Schedule, the Lushai Hills District Council and the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (PLRC) were inaugurated on 25th April, 1952 and 23rd April, 1953 respectively. The Lushai Hill District (Chieftainship Abolition) Act, 1952 was passed by the Assam Legislative Assembly with effect from 1st January, 1953. According to the Act, all the existing Chiefs as on 25th April 1952 within the Lushai Hill District were to be abolished. However, the Chiefs were allowed to function according to the instructions given by the District Council until another alternative was formed. Armed with the Sixth Schedule, the District Council enacted certain legislations which abolished and reduced the special privileges enjoyed by the Chiefs. The Lushai Hills District (Reduction of Fathang) Act, 1953 reduced the amount of Fathang (Fathang is the due payable to a Chief by villagers which amounted to six tins of paddy or ₹2 per household per year) from six tins to three tins of paddy if paid in kind or from rupees two to rupees one per year if paid in cash. The Lushai Hills District (Social Customs) Act, 1953 abolished the traditional dues payable to the Chief like *Sa Chhaih* (flesh tax), *Chi Chhaih* (Salt Tax) and *Khul Chhaih* (bee tax) with effect from 1st June, 1953. Similarly the PLRC passed the Pawi – Lakher Autonomous region (Social Customs and Practices ) Act, 1953 and the Pawi- Lakher Autonomous Region (Reduction of Fathang) Act, 1953 which abolished and reduced the traditional dues payable to the chief within its jurisdiction.

The District Council in its meeting on 15th April, 1953 adopted the list of villages as being declared to have Village Councils which was published in the Assam Gazette on 27th May, 1953. The District Council prepared the groundwork for the introduction of modern representative democratic institutions by passing the Lushai Hills District Village Council Act, 1953 on 13th July, 1953, which received the assent of the Governor of Assam on 29th November, 1953 and published in the Assam Gazette on 9th December, 1953.

The first Village Council election was held in 1954 which was the biggest ever democratic exercise in electing the largest number of candidates through secret ballot. A



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high degree of political activity was noticed in the Village Council elections. Almost in every village, it was an intensely contested election and there were very few cases of political somnolence leading to candidates returning uncontested. The PLRC also enacted the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Village Councils) Act, 1954 on 24th September, 1954. The village council was introduced with a belief that people would participate actively in various political processes and establish a genuine political control over them. By doing so they will have a say in the all round development of the village. Most importantly, the village council was aimed at democratizing the system by decentralizing the power structure.

The Village Council was officially inaugurated with great fanfare in 1954 and started functioning from 16th August 1954. The introduction of Village Council brought about a significant change in the traditional village administration. It brought modern participatory political process in Mizoram and replaced the traditional political institutions. It gave a new orientation to politics and changed the outlook of the people. It widened the political horizon of the people by making them to look beyond their communities instead off fragmented villages or communities. The new set of leadership concept of election, representation, and majority decisions slowly started creeping into these bodies. A new set of leadership having wider political perspective and modern outlook emerged through the Village Council. The leadership of these bodies was also undergoing a slow change and new emerging leadership started gaining influence in the institutions. Thus, the introduction of Village Council system brought about a total and far reaching change in the entire socio-political ethos of Mizoram.

The Government of Assam passed the Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of Chiefs' Rights) Act, 1954, which received the assent of the President of India on 26th June, 1954 and was published in the *Assam Gazette* on 30th June, 1954. The traditional chieftainship was abolished and the rights and interests of 259 Chiefs in Mizo District and 50 Chiefs in Pawi-Lakher Regional Council were acquired with effect from 1st April, 1955 and 15th April, 1956 respectively. The chiefs were paid a compensation of ₹14 lakhs. Thus, the oldest institutional traditional hereditary chieftainship came to an end.

### 1.3.1 Reasons for the Abolition of Chieftainship

- The people were disgusted with the system of autocratic rule of the chiefs. Some Chiefs abused their power by ruling excessively and this has been an intolerable burden for the villagers.
- The different kinds of taxes levied by the Chiefs had been too heavy for the poor villagers to bear. There was nothing that the Chief could not snatch from the citizens by any means. Chiefs treated the citizens unfairly.
- Free services rendered to the Chiefs by each family of the villagers affected the family economy as a result that a single-man family could never produce enough food.
- The new system of administration based on the democratic principles had been infused in the minds of some of the local leaders. People, therefore, wanted to have their leaders elected on these principles. They wanted to have a voice in the administration of their own affairs and for the general welfare.
- The principle of equality of men in the eye of God enshrined in the Christian doctrine and the equality of men before law induced people to rebel against the Chiefs.

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- The administration of the village by a hereditary Chief was replaced by a democratic system of village administration through Village Council. As was in the past, village administration remained autonomous and was carried on by the village council under the overall supervision of the District Council.

When Mizoram attained the Union Territory status on 21st January, 1972, the Mizo District Council was abolished on 29th April, 1972. The PLRC was trifurcated into three Regional Councils, viz., Pawi, Lakher and Chakma on 2nd April, 1972. The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953 and the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Village Councils) Act, 1954 have been adapted by the Government of Mizoram and the three Autonomous District Councils respectively for the administration of the villages in their respective areas. A department called Local Administration, Town Planning and Housing was set up to take over, inter alia, the village administrations through Village Councils. When Mizoram was elevated to a full-fledged State on 20th February, 1987, the existing laws which were applicable in the Union Territory of Mizoram continue to be applicable to the State of Mizoram by the State of Mizoram Adaptation of Laws Order (No.2) 1987.

### 1.3.2 Composition

The Village Council is the lowest administrative unit in Mizoram. The State Government may, by notification, propose any village to have a Village Council and define its territorial limits. A village council may comprise one or more villages and the number of members is determined by the number of houses it contains.

1. For village not exceeding 200 houses, there shall be 3 members.
2. For village with more than 200 houses, but not exceeding 400 houses, there shall be 5 members;
3. For village with more than 400 houses, but not exceeding 700 houses, there shall be 7 members;
4. For village with more than 700 houses, but not exceeding 500 houses, there shall be 9 members;
5. For village with more than 1500 houses, there shall be 11 members.

### 1.3.3 Members

#### Qualification

A Village Council is a lawfully constituted body. To be qualified for election to the Village Council, a person must (a) be a member of Scheduled Tribe; (b) attained the age of 25; (c) should have voted in the area where he/she seeks election; (d) should not be a member of any other village council; (e) should be not of mind or unsound stand so declared by a competent Court of Authority; and (f) not have been convicted by an offence under the Lushai Hills Autonomous District (Administration of Justice) Rules, 1953 before and after the commencement of the Act.

#### Term of Office

The normal term of a Village Council is 3 years, but it can be extended or shortened for a period not exceeding 18 months in aggregate members of the Village Council shall hold office during the life of the Village Council. A member elected to fill a vacancy shall hold office for the remaining term of office of the member whose seat falls vacant.

## **NOTES**

### **President**

The President is elected by and from among the elected members of the Village Council. The President occupies a pivotal position in Village Council administration and enjoys considerable authority and powers. He must ensure that the meetings of the Village Council are conducted with proper order, decorum, and decency and have the power of enforcing his decision as follows:

1. He may direct any member whose conduct is disorderly to withdraw immediately from the day's meeting.
2. If any member is ordered to withdraw for a second time from a meeting of the same session, the President may suspend him for the remaining period of the same session.
3. If any member fails to comply with the order given to him under the above reasons, the President shall report, in writing the conduct of the member, to the State Government. On receipt of such report, the State Government may, if it thinks necessary, suspend the member for any period considered reasonable.

The President shall issue notices and instructions to prevent the outbreak of fire, epidemic, etc., in the village. Whenever notices, orders, circulars or letters received from the State Government are to be re-distributed to other villages, he shall send them through the Secretary. The President is responsible for the compliance of all orders and notifications issued by the authority. He shall cause all orders and notifications to be read out by the Secretary in the meeting of the Village Council and, if necessary, to brought to the knowledge of the public. He shall examine the books kept by the Secretary from time to time.

### **Vice-president**

The Vice-President is elected by the elected members from among themselves. During the vacancy in the office of the President or the incapacity or absence of the President, the Vice-President shall perform the duties and exercise the powers of the President.

### **Secretary**

The Secretary, who is a village writer, is appointed and dismissed by the State Government on the recommendation of the President. The Secretary shall not be a member of the Village Council but may take part in the Village Council deliberations with no vote. The Secretary shall record all the proceedings of the Village Council and Village Council Court under the signature of the President. All the orders, notifications and records, signed by the President, shall be published by him. All the books and records of the Village Council and Village Council Court shall be keep by him and send to the State Government when asked for.

### **Tlangau**

Normally, there shall be only one Tlangau (village crier) for each Village Council. If it is found necessary to have more than one Tlangau, prior approval of the State Government should be obtained. Tlangau is appointed by the Village Council through selection from the applicants. Tlangau shall bring to the notice of the public all orders and notifications as directed by the Village Council. He shall summon all parties and persons required by the Village Council or Village Council Court to attend its meetings. Any member of the Village Council may order the Tlangau to summon all the villagers in case of emergency.

The Tlangau has to inform all the members for the meetings of the Village Council summoned by the President. The Tlangau shall be exempted from Hnatlang enforced by the Village Council and *Zoram Chhiah* (zoram tax).

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### Executive

The Executive body of a Village Council consists of the President, Vice-President, and the Secretary. Neither the President nor the Vice-President shall hold the office of the Secretary.

#### 1.3.4 Meeting

The President shall preside over all the meetings of the Village Council. He shall summon the meeting whenever necessity arises. A meeting of the Village Council can be called on a requisition made in writing by at least two-thirds of the members. No person other than a member of the Village Council shall vote or speak or take part in its deliberation and any person contravening shall be punishable with a fine not exceeding ₹50 by the Village Council. Normally, all the decisions are taken by a majority of votes of the members present and voting, but in case of equality of votes, the President has a casting vote.

The President or Vice-President can be removed by the State Government on the grounds of losing the support of the majority of members but refuses to tender his resignation or is too inefficient or too corrupt to carry on the village administration or is acting in a manner prejudicial to the interest of the State.

If a member absents himself continuously in ten consecutive meetings without permission, the Village Council may convene a special meeting and declare his seat vacant after giving him an opportunity for a hearing. In such case, the Village Council shall inform the State Government.

If, in the opinion of the State Government, a Village Council is too inefficient or is not able to carry on the village administration or is acting in the manner prejudicial to the interest of the State or any other reasons considered sufficient for dissolution, it can dissolve the Village Council. During the period of such dissolution, the State Government can appoint any person or persons to assume charge of the village administration and also act as a Village Council Court for the remaining period of the term.

#### 1.3.5 Village Council Fund

Every Village Council shall constitute a Village Council Fund. Except district revenue and taxes, all collections by or on behalf of the Village Council, authorized by law, shall be paid into the Village Council Fund. The President shall be the Treasurer and the Secretary shall keep the list of the collections. The account should be open for examination by any subscriber of the collection.

The Village Council may appoint a Treasurer from among the members who shall keep development grants and other funds exclusive of a collection authorized by law. The Treasurer shall maintain the account of the Village Council and may conduct inspection in its sitting and by any official authorized by the State Government.

#### 1.3.6 Power, Function and Responsibilities

The Village Council has the power to allot land within its boundaries for *jhum* cultivation each year through a draw of lots. It also has the power to enforce Hnatlang (common

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service rendered by people for common good) in the interest of the public whenever the occasion demands. Any person who does not comply with the order of Hnatlang shall be liable to run either in kind or cash which may not exceed ₹50 per Hnatlang day unless he has been exempted from Hnatlang. The Village Council has the power to exempt any person from Hnatlang at its own discretion. No person who is 60 years or above shall be compelled to do any Hnatlang. Any person below 15 years shall not be allowed to represent in the Hnatlang. Every person shall have the option of payment of cash compensation in lieu of Hnatlang at the rate of not exceeding ₹25 per Hnatlang day.

The village council can allot sites within its jurisdiction for residential and non-agricultural purposes with the exception of shops, stalls, hotels and other business houses of the same nature and issue Pass and may incorporate such conditions in the Pass. In case of violation of any such conditions, the Village Council may either cancel the Pass or impose a fine of ₹50. A Village Council can evict person having unauthorized occupation of land and may order for vacation within 7 days. In case the unauthorized person persists beyond 7 days, the Village Council may order demolition of the building or impose a fine of ₹5 per day so long as the unauthorized occupant persists.

In the village where master plan and detail plan or site plan have been done, house site may be allotted by the Village Council by giving a Pass where survey and settlement operation has not been done. In the village where jhum cultivation is practised, the Village Council shall be the competent authority to allot land for it for a period of one year, subject to any rules or regulations in force in this respect.

Every year each Village Council shall specify a period for cutting a jungle and for doing all preparatory activities for the purpose of jhum, during which all villagers having jhum must start and finish the same. The Village Council shall specify a date for burning of jhum land, and shall inform all villagers at least three days ahead of the fixed date. In a place where there is a danger of spreading of fire beyond the jhum area, the Village Council may enforce Hnatlang to clear the jungle to prevent spreading of fire, in which all persons having jhum have to participate.

The Village Council shall keep registers for the animals seized and feed them properly. The feeding charge must be collected from the owner. If the animal is not claimed within 7 days, the Village Council shall cause them to be sold by public auction and the sale proceeds shall be deposited into the local fund. Animal tax shall be collected by the Village Council within its jurisdiction and fifty per cent shall be credited to the local fund and the remaining fifty per cent shall be credited to the Consolidated Fund of Mizoram. The Village Council shall maintain registers for animals within its jurisdiction and keep accounts of registration fee.

The Village Council may dispose of dead trees in the manner it considers most beneficial for the village within the Village Safety Reserve. It may also distribute land within the Village Supply Reserve. Each Village Council shall constitute Village Forest Fire Prevention Committee to prevent the outbreak of fire. The Village Council shall take appropriate measures towards desired compliance by all villagers or households in this regard. Each Village Council shall be responsible for the sanitation of the village. A Sanitation Committee may be appointed by the Village Council.

### **Resignation, Removal and Dissolution**

The President may resign before the expiration of his term of office by giving notice in writing to the State Government. It becomes effective from the date of the information to the President that it has been accepted by the State Government. The Vice-President

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may also resign his office address to the President who shall, without delay, forward to the State Government for acceptance. Any member may at any time resign from his office in writing and submit it to the President or Vice-President, in the absence of the President, who shall, without delay, forward it to the State Government for acceptance. Until his resignation is accepted, he shall continue to function as such.

### 1.3.7 Village Council Court

It was under the Lushai Hills Autonomous District (Administration of Justice) Rules, 1953 that judicial powers were entrusted to the Village Council. The Rules provided for the establishment of Village Council Court, the judicial wing of the Village Council. The Village Council Court was established with the objective of providing speedy and inexpensive system of justice to the villagers. The members of the Village Council or not less than three members of the Village Council elected by the members among themselves shall constitute the Village Council Court. The quorum of the Court shall be three members or half of the total number of the Village Council. The jurisdiction of the Court extends to the territorial limits of the village. The Court was given the power to try suits and cases, both civil and criminal, in which both the parties belong to Scheduled Tribes.

In civil matters, the Court had jurisdiction to try cases which fall within the purview of village or tribal laws and customs. The Court has the power to award all costs and compensation to those against whom unfounded or vexatious suits and cases have been instituted before the Court. The fines and payment imposed and ordered may be enforced by distraint of the property of the offender. In criminal case, the Court was given the power to try cases which fall within the purview of tribal laws and customs and offences of petty nature, simple assault and hurt, affront and affray of whatever kind, drunken or disorderly brawling, public nuisance and simple cases of wrongful restraint.

The Court has the power to impose a fine for any offence it is competent to try, up to the limit of ₹ 500. The Court may award payment in retribute or compensation to the aggrieved or injured party in accordance with the tribal laws. The Court has the power to order attendance of the accused and witnessed to be examined and to imposed a fine not exceeding ₹100 on any person willfully fail to attend when so ordered. An appeal against the judgements or decisions of the Village Council Court lies with the Subordinate or Additional District Council Court, which must be preferred within 60 days of the decisions. However, the Village Council Court could not try cases of heinous crimes like murder, rape, sexual intercourse with minor and sodomy.

### 1.3.8 Election to Village Councils

Up to 1971, Village Council elections were conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Lushai Hills District (Election to Village Councils) Rules, 1954. At present, all elections to Village Council shall be held under the provisions of the Mizoram (Election to Village Councils) Rules, 1974 as amended from time to time. The Governor shall, by notification, call upon the constituency concerned to elect the number of members to be returned and shall appoint the date or dates for such elections. A candidate must furnish a security deposit of ₹ 25 to the Returning Officer along with his application for candidature within the time prescribed voting at elections shall be conducted by symbol system.

Candidates shall elect symbols on the approved list according to their preferences. If more than one candidate selected the same symbol, the Returning Officer shall decide by drawing lots. The number of election symbols at present is 60. Each candidate shall have his own ballot box at his own expense. The ballot box should be one foot square

box made of sawn timber having a hole half inches long and half inch wide on the top side for casting votes. One or more polling stations shall be set up for the same constituency depending upon the number of voters in the concerned constituency. For Village Council election, universal adult suffrage with 18 years is the qualifying age of the voter. Each voter shall be given as many ballot papers as there are seats to be elected. In case of equality of votes, the Returning Officer shall decide membership between those candidates by drawing lots.

A candidate shall forfeit his deposit if the number of valid votes polled by him does not exceed one-sixth of the total number of valid votes polled. The elections of the members are subject to the approval of the State Government and require a formal Government notification.

The Governor shall constitute an Election Tribunal to hear and dispose of all election petitions arising out of the general elections to Village Councils. The election of a member can be challenged through a petition signed by a person, who was a candidate at the election, to the Governor or any Officer appointed by him, within 30 days of the declaration of the election results. A petition shall be accompanied by a Treasury challan showing a deposit of ₹35. Such deposit shall be forfeited to the Government in case the petition fails. If, however, the petition succeeds, the deposit shall be refunded. An election petition may be withdrawn within 14 days from the date of filing with a refund of the security deposit.

### **1.3.9 Village Council Politics**

Since its inception in 1954, Mizoram has witnessed 14 general elections to Village Council. The elections were contested entirely on party lines. Each time, these elections have produced great enthusiasm among the people and have been keenly contested by political parties and independents. The electoral politics at Village Council level is found to be working slightly differently from the State level. Each of the political parties harbours the desire to expand its sphere of influence, strengthen the local units of party organization, build up its local base of political power and try to gain maximum number of seats. Sometimes, political parties contest the elections on an electoral adjustment with other political parties in selected villages and at the same, put up candidates against the same parties in other villages. In Mizoram, Village Council elections witnessed little political violence mainly because of the administrative skill of the State Government, political parties' commitment to democratic norms and above all, people's cooperation.

The usual common techniques of electioneering were canvassing by the candidates and their supporters from house to house, exchanging solutions, handshaking to create emotional impact and partisan appeals. Written impressive slogans and posters showing the names of the candidates and their election symbols occupied every available space of the walls. Appeals were made in the name of the political parties and contained references to past performances, qualifications, biographical sketches, the candidates' love for the village etc. Some candidates issued printed personal appeals to voters. Leaflets and pamphlets have been distributed and urged voters to support.

### **1.3.10 Reorganization of Village Council**

To make it more effective, the role and functions of the Village Council need to be reviewed. Over the years, several attempts have been made to reform the Village Council institutions. The first major move was made in 1979, when the Government of Mizoram appointed a Special Study Team, consisting of 9 members under the Chairmanship of the Minister, LATP & H. The terms of reference of the study team were:

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1. To make an in-depth study of the Ashok Mehta Committee Report and to examine its applications for Mizoram in light of the minutes of the meeting of the Council of Ministers held on the 14th May, 1979.
2. To examine the position of the existing Village Council system in Mizoram in the light of the report of the Ashok Mehta Committee and to make recommendations to the Government of Mizoram on the improvement of the existing Village Council as to the size, composition, remunerations and powers including the question of transfer of more administrative, development and financial powers from the Government.

The Study Team made an exhaustive study of administrative problems pertaining to the Village Council institutions and submitted its report called the Mizoram Panchayati Raj Bill, 1981. The Bill envisaged a two-tier system. A federation of villages having a population between 15,000-20,000 form the lower-tier and development councils, covering the area of revenue sub-divisions to form the upper-tier. However, the Bill was never introduced in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly.

The Mizoram Legislative Assembly unanimously passed a resolution tabled by its member, Pu Lalnghenga, on 9th September, 1983. The resolution said, 'This Assembly is of the opinion that it is a high time to increase the remuneration and facilities of the Village Councils, and, therefore, resolves that (a) Remuneration of the Village Council Members, Secretaries and Tlangau be enhanced, (b) Recurring grant be given to them in proportion to the size of the villages'.

On 18th March, 1994, the Mizoram Legislative Assembly unanimously passed a non-official resolution tabled by Pu Lalrinchhana, which read, 'This House is of the opinion that the rules, remunerations, powers and functions of the Village Council need ratification and the Committee be formed immediately to pursue this'. In pursuance of the above resolution, the Government of Mizoram constituted a Committee, consisting of 12 members, to determine the existing laws relating to Mizoram Village Councils; remuneration of the Village Council members and their powers and responsibilities and to recommend changes to suit the present days conditions. But nothing tangible came out of the above committee.

The Government of Mizoram appointed an Administrative Reforms Commission on 29th September, 1995, to review the existing administrative arrangements and to recommend appropriate structural mechanism and to study the implications of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments and to explore the possibility of harmonious implementation in Mizoram. The Commission submitted its Interim Report in 1998 and recommended structural modification of the administrative machinery which involved a three-tier system of local government institutions in rural areas—Village Council at the village level, Area Development Council at intermediate level and District Development Council at district level and Municipalities at the urban areas. The Report was placed before the Departmental Committee as well as Consultative Committee. The Consultative Committee decided that the Report be processed for Cabinet approval with a view to introducing a Bill in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly. However, nothing has been done even to implement some of the most rational and concrete recommendations of the Commission.

In 1999, the Mizoram Panchayats Bill, 1999 was prepared. The Bill provided for a two-tier system of administration—Gram Panchayat at the village level with five years term and Zilla Parishad at every district level with five years term. However, hardly any steps were taken towards its enactment.



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When the Draft Mizoram Village Councils Bill was constituted in 2003, it was hailed as a breakthrough in bringing about a vibrant system of participatory democracy at the grassroots level and to provide democratic decentralization in the true sense of the term. The Bill, which contained guidelines for the State to put in place the Village Council institutions, was exhaustive and comprehensive covering all aspects of the Village Council system. The Bill generated a lot of hope about devolution of powers and expectations ran high. Several years have passed since then and there is hardly any evidence of sincerity for the implementation of the Bill.

Generally speaking, all the attempts were praiseworthy so far as they go. But there is hardly any evidence of 'political will' to make radical changes in the concept of the Village Council institutions. The political parties in Mizoram have yet to develop definite programmes and policies in regard to Village Council institutions. The political leadership has stressed only the 'emotional aspects' of Village Council institutions without attempting any genuine devolution of administrative and financial powers to these bodies. It remained a 'mere slogan', 'oral announcement' and 'paper declaration' and left the system in a moribund condition. 'Political neglect' is considered to be an important reason for the dormancy of these bodies.

Under the existing framework, the Village Councils remain only field agencies for the development and maintenance of civic services and for the execution of State programmes in their respective areas. At present, more development schemes and programmes are chalked out at the State level and pushed through the Village Councils. The Village Councils are assigned by the State Government a large number of responsibilities in respect of implementation, execution and monitoring of development programmes rather than endowed them with greater powers and resources. Finance occupies a very important place and it has been the life blood of the Village Councils. The ability of the Village Councils to discharge their functions depend to a large extent on the availability of funds. Lack of resources and almost total dependence on State administrative machinery resulted in the ineffective functioning of the Village Councils. The Village Councils have no independent sources of revenue. It is necessary that specific mention may be made in the Act in clear terms as to which of the taxes the Village Councils can levy. The present financial resources of the Village Councils are absolutely inadequate to meet the expenditure of their expanding activities.

The Village Councils are not merely to carry out schemes evolved by the State Government with resources allocated to them. They have more responsibilities than the assigned and imposed functions and they are to be involved in preparing the village plans, prioritizing the people's needs at the village levels. They have to chalk out various programmes based on local needs peculiar to the local areas, mobilizing resources and integrating the village plans into state plan. Logically speaking, more number of development programmes and schemes are to be evolved from below. If the Village Councils are to function, as instrument of social transformation, they should be given more powers to deal with subjects that had a bearing on the people's actual needs. They can serve their purposes only through devolution of powers, authorities and resources.

The Village Council institutions in Mizoram completed 50 years in 2004. Five decades are a reasonable period for the institution to demonstrate its utility. The importance and role of Village Council has substantially increased with the increase in population, civic amenities, and its area. Since Village Councils are largely managed by people who are not adequately educated and are not well-versed in administration, it is essential that proper and regular training, guidance, and supervision of these bodies should be made.

The successful functioning of Village Councils would depend upon the extent of powers delegated to them, upon the availability of resources, upon the understanding between them and the State Government as well as administrative assistance made available to them.

## NOTES

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. On which factors does success of a democratic system depend?
5. How does grassroots democracy help the people?
6. When did Mizoram come under the British administration?
7. Which committee was set up by the Constituent Assembly after India's independence to suggest measures for the governance of hill areas of Assam?
8. When did Mizoram attain the status of a Union Territory?

## 1.4 NAGALAND

Nagaland is located in the North-Eastern part of India. It borders the state of Assam to the west, Arunachal Pradesh and part of Assam to the north, Myanmar to the east and Manipur to the south. Its capital is Kohima. The largest city is Dimapur. The state is mostly mountainous except those areas bordering Assam valley. Mount Saramati is the highest peak in Nagaland with a height of 3,840 metres. Its range forms a natural barrier between Nagaland and Burma. It lies between the parallels of 98-degree and 96-degree East Longitude and 26.6 degree and 27.4 degree latitude North of the Equator. Nagaland, the 16th state of the Indian Union, was established on 1 December 1963. It comprises eleven districts: Kohima, Phek, Mokokchung, Wokha, Zunheboto, Tuensang, Mon, Dimapur, Kiphire, Longleng and Peren.

In response to an influential and politically organized popular movement for separation, the State of Nagaland was created in 1963. Despite 38 years of existence, the creation of the State and the manner of its creation continues to divide Naga society with an influential group still opposed to its formation, saying that it is not sufficiently representative of all Nagas. Others have made their peace with the Government of India, accepting the ground reality but taking little responsibility for the functioning of the administration. However, others who are still fighting for a separate Nagalim (Naga homeland) continue to influence the politics not only for the State of Nagaland but the country as a whole. The result is an administration and a society in a state of acute dysfunction, with confrontation, violence, inefficiency and corruption ruling: in short, a complete failure of governance.

There are 16 tribes in Nagaland, each occupying a distinct area. Each tribe tends to treat itself virtually as a race apart. As a rule, all villages are mono-tribal, though there have of late been certain changes, especially in the foothills bordering Assam. The traditional system of Naga polity therefore varies from autocracy (*Konyaks*), gerontocracy (*Aos*, *Tangkhuls*) and democracy (*Angamis*, *Chakesangs*, *Rengmas*, *Maos*). Amongst the *Semas*, the position of the chief is a little less arbitrary than among the *Konyak*, but is nevertheless highly autocratic.

In a village consisting, as a rule, of people of one particular tribe but belonging to different exogamous clans, the supreme decision-making body was the council of elders and leaders, with each member representing a clan. The tenure of a council varied from tribe to tribe, but two broad patterns were discernible.

## NOTES

The most widespread one was the one in which the clan replaced its representative following his demise or on his reaching the age of about 60 years or so, or when the clan families came to the conclusion that their representative was incapable of discharging his duties. In the second system, the council had a fixed tenure in 30 years and all members were replaced at the same time. There was yet another system, where each village was governed by a hereditary chief, who owned all land and parcelled it out to families for cultivation.

Amongst the Angamis, the policy formulation and implementation is more democratic, the village chief is only a *prima inter pares*. Though he is chosen for his wealth, physical prowess and skill in diplomacy, the authority exercised by the chief is very nominal. For all important decisions, the villagers usually assemble and take a collective decision.

### **Constitutional Bodies**

After the formation of the State of Nagaland in 1963, these traditional village councils were restructured and replaced by village, area and regional council under the Village, Area and Regional Council Act. In general, the village councils had the following duties:

- To function as the highest court in the village
- To function as the custodian and manager of village common property
- To function as the war council of the village

At the village level the members were to be chosen by their respective clans. The size of the village council was to be determined according to the customs of the village. The supra-village councils i.e. the Area and Regional Councils, were much more intimately linked with the next lower level. In 1978, a new act was passed which did away with the regional councils, while the duties and powers of the village councils were more elaborately defined – including that of constituting a village Development Board. In 1980 statutory rules were promulgated to cover the latter also. In 1990, the Act was amended to do away with the area councils leaving only the village councils.

### **Village Councils: Representation and composition**

The members of village council are chosen by the villagers in accordance with customary practices and usages for a period of five years. The names of the members are then submitted to the government through the Extra Assistant Commissioner/Sub-Divisional Officer (civil) for formal approval. The elected members choose a chairman and a secretary, from among the men, who are assigned certain duties and responsibilities. Different clans are represented in the village council and existing rural institutions.

### **Powers and duties**

The powers and duties of the Village Councils are as follows:

- To formulate village development schemes, to supervise proper maintenance of water supply, roads, forests, education, etc.
- To help government agencies in carrying out developmental council in village, or on its own initiative. This is carried out through the Village Development Boards.
- To initiative preventive measures on outbreaks of epidemics
- To administer justice according to customary laws and usages
- To act as a supportive agent of the government in village administration, including maintenance of law and order

- To handle all aspects of application and receipts of funds for the village
- To constitute a Village Development Board

### Village Development Board Structure

Members of the Village Development Board (VDB) to be chosen by the Village Council could include—(a) members of the village council or non-members; (b) Those who are ineligible to be chosen in the Village Council (VC) by virtue of age or tradition and custom; (c) the deputy commissioner of the district was the ex-officio chair-person of all VDBs in his district; (d) At least one woman was to be a member of the VDB; (e) government servants could be chosen as members of the board with permission of the government. The tenure of the members was three years unless decided otherwise by the village council. The VDBs cannot be dissolved by the State.

### Functions

The VDBs were entrusted with a number of developmental activities in coordination with the Block Development officers. A number of state development programmes are also coordinated with the VDB such as I.R.D.P., TRYSEM, DWCRA and JRY. Under the model list scheme, the village was asked to choose from a list containing only infrastructure items, but over the past decade this pattern has been undergoing a change to include production oriented items within its scope.

For example, schemes undertaken in Kohima Block from this list are cited as follows:

- Education – construction, extension and improvement of school building
- Agriculture - cash crop cultivation, community orchard; kitchen garden
- Animal husbandry – poultry form, piggery, goat and cattle rearing
- Construction of public wells
- Construction of latrines
- Small scale industry – construction/procurement of rice mills, weaving units, biscuit factory, charcoal production unit
- Construction of community granary/purchase of paddy
- Social forestry
- Rural electrification
- Construction of community fishery pond
- Construction of resting shed, market shed, women welfare centre, community hall, approach road, community shop, community building outside village
- Purchase of mini-bus

### Financial Resources

The VDB is the recipient of two forms of grants from the state plan funds: (a) a one-time grant equal to the amount of common fund which the VDBs can invest in fixed deposits in a bank, called a matching grant; this fund also had to be invested in fixed deposits, thus enabling the VDB to draw from the banks, either for community use or to give to needy individuals. An annual recurring grant-in-aid for executing developmental schemes chosen by the VDB out of a list of model schemes. One-fourth of this grant was reserved for schemes chosen by women of the village. The total of the fixed deposits of the VDBs in the state stood at ₹ 700 lakhs.

The VDB is also free to receive funds from sources other than the state exchequer.

## NOTES

## Public Opinion

In the state of Nagaland, traditional political systems have been accommodated and amalgamated with the provisions under the constitutional status accorded to the state. Many still question the very creation of the state in 1963, saying that this was a knee-jerk reaction by the Centre to a broader demand. Yet, this has not prevented a reasonable turnout at most elections to the state assembly. Yet, a sense of ownership of the system is still missing in many parts of the state although there is also a growing feeling that, after nearly 50 years of struggle and bloodshed, there is a need for realism in the political context.

The conflict between traditional elites adopting a revivalist stand, and those deviating from it does not arise because of the issues cited above. The issues concerning decentralization and devolution of power and responsibilities, has therefore not generated the form of debate as seen in other states, particularly Meghalaya.

The public to a large extent is passive to such issues, but this passivity has to be understood in the background of insurgency, inter-tribe clashes, years of torture and abuse from the army and even insurgent groups themselves. Along with it arises the question of compulsory donation of money to the militants, which the latter define as taxes for their cause. It is in fact an open secret that 25-30 per cent of village development funds are earmarked for such insurgent groups.

However, amongst Naga scholars, political thinkers and planners, there has been an attempt to discuss the possibilities of restructuring such units of local polity. The primary motivation for such a move has been the ineffectiveness of VDBs, which has actually exposed the hollowness of claims of rural development and has failed to solve the socio-economic problems of the people.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

9. When was the state of Nagaland established?
10. Name the districts of Nagaland?

### ACTIVITY

Make a collage of pictures showing the lifestyle, culture, food and dress of the people of Meghalaya.

### DID YOU KNOW

The capital of Meghalaya is Shillong, and is popularly known as the Scotland of the East. One of the unique features of the state is that a majority of the tribal population in Meghalaya follows a matrilineal system where lineage and inheritance are traced through women. The Khasi and Jaintia tribesmen follow the traditional matrilineal norm, wherein the 'Khun Khadduh' (or the youngest daughter) inherits all the property and acts as the caretaker of aged parents and any unmarried siblings. However, the male line, particularly the mother's brother, may indirectly control the ancestral property since he may be involved in important decisions relating to property including its sale and disposal.

## NOTES

## 1.5 SUMMARY

### NOTES

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- All the three major ethnic tribal groups of Meghalaya, namely the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos have their own traditional political institutions that have existed for hundreds of years.
- The traditional political system of the Khasis had its own council, known as the *Durbar Kur*. It was presided over by the clan headman.
- Every village in Meghalaya had a local assembly known as the *Durbar Shnong*. These assemblies played an administrative role in matters of common interests, such as sanitation, water supply, health, roads, education and conflict resolution.
- The powers and functions of Durbar Shnong in Meghalaya are as follows:
  - o Developmental, such as construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, water sources and sanitation
  - o Establishment and maintenance of markets, including settlement of disputes and collection of dues
  - o Welfare works and community services
  - o Judicial powers to solve petty cases
  - o Initiation and organization of cultural festivals
- The Durbar Shnong in Meghalaya has limited funds which are generally self-generated. These include the imposition of fines, contributions, duties from households to meet general expenses.
- The Jaintias of Meghalaya had a three tier political system which was similar to the Khasis. The supreme political authority was the Syiem. The second tier of this structure was the congregation of Jaintia villages, known as raids.
- The Dolois of the Jaintia Hills and the Nokmas, or traditional headmen of the Garos, are not as influential or well organized as the Syiemships, which still collect tithes, exercise their influence to arbitrate in disputes but have been marginalized in the political process by the State Legislature and the District Councils, especially the latter.
- Before the advent of the British in Mizoram, administration of village was centred on the hereditary Chief. The chief was assisted by the council of elders called Upas, who were appointed and dismissed by him.
- After India's Independence, the Constituent Assembly set up a sub-committee, known as the North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Committee, to recommend an institutional framework for governance of the hill areas of Assam.
- The Village Council was officially inaugurated in Mizoram with great fanfare in 1954. The introduction of Village Council brought about a significant change in the traditional village administration in the state. It brought modern participatory political process in Mizoram and replaced the traditional political institutions.
- When Mizoram attained the Union Territory status on 21st January, 1972, the Mizo District Council was abolished on 29th April, 1972. The PLRC was trifurcated into three Regional Councils, viz., Pawi, Lakher and Chakma on 2nd April, 1972. The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953 and the Pawi-Lakher

Autonomous Region (Village Councils) Act, 1954 have been adapted by the Government of Mizoram.

- A Village Council in Mizoram is a lawfully constituted body. To be qualified for election to the Village Council, a person must (a) be a member of Scheduled Tribe; (b) attained the age of 25 stands so declared by a competent Court of Authority; and (f) not have been convicted by an offence under the Lushai Hills Autonomous District (Administration of Justice) Rules, 1953 before and after the commencement of the Act.
- The President is elected by and from among the elected members of the Village Council in Mizoram. The President occupies a pivotal position in Village Council administration and enjoys considerable authority and powers.
- The Village Council in Mizoram has the power to allot land within its boundaries for *jhum* cultivation each year through a draw of lots. It also has the power to enforce Hnatlang in the interest of the public whenever occasion demands.
- Up to 1971, Village Council elections in Mizoram were conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Lushai Hills District (Election to Village Councils) Rules, 1954. At present, all elections to Village Council shall be held under the provisions of the Mizoram (Election to Village Councils) Rules, 1974 as amended from time to time.
- The traditional system of Naga polity varies from autocracy (*Konyaks*), gerontocracy (*Aos, Tangkhuls*) and democracy (*Angamis, Chakesangs, Rengmas, Maos*). Amongst the *Semas*, the position of the chief is a little less arbitrary than among the *Konyak*, but is nevertheless highly autocratic.
- In a Nagaland village consisting as a rule of people of one particular tribe but belonging to different exogamous clans, the supreme decision-making body was the council of elders and leaders, with each member representing a clan.
- The members of village council in Nagaland are chosen by the villagers in accordance with customary practices and usages for a period of five years.

## NOTES

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### 1.6 KEY TERMS

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- **Autonomous District Council:** Autonomous councils are governing bodies based on the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India
- **Headman:** The chief or leader of a community, tribe or village
- **Raid:** A type of political unit in Meghalaya
- **Syiemship:** A supreme political authority above the Raid
- **Suffrage:** The right to vote in political elections
- **Constituent Assembly:** A parliament, congress or Convention elected for the purpose of drawing up a constitution

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### 1.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

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1. Panchayati Raj institutions were set up to provide local self governance.
2. The Sixth Schedule was appended to the Constitution on the recommendations of a sub committee formed under the leadership of Gopinath Bordoloi.

## NOTES

3. The traditional council of the Khasis is known as the *Durbar Kur*.
4. The success of a democratic system depends on the extent of the participation of the citizens.
5. Grassroots democracy, based on small unit of government, enables the people to feel a sense of responsibility and to inculcate the values of democracy.
6. Mizoram came under the British Administration in 1890.
7. After India's independence, the Constituent Assembly set up a subcommittee, known as the North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Committee to suggest measures for the governance of hill areas of Assam.
8. Mizoram attained the status of a Union Territory on 21st January, 1972.
9. Nagaland, the 16th state of the Indian Union, was created on 1 December 1963.
10. Nagaland comprises eleven districts, namely Kohima, Phek, Mokokchung, Wokha, Zunheboto, Tuensang, Mon, Dimapur, Kiphire, Longleng and Peren.

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## 1.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### Short-Answer Questions

1. Identify the characteristics of *Syiemship* system of the Khasis in Meghalaya.
2. Describe the political system of the Jaintias of Meghalaya.
3. What were the reasons for the abolition of chieftainship in Mizoram?
4. What do you mean by the Village Council Fund set up in Mizoram?
5. What are the functions of Village Council courts in Mizoram?
6. Identify the powers and duties of Village Councils in Nagaland.

### Long-Answer Questions

1. Give a detailed account of the Village Councils in Meghalaya.
2. Discuss the structure and functions of Village Councils in Mizoram.
3. What are the power and responsibilities of Village Councils in Mizoram?
4. Describe the salient features of the Village Councils in Nagaland.

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## 1.9 FURTHER READING

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# UNIT 2 POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

## Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Unit Objectives
- 2.2 Inner Line
  - 2.2.1 Regulation for the Peace and Good Government of Certain Districts on the Eastern Frontier
  - 2.2.2 Protected Area Permit in Arunachal Pradesh
- 2.3 Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas
  - 2.3.1 District Councils' Territorial Composition
  - 2.3.2 Executive Committee
  - 2.3.3 Functions
  - 2.3.4 Working of District Councils
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 Key Terms
- 2.6 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 2.7 Questions and Exercises
- 2.8 Further Reading

## NOTES

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

All through the period of British rule in India, the treatment meted out to North-East India was distinctly different and of a separate kind from that given to other parts of India. It has to be understood that the fundamental theme of the policy of the British in North-East India was isolation and separatism. One element of policy toward tribals that the post-colonial Indian state inherited in North-East India was the status of many parts of the region as excluded and partially excluded areas.

The Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873 allowed the government to prescribe, and from time to time alter by notification, a line to be called the Inner Line and to prohibit any subject living outside the area from living or moving therein. The areas beyond the Inner Line were supposed to be outside the active control of the colonial administration. Beyond this line the tribes were left to manage their own affairs with only such interference on the part of the frontier officers in their political capacity as may be considered advisable with the view to establishing a personal influence for good among the chiefs and the tribes. Over time administrative control was extended beyond the Inner Line; but the movement of people remained restricted beyond the Inner Line. The Inner Line extended to all the hills except the Khasi and the Garo Hills — today's state of Meghalaya—and the Mikir Hills—the Karbi Anglong district of present-day Assam. The plains areas of present-day Assam and Tripura were unprotected by such exclusionary rules.

In 1935, the colonial rulers divided and demarcated the hill region into Partially Excluded Areas and Excluded Areas. While Excluded Areas were under the direct jurisdiction of the British, the Partially Excluded Areas fell into a system of limited representation under the control of the British administration.

Let us look at the two policies employed by the British in North-East India, namely drawing of the Inner Line and demarcation of Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas.



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## 2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss important features of the Inner Line policy
  - Examine the British policy of Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas
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### NOTES

## 2.2 INNER LINE

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After the occupation of Assam in 1826 the British followed almost the same policy towards the tribes of Arunachal as was followed by the Ahoms. The Ahoms followed the policy of reconciliation towards the tribes and at no time considered the extension of their rule into the hills. David Scott, who is considered to be the architect of the British administration in the North East favoured status quo in their relations with the tribes of Arunachal as well as others. Gradually for administrative convenience and needs of the expanding colonial economy, the need for boundary demarcation (in any form) between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh was realized. Hence, the whole exercise of demarcation started.

### 2.2.1 Regulation for the Peace and Good Government of Certain Districts on the Eastern Frontier

Regulation I of 1873, called 'Regulation for the Peace and Good Government of Certain Districts on the Eastern Frontier' came into operation on 1st November, 1873. This became popular as the Inner Line Regulations because of the name given to the line of control by the author of the Act, Sir Arthur Hobhouse, a member of the Viceroy's Council. This regulation is also called 'The Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation I of 1873.' According to this Act, which was to be applicable to the districts of Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Garo Hills, Khasi and Jayantiya Hills, Naga Hills, Cachar and Chittagong Hills, a restriction line was laid down to regulate intercourse between the tribesmen and the British subjects in the plains bordering the hills. This line was called the Inner Line and beyond this no British subject was allowed to enter without a formal pass from the concerned authority. The Regulation laid down that 'any British subject or other person ... who goes beyond the Inner Line ... without a pass, shall be liable on conviction before a magistrate to a fine not exceeding ₹ 100 for the first offence and to a fine of not exceeding ₹ 500 or to simple or rigorous imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months, or to both for each subsequent offence.'

The Regulation further laid down that, 'any wood, wax, ivory, rubber or any other jungle products found in the possession of any person without permit, may be confiscated to the government.' The Act also prohibited the killing or catching of the wild elephants without a license, and laid restrictions on the possession of land beyond this line, by saying that, 'it shall not be lawful for any British subject, not being native of the district, to acquire any interest in the land or the product of land beyond the Inner Line without sanction of the local government.' The local government, however, was empowered to suspend or alter these restrictions from time to time. It was also made clear that the Government of India was not to be held responsible for the loss of life or property beyond the Inner Line, of those persons who went there without a permit.

## NOTES

The Inner Line was notified for Lakhimpur District on 3rd September, 1875, in accordance with the Regulation of 1873. This Line was initially proposed by Major W S. Clarke, Commissioner of Lakhimpur district on 22nd May, 1875. Later on, some changes were made on the suggestions of the Chief Commissioner of Assam. The Government of India, while passing the Regulation of 1873, had suggested to the Government of Bengal that while prescribing the Inner Line, they should see that the line corresponded to the natural features of the country and if there were no such features, it was to coincide with the obligatory points like crossing of a road. The place where a road crossed the line was to be clearly shown on the map and if the area through which it ran had not been mapped, arrangements were to be made for topographical survey as well. If any tea garden was there in the frontier, that was to be brought within the Inner Line, if it was possible to avoid any complications.

In accordance with these suggestions, the Inner Line which was finally drawn up in Lakhimpur was to take the course of the Buri Dihing in the South Eastern Sector, as it was a good natural boundary though it kept outside the Inner Line, the coal fields of Tirap and Nandang. The tea gardens of Namsang, Hukanjuri and Taurack, however, were brought within the Inner Line after an agreement with the Namsangia chief. The tea gardens of Joyhing and Harmoti were also brought within the Inner Line. This Inner Line starting from Desang was to go along Desang River, Namsang river, Boori Dihing, Kherampani, Noa Dihing and up to river Brahmaputra. From the north of Brahmaputra, starting from the boundary of Darrang, it was to go along the Rajgarh Ali, Dihing, Rangnadi, Joyhing tea garden, the Sisi river upto the Dimu guard. From there it was to go to the Puba guard, Lalimukh, Debongmukh upto Debong and Dikrang guard. It terminated on Noa Dihing Mukh in the east.

Over time, with Partition and India's Independence, inner line laws morphed differently for different areas, but similarity remained in control of access. Such control in Nagaland was used by the government of India to suppress news of its near-genocidal war against the Naga people in the 1950s and 1960s; and during the height of the Mizo rebellion in the late 1960s. Such cynical extension of colonial law is now more benign. It is absent in most of North-Eastern India except Arunachal Pradesh—the need to preserve the ecology and tribal identities masking the equally real purpose of it being India's strategic backyard confronting China—Nagaland and Mizoram.

In the India of 2013 too there is the system of inner line being followed and a permit is required to enter those regions. This Inner Line Permit or ILP is an official travel document which the Government of India issues to Indian citizens for allowing inward travel for a limited period into a protected/restricted area. Citizens of India who do not reside in the states that require ILP are obligated to obtain one for the purpose of travel into that state. With ILP the Government of India tries to regulate movement to some of the areas that lie near India's international border. The ILP is used as a security measure. It is applicable to the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland.

- In Arunachal Pradesh, the secretary (political) of the government of Arunachal Pradesh is responsible for issuing the ILP. A person requires an ILP for entering Arunachal Pradesh from any check gate located across the inter-State border of Arunachal Pradesh with Nagaland and Assam.

## NOTES

- In Mizoram, the Government of Mizoram is the ILP issuing authority. The ILP is needed when entering Mizoram from any check gate located across its inter-State borders.
- In Nagaland, ILP is required by all mainland Indian citizens entering Nagaland through any check gate located on the state's inter-State borders.

The proposal made by the Government of Manipur to introduce the provision of Inner Line Permit system for restricting outsiders' entry into Manipur under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations, 1873 has been rejected by the Centre.

### 2.2.2 Protected Area Permit in Arunachal Pradesh

Foreign tourists can now visit in a group of two or more persons as against the earlier requirement of four or more persons. The stay permit for foreign visitors has also been extended to 30 days from the earlier permit of 10 days.

Foreign Tourists intending to visit Arunachal Pradesh require a Restricted Area Permit. The foreign tourists can obtain the Protected Area Permit from:

- All India missions abroad
- All Foreigners Regional Registration Officers (FRROs) at Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata
- Chief Immigration Officers, Chennai
- Home Ministry, Govt. of India
- Home Commissioner, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar

The permit can be obtained for a period of 30 (thirty) days for a group consisting of two or more persons.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Who is responsible for issuing the ILP in Arunachal Pradesh?
2. Which is the issuing authority for ILP in Mizoram?
3. When foreign tourists visit Arunachal Pradesh, from where can they obtain their Protected Area Permit?

## 2.3 EXCLUDED AND PARTIALLY EXCLUDED AREAS

On the basis of the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935, Assam's hill areas got separated into two distinct categories:

1. Excluded Areas
2. Partially Excluded Areas

Excluded areas included the North Cachar Hills, Naga Hills, and the Lushai Hills (now Mizoram). Over these Excluded areas, there was no jurisdiction of the provincial ministry. Even the expenditure incurred in this region was not put to vote by the provincial legislature due to the fact that the legislature did not have representatives from this region. Further, neither Central nor provincial legislation was automatically extended to this region.

## NOTES

Partially excluded areas included the Mikir Hills, the Garo Hills and the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. From these districts 5 representatives were sent up to the Legislative Assembly of Assam. It needs to be noted that in both the Mikir and Garo Hills the permission was only for the traditional village headmen. For a short period, the state government did administrate these areas but subject to the Governor's special powers. There was, due to this, no change in the district's administrative machinery. The result was that the Constitution of 1935 was unable to provide either political autonomy or local self government to the tribe of the hill in both partially excluded and excluded areas to be in a position to handle their local affairs as best they could, limited only by their ability and genius. In these districts, conducting of political activities was strictly prohibited. Also, here, any political entity that could provide a voice to the grievances and aspirations of these people did not exist. In most excluded area districts, the local chiefs and the British Superintendent ran a virtual dictatorship in the name of ruling the people.

Post independence, demand was made to provide a better status as also regional autonomy to tribal people of Assam's hill areas, as possible in the framework of the constitution. The 1947 Interim Government of India was sensitive to the Assam hill area's tribals' political aspirations, keeping in mind the fact that the British rulers who were on their way out had given them certain assurances. To safeguard the interests of the tribal and to make sure that they participated in both decision making and management of the affairs, a Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly – the North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Committee was appointed by the government. This subcommittee was chaired by the then Chief Minister of Assam, Gopinath Bardoloi.

An on-the-spot study was conducted by the Bardoloi Committee of the aspirations and demands of the tribes of the hill tribes. The recommendations arising from the study were for forming of an inexpensive and simple set-up (District Councils) in tribal areas. This was at a future date both accepted and incorporated into Article 244 (2) of Indian Constitution's Sixth Schedule. Provisions were also made by this sub-committee for setting up of Regional Council for tribes besides the main one. The attempt of the scheme was to create autonomous administration with the help of regional and district Councils to enable the tribals to conserve their traditional ways, thus ensuring that their cultures and customs would be safeguarded. These schemes were created for Assam's hill areas comprising Mikir Hills District, North Cachar Hills District, Naga Hills District, Lushai Hills District, Garo Hills District and United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District. It was also recommended by the committee that there should be abolishing of the partially excluded and excluded areas with adult franchise being used for the hills districts' representation in the legislative Assembly. The committee was of the belief that the Centre and the State governments would provide help to the tribals to avail of the benefits of the nation's liberal, progressive and democratic Constitution.

Post the adoption and enforcing of the Indian Constitution, an Interim Tribal Advisory Council was set up by the Government in every hill district. Desire was also expressed for tribal representative participation in the area's administration during the interim period also, even while the District Councils had not been formed. There was no statutory basis for the councils, yet they provided the District Superintendent/Deputy Commissioners advice regarding the various developmental schemes and administrative problems concerning the district. This proved for the tribes of the hill areas to be a training period in self governance. In accordance with

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the Indian Constitution's Sixth Schedule's paragraph two, for Lushai Hills District's autonomous region, Government of Assam formulated the Assam Autonomous District (Constitution of District Councils) Rules 1951 and the Pawi-Lakher (Constitution of Regional Councils) Rules, 1952. In line with these, constituting of the District Councils (1952) and the Regional Councils (1953) was done.

In line with the North-Eastern Areas (Re-organisation) Act, 1971, the status of the Mizo Hills got elevated to Union Territory of Mizoram and in 1972, there was the abolition of the Mizo District Council. In the same year there was a trifurcation of the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council which had been set up into the Pawis, Lakher and Chakmas. In accordance with the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Councils Act, 1971 (passed by the Parliament), six Autonomous District Councils were set up by the Manipur Government for Manipur hill areas' tribal people. The six councils did not fall within the Sixth Schedule's purview. As of today there are fifteen District Councils in North-East India— six in Manipur, one in Tripura, three in Mizoram, three in Meghalaya and two in Assam. The point of interest is that the Sixth Schedule was mainly created for the Nagas and the Nagas still do not have even a single autonomous District Council.

### 2.3.1 District Councils' Territorial Composition

The Governor is empowered by the constitution's Sixth Schedule to decide a council's areas of administration. He is also given the authority to:

- alter the name of any autonomous district
- combine two or higher number of autonomous districts or parts thereof to create a single autonomous district
- decrease/increase an existing district's area
- decrease/increase or an existing District Council's area
- define the boundaries of any district
- make a new autonomous district

The governor has the power to make the above changes but only if it is based on the report of the Commission appointed for the purpose as per paragraph (1) of paragraph 14 of the Sixth Schedule. Prior to issuing an order to the effect of change in an autonomous territory, the Governor of Manipur needs to have consulted the Hill Areas Committee. However, based on the place, the administrative areas of the District Council will differ. To take an example, in both Meghalaya and Assam, the District Councils exist at district level while in Mizoram, the District Councils exist at both the sub-divisional and district level.

### Regional Councils and District Councils: Composition

Under the sixth Schedule, every regional or district Council that has been provided exists as a corporate body and is known by the name Regional Council or District Council of (Name of the Region/District) with perpetual succession and a common seal with the right to sue and be sued. Each Council comprises 30 members, of which 26 get elected on adult franchise from the single member constituencies while the Governor nominates 4 (or less) persons for a 5-year term based on the on the advice of the Chief Executive Member. These members are known as Member of the District Council or MDC. Normally, the members who are nominated are representatives of unrepresented communities and minorities and they remain in



office till it pleases the Governor. Based on how many elective seats are provided to a Council, the number of constituencies that District Council has is decided. So, different Councils could have different number of constituencies.

A District Council serves in office for a 5-year term. It is the prerogative of the Governor to extend the term but only by 1 year at a time. This prerogative can be exercised by the governor only in the event of a national emergency or if it is not possible to conduct elections.

The District Councils have the provision for a Deputy Chairman and a Chairman who are ones generally presiding over the sessions of the Council. District Council's members elect are the ones who elect persons to both these posts. Either the Deputy Commissioner or any officer that the Governor authorizes presides over the meeting in which the chairman of the Council is elected. The election is by a simple majority. Members elected as Deputy Chairman and Chairman enjoy the position at the confidence and pleasure of the District Council. According to the rules, they are allowed to resign when they choose but the resignation needs to be a written one. Their removal can be achieved a resolution passed by the Council, as specified by the rules.

The function performed by the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman is parallel to that performed by in the legislature by the Speaker and Deputy Speaker. The Chairman calls District Council meetings, presides over its sessions and regulates the Council's proceedings. The Chairman's decision is final as far as conducting of the meeting is concerned. It is the Chairman who admits questions and motions and allows time for the discussion of business. In a tie situation, the Chairman has a casting vote. The Deputy Chairman is responsible for all the tasks that the Chairman performs in the absence of the Chairman. The Secretary to the Council assists the Chairman, and is generally deputed from the government of the respective state.

### 2.3.2 Executive Committee

The Sixth Schedule's rules made provision for the District Council having an Executive Committee (EC) to perform the executive functions for the District Council. The composition of the EC was one Chief Executive Members (CEM) and 2 other members. The District Council's elected members hold the responsibility of electing the CEM. On the Chief Executive Member's recommendation, the governor appoints the 2 other members of the EC from amongst District Council members. All Executive Committee members are known as Executive Members (EM) and the team is led by the Chief Executive Member or CEM. This committee works on the exact same lines as does a parliamentary democracy's cabinet system. In other words, being at the district level, it is small in size but is just the same as a government. EC has a Secretary whom the CEM appoints but the Secretary is not a District Council member. It is imperative for the District Council to elect a Chief Executive Member inside of 48 hours from when the existing committee was removed. If there is a failure to do so, any member of the District Council can be appointed by the Governor to the position of Chief Executive Member.

As far as the functions of the EC are concerned, all matters that fall in its scope are disposed by it. Regulations are made by the EC, as are laws and rules. The EC also makes all necessary appointments, though with the District Council's approval. Each Executive Member is allocated specific subjects by the Chief Executive Member and the Executive Members are to be fully responsible for the

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smooth functioning of the allocated subjects. One of the Executive Members is given charge of the District Council's financial affairs or the district fund. This also involves the creation and getting approval on the District Council's budget. Thus, it is the collective duty of the Executive Committee to carry out all executive orders and policies which are issued in the District Council's name as also for implementing all the schemes for development in the autonomous district areas. One implication of this is that on the resigning of a Chief Executive Member there is automatic dissolution of the executive committee. The Sixth Schedule's provisions amply clarify that the autonomous districts' civil administration lies with two authorities – the Deputy Commissioner who is a representative of the state Government and the District Councils' Executive Committee. In this way, with the Sixth Schedule, two sets of authorities have been created in which there are consequently various overlaps, anomalies and quite a bit of confusion.

**2.3.3 Functions****Legislative Functions**

Power had been vested in the District Councils for land allotment, occupation and use, but for the reserved forests for purposes of agriculture, grazing and other residential and non-residential purposes. They have the responsibility for unreserved forests' management, use of canals and water courses for the purpose of agriculture, shifting cultivation's regulation, establishment of town committees and village councils, village policy administration, public health and sanitation, succession and appointment of headmen or chiefs, property inheritance, marriage, divorce and social customs, money lending and trading by non-tribals within the autonomous districts. The power is vested in the Governor for changing rules and laws which the District Councils have passed but are violating the Sixth Schedule's provisions. It can be gleaned that according to the Sixth Schedule, the Governor is the actual head of the Autonomous District Council.

**Executive Functions**

The District Council is vested with executive powers for the construction or management of waterways, roads, fisheries, ferries, cattle pounds, markets, dispensaries and primary schools. For the primary schools that lie within the District Council's jurisdiction, it has the right and responsibility to specify the form of education and medium of instruction.

**Judicial Functions**

Sixth Schedule's Paragraph 4 vests in the Council the power for constituting in the autonomous areas District Council and Village courts for the purpose of trying or adjudicating cases or customary laws where both parties are tribals. These courts are not to hear those cases which could involve the death sentence, imprisonment for not less than five years or transportation of life. Both the Regional Council Court and District Council Court are appellate courts when it comes to suits and cases tried by a Subordinate District Council Court or Village Council Court. All jurisdiction over suits and cases that the Council Courts has given a decision on lies only with the High Court and the Supreme Court of India.

## Financial Functions

It is the responsibility of the District Council and the Regional Councils to formulate rules for finance management with the Governor's approval. Also, in them rests powers which are mutually exclusive and restricted to their jurisdiction, for the purpose of for example, land revenue collection, levying and collection of taxes on shops, holdings and lands, collecting tolls and entry of goods into market. Concurrent power has been vested in the District Council regarding the professions, trade, callings, employments, animals, vehicles and huts, tolls on passengers, and goods carried in ferries and maintenance of schools, dispensaries or roads. According to the Sixth Schedule's Para 9, the District Council is given the entire amount that accrues from the leases or licenses royalty on the extraction of minerals in the autonomous districts. On the District Council's behalf, the State Government assigns and collects the tax on motor vehicles. Other sources of the District Council's income are the state government provided advances, loans, grants-in-aid and such.

The District Councils enjoy autonomy and the Acts of the Parliament and the State legislatures on the subject under them do not normally apply to the autonomous districts. Though, it is possible to extend them there considering exceptions and making appropriate modifications which the concerned District Regional Council deems necessary.

### 2.3.4 Working of District Councils

Elaborate powers/functions are vested in the District councils in the domains pertaining to the financial, judicial, executive and legislative. With these powers, the District council is expected to be able enough to ensure tribal community's upliftment in the fields of primary education, health, culture, social customs, social welfare, forest, land, agriculture, water management, village administration, and economic and rural development. Nevertheless, in reality the District Councils' performance has not met the expectations of either the policy makers or the citizens. The result that have been shown by District Councils have not won applause criticism of a severe kind. Other than functional and political deficiencies, a few of the Sixth Schedule's provisions are also responsible for the low level of performance displayed by the District Councils. To take an example, party gains stand in the way of fair nominations. The ministers who are concerned with the district Councils usually have their own politically based recommendations for who should be nominated. So, in fact it is not the government but the ministers who are nominating members. There have been instances when such nominations have turned tables, turning minority to majority. In various District Council areas, there is not enough representation of ethnic minorities within the Councils be they nominated or election and this is totally violating the Sixth Schedule's provisions.

There are a number of District Councils which have as yet not formulated courts at any level, including the village level. In one instance, since the state government dithered in releasing funds to the council, the Karbi Anglong District Council was unable to set up a judiciary. Majority of District Council level courts are under the care of such persons who possess no training or background of judicial nature which is why there is a failure of justice delivery in such courts. Also, generally, most of the District Councils as yet have not managed to arrange and systematize their autonomous districts' every customary law. Furthermore, there is hardly any observance of customary laws.

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Even though the councils have framed appropriate service rules, needs are not fulfilled by the staff members since they are unable to provide relevance to the necessity due to lack of appropriate qualification. Such staff is an unnecessary burden on Councils' financial resources.

According to the Sixth Schedule's paragraph 7, powers to formulate appropriate rules regarding the taxes, finances, etc., of the district councils rests with the district councils themselves. The responsibility for controlling and managing the funds of the District Council lies with the member in-charge of the finance. Nevertheless, many of the financial irregularities that the councils commit are striking.

To quote Dr. R.N. Prasad from his writing *Sixth Schedule and Working of the District Councils in North-Eastern States*:

The grants-in-aid are misused by diverting under different heads, particularly in non-plan expenditure. Even the basic rules of financial propriety are not observed. Due to overstaffing the establishment expenses, on unproductive trained etc. is unduly heavy. Most of the Councils are unable to balance their budgets and often overspend. Mismanagement of public funds was widespread before 1969, when the system of audit by the auditor and comptroller General was introduced.

However even system of audit has failed to control extravagances mainly because under sub-paragraph 2 of paragraph 7, the Governor i.e. the State Government has not made rules for the management of the District Council's fund. There is need to include in this sub-paragraph a provision that till such time, the Rules are framed, rules framed by the Comptroller and Auditor General shall apply. A provision need also be made that the accounts of the District Councils can also be audited by the State Government audit agencies.

One more reason why the District councils perform so poorly is their being dependent for their allotments and financial grants on State Governments. Nevertheless, it is within the power of the District Councils to have power to both impose and appropriate taxes (on boats, vehicles, animals, employments, callings, trade and profession) even in the Regional Council's jurisdiction while this power is not made available to the Regional Council. It does not appear to be fair that such income should come to the District Council rather than remain with the Regional Councils. The District Councils are not strict in enforcement and not efficient in collection of the taxes and this leads to a situation of tax returns being meager. Normally, District Councils do not put enough effort or do not even attempt to increase its revenue income by appropriately exploiting the available financial resources.

Areas lying in the District Council are given on lease or license by the State Government for mineral extraction or prospecting and the annual royalty amount accruing from the lease and license is a source of finance which gets shared between the state government and the District Council. The share of the two parties is dependent upon the ratio agreed upon by the two.

Dr. R.N. Prasad states in his writing, *Sixth Schedule and Working of the District Councils in North-Eastern States*:

...the District Councils often allege that the share of royalty is not paid to the concerned District Councils regularly by the State Government. Therefore, it is suggested that this power should be given to the councils by amending the sub-paragraph 3 of paragraph 8 of the Sixth Schedule.

For similar licenses and leases that the State Government gives out in the area of the Regional Council, no share of the proceeds come to the Regional Council. They get shared by the State government and the district council in an agreed upon ratio.

Dr. R.N. Prasad is of the opinion that, 'This is, no doubt, unjust and against the norm of economic autonomy or justice. This needs rectification to enable the Regional Council to share such income.'

Grants-in-aid form yet another extremely important income source for the District Council. The Council, under the provisions of the Indian Constitution's Article 275 is entitled to such grants. State Governments release such grants-in-aid to District Councils. District Council leaders allege that state governments cause delays in fund disbursement which at times are due to political considerations and lead to hindrance in the council's regular functioning. According to the Sixth Schedule's provisions it is obligatory for the State Government to, within a time which is specified, disburse the amount to the District Councils. It is obligatory for the Councils to provide to the state government certificates of utilisation of the released amount or face the penalty of further funds being withheld. The district councils do not mobilize effectively their available resources and put a major amount of dependence on the Central Government's grants-in-aid.

It is within the power of the district councils 'to establish, construct and manage primary schools and also prescribe their medium of instructions.' Even with this major power vested in them, there is an extremely discouraging and low literacy rate among the tribes of the District Councils (Karbi-Anglong, North Cachar Hills and Kamala Nagar (Headquarters of Chakma District Council)). Majority of the Councils have teachers of the lower primary school who level, who are unqualified and as a result, there is a regular decline in the level of education at the lower primary level. It is also evident that the District Council is unable to appropriately fulfill its responsibility of raising the literacy level of their region's tribals.

It is the responsibility of the District Council to manage education at the primary level as also to prescribe the instruction medium to be used in the schools that fall in its Regional Council's jurisdiction. No power vests with the Regional Council for imparting education at the primary level which is responsible for alienating the region's minor tribes from the freedom of writing and reading using their own languages and dialects. The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council's Chakmas, Lakhers and Pawis prime complaint as far as the Mizo District Council is concerned is on this subject and it became so acute that the minor tribes found it appropriate to ask for a district council separately for themselves.

To quote Dr. R.N. Prasad:

The provisions of the Sixth Schedule suffer from certain shortcomings and defects. There is no provision for coordination of the activities of the District Council, the Regional Council and the State Government. The State has no power to review and assess the working of these councils except to approve their legislations by the Governor and to sanction loans and grants for development schemes.

According to Dr. R.N. Prasad, due to this the councils do not give back to the State Government the left over amount of the grants. Without attaining appropriate sanction, they channel the balance unspent for various other purposes. District Councils' leaders neither have expert inputs for tackling and implementing developmental matters nor do they show any interest towards planning and

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monitoring of schemes etc. at the micro level. As a result there has been total failure on the parts of the Councils as far as the upliftment of poor masses is concerned.

Towards the micro level strengthening of the planning process, the councils are contributing next to nothing and play no such role that is worth mentioning. According to Dr. R.N. Prasad, 'As a consequence, the councils have neither been able to do anything of standard in the interest of hill masses nor to involve the poor tribes in development activities either as beneficiaries or as decision makers on any significant scale. In fact, it is shown that the councils have harmed interests of the poor tribes. Within the councils, over a period of time, due to large development funds available, a nexus has emerged between the neo-rich middle class or classes or rich traders, contractors, bureaucrats and educated, who have emerged from within the tribal society of north east India. This emerging socioeconomic power structure in the tribal areas does not allow the benefits of the Sixth Schedule to flow down to the weaker section of the tribes.'

It does appear that those members of Councils who are elected as also the office-bearers, who generally come from the tribal societies' elite group, hold their own vested interests when it comes to maintaining this structure which is exploitative; they have formed a class that has all privileges in its hold. Such persons have altogether undermined the Sixth Schedule's very purpose of the Councils functioning in a democratic structure. The Sixth Schedule is being used to, at the cost of the majority, serve the few.

Despite the Fifth and Sixth Schedules, the existing power structure in these tribal areas is exploitative towards the poor. It requires a public distribution system that is efficient, providing the tribesmen right to work which will provide minimum employment and incomes to live on, land reforms for asset redistribution favouring the poor and encouraging the role of development bureaucracy and voluntary agencies in rural development so that Sixth Schedule's benefits can reach poor and even to empower them.

As the members of Districts Councils held posts of profit, in 1952, they could not become members of the Parliament or Legislative Assemblies and that the Central and State Governments held financial interests in District Councils. District Councils influenced the Ministry of Home Affairs to get rid of this restriction to enable them to be State Legislative Assembly members and position to foster smoother and better relations and understanding between the District Councils and State Governments. Accordingly, an amendment was made to the Representation of People Act. With this practice, state politics seeped into councils and partisanship discriminations based on party affiliations. According to the Sixth Schedule a person cannot be a member of more than one District Council or of more than one legislative body – District Council and the State legislature as it encourages concentration of power in hands of few.

For the councils, another problem area is land management. It is in the hands of the District Councils to formulate laws pertaining to land allotment, occupation or use as also jhuming for the interests of the tribesmen of any town or village. As land matters are in the District Councils' jurisdiction, it is also vested with land reforms. District Councils perform brief administration of areas of the Sixth Schedule based on traditions and customs of the tribals in that area. Under the provisions of the Sixth scheduled, it is not allowed to transfer land to a non-tribal from a tribal. Still, no laws have been made by majority of District councils with

respect to the system of land holding within their jurisdictions. Fundamental structure followed by the land tenure traditional system remains unaltered. There has been no success for the District Councils as far as common land's protection or codification of customary system of land tenure and any of other social custom is concerned. There has been no initiation of measures for land reform in areas where people recognize individual land ownership. Even a cadastral survey has not been conducted.

To quote Dr. R.N. Prasad,

The protection provided by the Inner Line Regulation and the Sixth Schedule have been used to generate a process of progressive concentration of vast landed property in the form of private ownership in the hands of the emerging local middle class or a small group of well-off tribals. It is aggravating the situation of rural poverty by pushing an increasingly larger section of the real poor, to the margins of landless peasants, farm/agricultural labourers and share croppers. The emergence of private ownership in land leads to exploitative relations in land use and management and thereby perpetuates the existing disparities of wealth and land alienation among the extremely poor tribals. This will certainly disturb social harmony. However, if the situation is to be improved even in a modest way, codification of tribal rights in lands, enactment of laws/regulations concerning the existing land holding system, land reforms and cadastral survey will have to be initiated/implemented effectively as measures of social justice and equity.

Even in the beginning of the 70s, district councils were functioning with some amount of stability. A great adverse effect has hit the councils in the milieu of defections and political instability. A suggestion has been advanced for amendment of the sixth Schedule's paragraph 16 such that the governor will have the power for dissolving Councils of this type. In view of the political opportunism that District Council members have shown in the recent past, it will be a wise step to have anti-defection legislation. If there is an appropriate amendment made, the Councils might find themselves empowered in this regard to take positive steps.

According to the Sixth Schedule, a law that the State legislature or the Parliament passes on matters that lie in the purview of the district can become applicable till the District Council does not extend its application. Under Paras 3 (1) 8 and 10 of the Schedule the powers to legislate on the subjects enshrined in the Sixth Schedule are given to the district Councils. Under Para 12-B there is a modification to this for Mizoram and Meghalaya providing to the laws that the state legislature passes an all-overriding character. Under it, the state government is given the power to keep control over District Councils as also snatch powers from them. There appears to be a self contradiction in the Sixth Schedule as it appears to be a like a Constitution sitting inside the Constitution of India. According to Dr. R.N. Prasad, 'This needs to be removed by a proper amendment of the said Para 12-B as in Para 12.'

Through the constitutional (Amendment Act) of 1988, to the Sixth Schedule there has been added paragraph 20B (B) to help the Governor use his discretionary powers for performing his functions. Also, under the provision, it is mandatory that the Council of Ministers be consulted by the Governor. This might influence his actions and for safeguarding the ADC's autonomy it should be amended.

Oftentimes, district councils' functionaries arbitrarily discharge their functions and powers. They are found to be violating regulations, rules and acts for interests either of the party or totally selfish. They are not clean of indulging in nepotism and favouritism and misusing the financial powers. Customary land tenure system as other regulations that are for land protection to aid the plains private

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capital/investors/entrepreneurs to acquire land for economic development or for investment in any other public purpose may be codified, modified/liberalised. Codification does not seem to be the main purpose but legislation as far as the State Governments and Autonomous District Councils are concerned. Through legislations it is possible to provide traditional system some uniformity instead of codifying the customary laws which are different in different tribes. Furthermore, tribals need to grow and develop based on their own genius and radical change in land-relations is required to maintain continuity with tribal traditions' egalitarian ethos.

Dr. R.N. Prasad says,

The Sixth Schedule has a vague provision that creates a confusion/complication. Paragraph 3(G) of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India empowers the District Councils to appoint the succession of Chiefs or headmen but it does not appear clear whether such power covers the abolition of Chiefship as an institution.

Chiefships were abolished by an Act by the Government of Assam in 1954. District councils took charge of all the lands that were till then under the Chiefs. Such lands passed from the district council to the control of the state in the Mizo Hills District when it finally became a state.

Moreover, in villages, there exists the jurisdiction which traditional economic-cum-proto-political and the Village Councils (village authorities) function as State agents. If it was under an Act of the Autonomous District Council that the land was acquired, it would have possibly been under the control of the village communities without any proprietary State intermediacy.

The Indian Constitution's Sixth Schedule gave India the District Council and it is not a product of the State legislature but of the Indian Parliament. It is Parliament alone which can amend the Sixth Schedule's provisions. Being a body corporate, the Autonomous District Council has the power to act independently of the State Legislature. In truth the scene is just the opposite. As head of state, the Governor also heads the District Council and holds the power to suspend the Council's resolutions if they are not aligned with the Sixth Schedule, could prejudice the opinion of the public or if they could put the country's safety in danger. The Governor in such a case can take steps he deems necessary to the extent of suspension of the council. The Governor can take on some or all of the Council's powers and functions for 6 months duration. The Governor even has the power to, if so recommended by an Inquiry Commission, to dissolve the Council. Looking at instances of the same, it appears that rather than the Governor, the State Council of Minister recommends the setting up of the Inquiry. This recommendation/order needs the approval of the concerned state's legislature. Prior to an Inquiry Commission getting appointed, the District Councils cannot put forth its side to State Legislature/State Government. In final summing up, it is quite evident that the District Councils have been unable to uphold the tribesmen's socio-economic interests and customs/traditions.

Dr. R.N. Prasad opines,

If the District Council is to continue to function in a proper shape and manner required under the sixth Schedule, its autonomy should be restored by scrapping the overriding powers of the State Government, over the District Councils'. Adequate grants-in-aid must be given to them. A provision should be made that mandatory obligation on the part of the State Government is required to make funds available to the District Council in time for its estimated expenditures by amending paragraphs 7 and 13 of the Sixth Schedule.



### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. The provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935 separated Assam's hill areas into two distinct categories. Name these categories.
5. Which areas form partially excluded areas?
6. How many district councils are there in North-East India, as of now?
7. What is the tenure of a district council?
8. Which two authorities control the autonomous district's civil administration, according to the provisions of the Sixth Schedule?
9. When were chiefships abolished by the Government of Assam?

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### ACTIVITY

Use the Internet to research the history of the political developments in the North-East.

### DID YOU KNOW

The people inhabiting the seven states of the North East are all of Mongoloid descent and are completely different from the conventional Indian in physical appearance and outlook.

## 2.4 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- For the British colonial rulers, the region of north east was a frontier region that provided them with extreme difficulty.
- The policy that the British had towards the frontiers appeared to be well thought for ensuring 'segregation'.
- For the purpose of protecting the people of the hills, the first step that the British colonial rulers took was to pass the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873. This enabled the colonial state to form an Inner Line that ran along the foothill tracts of Assam.
- According to the Government of British India, the purpose of this Inner Line was merely an ease of jurisdiction. Yet, the provisions of the regulation put restrictions on subject existing outside the area and prohibited them from living or moving therein.
- The inner lines regulation became part of Scheduled Districts Act of 1874 and the Frontier Tract Regulation Act of 1880 that allowed territories under them to be excluded from criminal and civil procedure codes, the rules on property legislation and transfer and from those laws which it was considered would not suit them.
- In the India of 2013 also there is the system of inner line being followed and a permit is required to enter those regions.

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- In Arunachal Pradesh, the secretary (political) of the government of Arunachal Pradesh is responsible for issuing the ILP.
- A person requires an ILP for entering Arunachal Pradesh from any check gate located across the inter-State border of Arunachal Pradesh with Nagaland and Assam.
- In Mizoram, the Government is the authority that issues the ILP. The ILP is needed at the time of entering Mizoram from any check gate located across its interstate borders.
- In Nagaland, ILP is required by all mainland Indian citizens entering Nagaland through any check gate located on the state's inter-State borders.
- The proposal made by the Government of Manipur to introduce the provision of Inner Line Permit system for restricting outsiders' entry into Manipur under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations, 1873 has been rejected by the Centre.
- Based on the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935, Assam's hill areas got separated into 2 distinct categories: Excluded areas and Partially Excluded Areas.
- Excluded areas included the North Cachar Hills, Naga Hills, and the Lushai Hills (now Mizoram).
- There was no jurisdiction of the provincial ministry across these excluded areas. Even the expenditure incurred in this region was not put to vote by the provincial legislature, due to the fact that the legislature did not have representatives from this region. Further, neither Central nor provincial legislation was automatically extended to this region.
- Partially excluded areas included the Mikir Hills, the Garo Hills and the Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

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## 2.5 KEY TERMS

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- **Frontier:** A line or border separating two countries
- **Anthropology:** The holistic scientific and social study of humanity, mainly using ethnography as its method
- **Inner Line Permit:** An official travel document issued by the Government of India to allow inward travel of an Indian citizen into a protected/restricted area for a limited period
- **Restricted Area Permit:** An order required for non-Indian citizens to visit certain areas in India (mainly in the North-East)
- **Autonomy:** The right or condition of self-government
- **Grants-in-aid:** An amount of money given to a local government, an institution, or a particular scholar
- **Redistribution:** The act of changing the distribution of resources
- **Affiliation:** The act of becoming formally connected or joined

## 2.6 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. In Arunachal Pradesh, the secretary (political) of the government of Arunachal Pradesh is responsible for issuing the ILP.
2. In Mizoram, the Government of Mizoram is the ILP issuing authority.
3. Foreign tourists intending to visit Arunachal Pradesh require a Restricted Area Permit. The foreign tourists can obtain the Protected Area Permit from:
  - (i) All India Missions abroad
  - (ii) All Foreigners Regional Registration Officers (FRROs) at Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata
  - (iii) Chief Immigration Officers, Chennai
  - (iv) Home Ministry, Govt. of India
  - (v) Home Commissioner, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar
4. The provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935, divided Assam's hill areas into the following two distinct categories:
  - (vi) Excluded Areas
  - (vii) Partially Excluded Areas
5. Partially excluded areas included the Mikir Hills, the Garo Hills and the Khasi and Jaintia Hills.
6. As of today there are fifteen district councils in North-East India— six in Manipur, one in Tripura, three in Mizoram, three in Meghalaya and two in Assam.
7. A district council serves in office for a 5-year term.
8. The Sixth Schedule's provisions amply clarify that the autonomous districts' civil administration lies with two authorities – the Deputy Commissioner who is a representative of the state Government and the District Councils' Executive Committee.
9. Chiefships were abolished by an Act by the Government of Assam in 1954.

## NOTES

## 2.7 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

### Short-Answer Questions

1. Why did the British colonial rulers in India create excluded and partially excluded areas?
2. Define the terms 'excluded areas' and 'partially excluded areas'.
3. What is the current status of Inner line in Arunachal Pradesh?
4. Why did the British colonial rulers create the inner line?
5. Which acts/regulations went into creating the inner line and the excluded and partially excluded areas?

### Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the salient features of the Inner Line policy.
2. Write a detailed note explaining the protected area permit.

3. Explain the composition of regional and district councils.
4. Categorize and explain the different types of functions of district councils.
5. Describe the working of district councils.

## NOTES

### 2.8 FURTHER READING

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## UNIT 3 SIXTH SCHEDULE

### Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Unit Objectives
- 3.2 The Sixth Schedule
  - 3.2.1 The Background Study
  - 3.2.2 Conclusion for the Sixth Schedule
- 3.3 The Bordoloi Subcommittee
- 3.4 The District Council and its Structure
  - 3.4.1 Membership
  - 3.4.2 Powers and Functions
- 3.5 Dissolution of Autonomous District Council
  - 3.5.1 Autonomous District Councils in the Region
  - 3.5.2 Demands for New ADCs in Some Districts of Arunachal Pradesh
- 3.6 The North-Eastern Areas Re-organization Act, 1971
  - 3.6.1 Emergence of Various States
  - 3.6.2 Important Provisions of the Act
  - 3.6.3 Conclusion
- 3.7 Summary
- 3.8 Key Terms
- 3.9 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 3.10 Questions and Exercises
- 3.11 Further Reading

### NOTES

### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn about the nature and significance of the Sixth Schedule, which was appended to the Constitution of India after years of deliberation to fulfill the aspirations of the tribes of the hills in North-East India. The Schedule has provided the people of the hills with a unique system of administration that helps them to maintain and preserve their identity in the form of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) and Autonomous Regional Councils (ARCs). It has specifically mentioned powers of the district council on development. For example, the Executive Committee of Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council has given priority to maintenance of civic services for the welfare of the people. The ADCs are self-governing bodies. They have a great role to play in matters relating to development and welfare of the people at the grassroot level apart from being the guardian and protector of the traditional institutions.

This unit will also introduce you to the various provisions under the North-East Areas Reorganization Act, 1971, which has led to the formation of different states in North-East India. The North-East Areas Reorganization Act, 1971 is an Act to provide for the establishment of the States of Manipur and Tripura and to provide for the formation of the State of Meghalaya and of the Union territories of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh by reorganization of the existing State of Assam and for matters connected therewith. The Act specifies the rules and procedures of various states under various paragraphs. Along with some of the provisions of the Act, this unit also discusses the process of formation of the state in brief.

## NOTES

### 3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Assess the background of the Sixth Schedule
- Explain the provisions of the Sixth Schedule in detail
- Classify district councils
- Identify the provisions of the North-East Areas Reorganization Act, 1971

### 3.2 THE SIXTH SCHEDULE

The Sixth Schedule to the Constitution is also known as the mini constitution and provides a special set of administration for certain tribes of the hills of North-East India. There are ten different district councils in the North-East India under the Sixth Schedule. It was believed that the Indian Constitution would not be able to answer the specific demands of certain tribes of North-East India and hence there shall be some special provision within the Constitution itself. The importance of the Sixth Schedule can be gauged by the fact that even the 73rd and 74th Amendment to the Constitution was not allowed to disturb the special structure of the Sixth Schedule areas. Thus it becomes important to understand the formation of the Sixth Schedule for North-East India.

The administration of the tribal areas of the north-eastern region, which were earlier known as 'Backward Tracts', has a history of its own. The grant of the *Diwani* of Bengal to Robert Clive in 1765, by Shah Alam II, secured for the East India Company as 'superintendence of all revenues' in the presidency of Bengal, which at that time consisted of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Assam.

In the subsequent years, many Acts, Rules and Regulations were passed from time to time which had affected the North-Eastern region in diverse ways. Few of these Acts may be mentioned – the Scheduled Districts Act of 1874, the Government of India Acts, 1919 and 1935. Under the scheme of Provincial autonomy, the hill areas of the then Province of Assam fell into the categories, namely, the Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas, as scheduled in by the Order-in-Council under the Government of India Act, 1935.

The main concern of the British administration at that period of time was more static than dynamic. Thus, the administrative insulation contributed to the prolongation of backwardness of the North-Eastern region especially the areas predominantly inhabited by the tribal people. The British did everything possible to check the emotional integration between the tribal and non-tribal population for the evolution of a spirit of common identity superseding ethnic diversities. There were even abortive attempts at keeping the tribal areas of the region outside the Indian Dominion when the Indian Independence Act of 1947 was being passed by the British Parliament.

#### 3.2.1 The Background Study

When India attained its independence in 1947 and adopted its Constitution in 1950, it envisaged strong democratic institutions at the grassroot level as well as concerning the day-to-day affairs of the tribal communities. Consequently, democratic

decentralization and the establishment of Panchayati Raj institutions is one of the Directive Principles of State Policy. However, in the case of the tribal areas, especially those in the North-East, there are certain special provisions provided in the Constitution itself. The framers of the Indian Constitution also recognized the necessity of a separate political and administrative structure for the hill tribal areas of the erstwhile State of Assam by enacting the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India under Articles 244(2) and 275(1). In doing so, they were guided, broadly speaking, by three major considerations:

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1. The necessity to maintain the distinct customs, socio-economic and political culture of the tribal people of the region and to ensure autonomy of the tribal people and to preserve their identities;
2. The necessity to prevent their economic, social and political exploitation by the more advanced neighbouring people of the plains; and
3. To allow the tribal people to develop and administer themselves according to their own genius.

The constitutional provisions therefore seek to maintain and safeguard the tribal customs, traditions, culture, language, social and traditional councils/institutions and courts, and to secure the autonomy of the districts which are inhabited by fairly homogenous groups of tribal communities.

### 3.2.2 Conclusion for the Sixth Schedule

The Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India continues to function in various states of North-East despite certain limitations. In fact there are several new groups who have started demanding the inclusion of their communities under the Sixth Schedule as it is the only way according to them to protect their identity and development. The Central Government has time and again set up various committees to review the functioning of district councils under the Sixth Schedule and has put proposals to strengthen these councils by devolving into them more powers so that they can equally help in the process of democratic development in the country.

#### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Why is the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution also known as the mini constitution?
2. How many district councils are there in the North-East India under the Sixth Schedule?
3. Why have several new groups started demanding the inclusion of their communities under the Sixth Schedule?

### 3.3 THE BORDOLOI SUBCOMMITTEE

It was rather fortunate for the tribal areas of North-East India that the Interim Government of India (which was set up in 1947) could realize the critical situation and the political aspirations of the people of the hill areas/districts of the then composite State of Assam. The Interim Government also showed some kind of positive interest in the problems of the tribal areas of North-East India and wanted to look into their grievances and affairs so as to enable them to participate in policy

and decision-making process and manage their affairs according to their genius and pertaining to their welfare.

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In this backdrop, the Interim Government appointed a subcommittee of the Constituent Assembly known as the North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Committee, under the chairmanship of Gopinath Bordoloi, the then Chief Minister of Assam. This subcommittee, popularly known as the Bordoloi subcommittee, visited a number of the hill districts and carried on the spot study of the traditional institutions of the tribal communities of North-East India.

The subcommittee further felt that the assimilation of the people of the tribal areas with the rest of the country would not take place by the sudden breaking up of the tribal institutions; what was required was the evolution of growth on the old foundations. This meant that the evolution should come, as far as possible from the tribals themselves and it was equally clear that contact with outside institutions was necessary, though not in a compelling way.

To fulfill the terms of reference given to the subcommittee, it visited the tribal areas of the hill districts of the then composite State of Assam and interacted with the representatives and heads of the different traditional institutions in order to enable it to formulate a model administrative set up for these areas within the State of Assam. When the members of the subcommittee studied the problems and issues involving the administration of the tribal areas and their people, it realized that these areas needed protection and safeguard so that they might be able to protect and preserve their way of life and at the same time participate in the political life of the country along with others.

The members of the subcommittee also noted the existence and continuation of the traditional tribal self-governing bodies/institutions which functioned more or less democratically and settled their disputes in accordance with their own traditions, customs and usages of the land. The subcommittee therefore sought to evolve a system by which it would be possible to remove the apprehensions of the tribal people of the region, simple and backward as they were, so that they might not be exploited, subjugated or oppressed by the more advanced people who are their nearest neighbours.

The recommendations of the Bordoloi subcommittee were debated and discussed threadbare by the members of the Constituent Assembly in 1949. It was quite unfortunate, had it not been for the constructive and strong defensive stand and positive approach taken by the tribal leaders like Dr. Ambedkar, Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy and Jaipal Singh as well as Gopinath Bordoloi himself, because of the negative stand and indifferent attitudes shown by many non-tribal members of the Constituent Assembly. Mention may be made especially of the negative stand and indifferent attitudes of the two members from Assam, Kuladhar Chaliha and Rohini Kumar Choudhury towards the issue of the hill areas' autonomy during the course of the discussion in the Constituent Assembly. Such indifferent attitude and detestation towards the hill areas' autonomy by the two leaders could be clearly understood through their expressed opinions while taking part in the Constituent Assembly Debate (dated 5th -7th September 1949) relating to the draft provisions of the Sixth Schedule put forward by the Bordoloi subcommittee. However, all such negative views were finally rejected by the Constituent Assembly.



The recommendations of the Bordoloi subcommittee were incorporated in the Sixth Schedule to the Indian Constitution. The idea behind the Sixth Schedule was to provide the tribal people with a simple and inexpensive administration of their own, so that they could safeguard their own customs, traditions, culture, language, etc., and to provide them maximum autonomy in the management of their tribal affairs.

The Bordoloi subcommittee in particular, appreciated that the tribal people were particularly sensitive about their lands, forests, traditional system of justice and social customs. Most of the recommendations of the Bordoloi subcommittee were accepted. This led to the incorporation of the Sixth Schedule into the Indian Constitution and provided for the constitution of the Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in certain hill districts of the then composite/undivided State of Assam. Thus such ADCs were introduced in certain hill districts (except in the Naga Hills district) in 1952 and in 1953, a Regional Council was introduced in the Mizo Hills district which was meant to serve the needs of the smaller communities among the Mizos like the Pawis, the Lakhers and the Chakmas under the Sixth Schedule to the Indian Constitution. In 1972, the same Regional Council was up-graded into the ADC, one each for the Pawis, the Lakhers and the Chakmas. These ADCs have functioned in their respective autonomous districts for the last 57 years. Many of them have passed from time to time a number of Acts, Rules and Regulations as granted to them under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule. Such Acts, Rules and Regulations are dealing with and affecting the people of their respective areas in diverse ways, relating to such pertinent issues like the appointment and succession of chiefs and village headmen, land, forest, primary school education, planning processes, markets, trade and commerce, developmental activities, etc. to mention a few. Some such Acts have had direct effect on traditional institutions like chieftancy and their councils.

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### 3.4 THE DISTRICT COUNCIL AND ITS STRUCTURE

According to Paragraph 2 of the Sixth Schedule there shall be a District Council for each Autonomous District consisting of not more than 30 members, of whom four persons shall be nominated by the Governor and the rest shall be elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage.

#### 3.4.1 Membership

Members of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) are representatives of the people. All members shall hold office for a period of five years. A person shall not be qualified to be elected as a member unless:

1. He is a citizen of India;
2. He is not less than twenty five years of age; and
3. He is entitled to vote at the election of members of the District Council of that Autonomous District.

Apart from these qualifications he must be a member of the scheduled tribe of the district.

There is an Executive Committee headed by the Chief Executive Member, who is elected by the elected members of the District Council. The members of the Executive Committee are known as Executive Members (EM).

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The Executive Committee formulates policy decisions besides discharging day to day functioning and matters of the Council. The executive functions of the District Council shall be vested with the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee is collectively responsible to the District Council. Thus the Executive Committee is the highest body of the Council. The Chief Executive Member (CEM), who is the leader of the Executive Committee, allots certain departments to each EM. When the Chief Executive Member resigns, the Executive Committee is also dissolved.

There is a provision of a Chairman and Deputy Chairman in the District Councils. The Chairman and the Deputy Chairman are elected by the elected members of the District Council. The meeting to elect Chairman is presided over by the Deputy Commissioner or any other officer as authorized by the Governor of that State. The Chairman and the Deputy Chairman can hold office as long as they command the confidence of the Council. The Chairman can resign by submitting a letter of resignation to the Deputy Chairman. The Chairman has certain responsibilities. He is the presiding officer of the District Council. In his absence the Deputy Chairman presides. The Chairman regulates the proceedings of the House and he also has the right to suspend the sitting of the House if there is disorder.

### 3.4.2 Powers and Functions

The provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India have given some specific powers to the District Council to operate as organs of self-government. These powers can be categorized as legislative, executive, financial and judicial.

#### Legislative Powers

Under Paragraph 3 of the Sixth Schedule, of the Constitution, the District Council shall have the power to make laws with respect to:

1. The allotment, occupation or use, of the setting apart of land, other than any land which is reserved forest for the purpose of agriculture or grazing or for residential or other non-agricultural purpose or for any other purpose likely to promote the interests of the inhabitants of any village or town;
2. The management of any forest not being a reserved forest;
3. The use of any canal or water course for the purpose of agriculture;
4. The regulation of the practice of jhum or other form of shifting cultivation;
5. The establishment of village or town committee or councils and their powers;
6. Any other matter relating to village or town administration, including village or town police and public health and sanitation;
7. The appointment or succession of chiefs or headman;
8. The inheritance of property;
9. Marriage;
10. Social customs.

Under Para III (A), the Council within district shall have power to make laws with respect to:

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1. Industries;
2. Communication;
3. Preservation, protection and improvement of stock and prevention of animal diseases, veterinary training and practice, cattle pounds;
4. Primary and secondary education;
5. Agriculture including agricultural education and research, protection against pests and prevention of plant diseases;
6. Fisheries;
7. Water, i.e., water supplies, irrigation and canals, drainage and embankments, water storage and water power;
8. Social security and social insurance, employment and unemployment;
9. Flood control schemes for protection of villages, paddy fields, market, town etc. (not of technical nature);
10. Theatre and dramatic performances, cinemas, sports, entertainment and amusements;
11. Public health and sanitation, hospitals and dispensaries;
12. Minor irrigation;
13. Trade and commerce in, and the production, supply and distribution of food stuffs, cattle fodder, raw cotton and raw jute;
14. Libraries, museums and other similar institutions controlled or financed by the state, ancient and historical monuments and records other than those declared by or under any law made by the Parliament to be of national importance; and
15. Alienation of land;

Though the Councils have the power to make Acts and rules but the Governor must give his assent to the Acts and rules made by the Councils.

### Executive Powers

The District Councils may establish, construct or manage primary schools, dispensaries, markets, cattle pounds, ferries, fisheries, roads and waterways in the district in particular and may prescribe the language and manner in which primary education should be imparted in the primary schools of the district.

Besides, the Governor may with the consent of the District Council, entrust to its officers, the functions relating to agriculture, animal husbandry, community projects, cooperative societies, social welfare, village planning or any other matter to which the executive powers of the State extend. Certain executive powers of the State have already been entrusted to the District Council by invoking the provision of Para 6(2) of the Sixth Schedule.

### Financial Power

The District Council has been allotted specific items of revenue for the efficient discharge of its functions and to meet necessary expenses. The following financial powers have been vested with the district councils:

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1. The District Council in respect of all lands within the district shall have the power to assess and collect revenue in respect of such land in accordance with the principles for the time being followed by the Government of Assam in assessing lands for the purpose of land revenue in the State.
2. The District Council shall have the power to levy and collect taxes on lands and buildings and tolls on persons residing within such areas.
3. It shall have the power to levy and collect all or any of the following taxes:
  - Taxes on professions, traders and employments,
  - Taxes on entry of goods into the market for sale therein and tolls on passengers and goods carried in ferries,
  - Taxes for the maintenance of schools, dispensaries and roads,
  - Licenses or leases for the prospecting for, or extracting minerals. The District Council shall have the right of sharing the royalties accrued each year from licenses or leases for the purpose of prospecting for or for extracting of minerals granted by the Government of Assam in respect of any areas within the autonomous district as may be agreed upon between the Government of Assam and the district councils. The Councils also derive their income from grants-in-aid, loans and advances etc, from the State government.

**Judicial Powers**

The Regional Council for an autonomous region in respect of areas within such region and the District Council for an autonomous district in respect of areas within the district other than those which are under the authority of the Regional Councils, if any, within the district may constitute village councils, or courts for the trial of suits and cases between parties all of whom belong to schedule tribes within such areas, but cannot hear cases involving offences punishable by death, transportation of life or imprisonment for not less than five years. The Regional Council Courts are courts of appeal in respect of all suits and cases tried by the village Council courts and the subordinate District Council Courts. Only the High Courts and the Supreme Court of India have jurisdiction over suits and cases decided by the Council courts. However, the Governor, if he deems appropriate, may confer powers to the Regional and District Councils in exceptional cases for the trial of offences punishable with death, transportation for life, or imprisonment for a term of not less than five years under the Indian Penal Code. The Governor also has the right to withdraw such powers from the councils if need arises.

On further scrutinizing the role of the ADC in the Sixth Schedule areas, it may be noted that it was an institutional innovation of effecting decentralization of power at the district level covering under its general framework the problems and issues down to the village level as devolved under the Constitution of India. However, soon after the setting up of the ADCs in the Sixth Schedule areas of North-East India, these Councils had been seriously and persistently voicing their grievances against the treatment meted out to them by the different State Governments, where the ADCs are in existence, in the matters of provision of grants and other financial assistance, according of approval of the legislative proposals of the ADCs, nomination of members to the ADCs, supersession of the ADCs, etc. There are states in which the Councils have been treated in a questionable manner such as in Meghalaya where it is under the control of the State government.

Before the re-organization of the then undivided State of Assam (pre-1972), such grievances were directed against that State. The situation is not so different today even after the re-organization of Assam which gave way to the creation/formation of full-fledged States like Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura, etc. For instance, in Meghalaya today, a tug-of-war is still continuing between the State Government and the three ADCs over a particular paragraph (Paragraph 12A) of the Sixth Schedule. The ADCs in Meghalaya are unhappy and dissatisfied with the decisions of the State Government which makes use of the paragraph to declare those Acts, Rules, Regulations passed by the ADCs null and void on the basis of the strength of this paragraph.

The ADCs were created in certain hill areas/districts of North-East India in response to the constitutional needs of the tribal people for autonomy due to their apprehensions about the preservation and protection of their ethnic identity and their rights over the lands, natural resources, forests, customary laws, languages/dialects, traditions, etc. The ADCs were conceived and established to ensure the right of self-governance of the tribal people, to enable them to manage their affairs according to their own genius, to enable them to preserve and protect their ethnic identity and to face the forces of assimilation squarely from their more advanced neighbours in the plains.

The underlying factor contributing to whatever achievements of the ADCs is the tribal people's emotional and active involvement in asserting their rights of self-governance and to run the administration by their own elected tribal representatives for promoting, preserving and protecting their rights over their lands and natural resources which are so dear to them and the overall economic interests and development of their own people in general. No wonder, the concept of the ADC has served as the basic model for meeting the demands for autonomy.

The autonomy of the ADCs has been much affected in the area of financial independence. They have to depend on their respective State Governments in matters of financial allotments. This in turn has reduced and restricted their autonomy and performance. One of the sources of finance of the ADCs is the share of royalty accruing each year from licenses and leases for the purpose of prospecting for or extraction of minerals granted by the State Government in respect of any area within an autonomous district. For instance, in Meghalaya, all the three ADCs have complained that they are not given due share from the collection of royalties and taxes. Secondly, the ADCs alleged that because of the obstructive attitude of the State Government in the matter of the release of funds, they have been forced to adopt undesirable practices so as to raise funds in order to discharge their constitutional obligations like running of primary schools, dispensaries and even to meet the salaries of the employees of the Councils.

The Sixth Schedule confers few development functions on the ADCs, though there is an enabling clause whereby the State Government can entrust such functions to them. On the event of the re-organization of States in North-East India in 1971, there was some sort of understanding at the political level as a result of which a number of development functions were conferred on the ADCs. In this aspect, certain ADCs in North-East India experienced subsequently that this arrangement was a fragile one. Lacking in statutory support, the ADCs had to depend on the changing political relations with the state leadership. The developmental activities of the ADCs therefore depend very much on the political party or parties that run the State

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administration. If the same political party or alliance of parties is in power both at the State and District Council level, the latter may have a smooth sailing in its programmes of developmental activities due to a good understanding at the political or party level. Funds or flow of funds from the State Government to the ADCs may not be a problem. If it is otherwise, a number of obstacles and hurdles may be created by the party or parties/alliances in power at the State level to jeopardize the plan of action that might be framed by the ADCs for the development of the autonomous districts.

A very interesting fact of the ADCs within the Sixth Schedule is that today all the ADCs have their separate sets of powers and functions. If a proper comparison is done among all the ADCs it can be seen that leaving aside the ADCs of Meghalaya, the powers of the other ADCs have been increased significantly. For example, in the state of Assam all the three District Councils have powers and functions which are much more than their counterparts in other states. In fact in Assam, the State government has increased the powers due to certain political reasons like keeping the demand of Statehood under control by increasing the powers and functions of certain district councils from time to time.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

4. Name a few tribal leaders who contributed positively in the Bordoloi Subcommittee.
5. Where, in the Constitution of India, are the recommendations of the Bordoloi subcommittee incorporated?
6. What is the official tenure of members of Autonomous District Councils?
7. What are the criteria for a person to be a member of the Autonomous District Council?

**3.5 DISSOLUTION OF AUTONOMOUS DISTRICT COUNCIL**

A significant feature of the Sixth Schedule is the provision for the constitution of Regional Councils by the Governor within an ADC to enable a small yet distinctive tribe living in a compact area to enjoy the same degree of autonomy as the larger closely-knit tribe in the District Council. The Governor also has the power to determine the area and boundaries of the regional and the district councils. The provision recognizes the diversity of the tribes, the need to protect smaller ones from possible domination by the larger tribes and therefore to empower them with full autonomy to preserve their culture and customs and to administer their areas for overall betterment.

Thus, the legislative and administrative powers of the Regional and District councils are the same, the latter in no way being superior. The administration of justice under the customary laws and all other legal and administrative responsibilities with reference to land, forests, water courses, village councils, village haats, regulation of trade by non-tribals and shifting cultivation are discharged by the Regional Council by its own machinery and are independent of the District Councils.

At present there are no Regional Councils in any of the four North-Eastern states where the Sixth Schedule is in operation.

The Mizo district of erstwhile Assam had a regional council for the Pawi-Lakher tribes. Later, with the grant of the Union Territory status, Pawi Lakher Regional Council was trifurcated into three Regional Councils namely, Pawi Regional Council, Chakma Regional Council and Lakher Regional Council on 2 April 1972. They were subsequently upgraded to the status of ADC on 29 April 1972. Despite the identification of Lai as 'Pawi' and Mara as 'Lakher' in Mizoram, the Laies and the Maras regarded the popular terms 'Pawi' and 'Lakher' as derogatory terms. They demanded change of their District Council names after their ethnic and original names. Thus, under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 1988 of Indian Parliament (No. 67 of 1988), the Pawi ADC was changed into Lai ADC and the Lakher ADC into Mara ADC.

### 3.5.1 Autonomous District Councils in the Region

1. Khasi Hills ADC, covering three districts of the State of Meghalaya, with HQs at Shillong.
2. Jaintia Hills ADC covering one district of the State of Meghalaya with HQs at Jowai.
3. Garo Hills ADC covering three districts of the State of Meghalaya with HQs at Tura.
4. North Cachar ADC covering one district of the State of Assam with HQs at Haflong.
5. Karbi Anglong ADC covering one district of the State of Assam with HQs at Diphu.
6. Lai ADC, Mizoram with HQs at Saiha.
7. Mara ADC, Mizoram with HQs at Lawngtlai.
8. Chakma ADC, Mizoram, with HQs at Chawngte also known as Kamalanagar by the Chakma people.
9. Tripura's Tribal Areas' ADC covering several districts of Tripura inhabited by indigenous tribals; its Council and Assembly are situated in Khumulwng, a town 26 km away from Agartala, the State capital.
10. Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was established according to the Memorandum of Settlement of February 10, 2003. BTC was announced to be formed just after the surrender of the BLTF. The BLTF under the leadership of Hagrama Mohilary laid down their weapons on 6 December 2003. Shri Hagrama was sworn in as the Chief Executive Member (CEM) on December 7, 2003. The BTC with HQs at Kokrajhar, initially had 12 electorate members each looking after a specific area of control call Somisthi. The area under the BTC jurisdiction is called the Bodo Territorial Autonomous District (BTAC). The BTAC consists of four contiguous districts—Kokrajhar, Baska, Udalguri and Chirang—carved out of eight districts—Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, Darrang and Sonitpur—an area of 27,100 km<sup>2</sup> (35% of Assam).

## NOTES

### 3.5.2 Demands for New ADCs in Some Districts of Arunachal Pradesh

#### NOTES

An interesting feature of the ADCs in the region is that there is a move from three distinct tribal inhabited areas of Arunachal Pradesh to have ADCs, despite the operation of Panchayati Raj in the State of Arunachal Pradesh.

#### **The Proposed Patkai Autonomous District Council (Tirap and Changlang)**

The region inhabited by the tribes with population of 225748 (2001 census) has tremendous scope for development of power, tourism, horticulture, mineral, mining etc. This area has remained isolated and has not received any focused attention particularly in the fields of education and infrastructure development. The negligible representation in various state Governments and other organizations from these major tribes is one of the sad testimonies of the above facts. Thus, the two districts remained backward and underdeveloped in every sphere of development and still continue to be so.

In order to ensure economic, educational and linguistic aspirations of the major tribes of the two districts and also to ensure preservation of their rich and unique socio-cultural, religious and ethnic identity, their leaders have made representations for separate district councils for the tribes. There is a popular demand for a Patkai Autonomous District Council (PADC).

The idea of autonomy as conceived in the case of Tirap and Changlang is the model that has been put into operation for the tribes of Tripura, the Boros and the Karbis. The demand for ADCs is necessitated by the special situation of the place and people, politically, economically and in other aspects. The geographical position of these tribal areas and their location on the international border has called for some special attention.

The objectives of having an autonomous self governing body to be known as PADC within the State of Arunachal Pradesh are: to fulfill the economic, educational and linguistic aspirations and the preservation of socio-cultural and ethnic identity of the indigenous tribes of the two districts of Tirap and Changlang and to speed up the infrastructure development in the districts.

The smaller tribes beginning with the Idus in Dibang Valley, those in Lohit, Changlang and Tirap who follow different traditions are very poorly represented in the administration and whose voice is heard rarely in the Arunachal context. Apparently what the demand centres on is that the two district should have more numbers in the Arunachal administration. Here too, like in some other existing ADCs, the councils are looked upon as employment agencies with little thought for the mandate and purpose of the ADCs.

Likewise there is a demand for a proposed Mon Autonomous District Council (MAC). West Kameng District as a whole is dominated by mountains/hills except some plain area in the foothills adjoining Assam. In such land locked rugged topography, the only source of accessibility is through the poor network of road transport which hardly reaches to the Circle/Block. This means most of the villagers are still without assured connectivity and villagers are in pockets of isolation which needs more attention and care for their all round development. The economic



development depends upon how resources are mobilized. For this, there is need for timely planning and quick delivery mechanism so that sustainable development takes place at the local level.

This district is inhabited by numerous heterogeneous tribes which are different from each other in every aspect of their social life. There are Monpas, Akas, Mijis, Sherdukpens and Buguns. Numerically all of these tribes are not very large in comparison to other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. But from time immemorial they have had their own culture, religion and rituals, faiths, beliefs and handicrafts which are unique and to keep alive these values, special protection and promotion are imperative.

By virtue of being smaller in terms of numbers of population, all the tribes of this district have very few number of representatives and senior level officers in the apex body of decision and policy making. Similarly resource allocation is also not adequate or at par with the 'degree of backwardness'.

West Kameng District has a very strategic location. It lies on the international boundary with China and Bhutan, having links through vital passes and valleys. The Chinese aggression into this region is still fresh in the minds of the people who were affected by this intrusion. Therefore, this district draws special attention of planners and policy makers towards its people not only for materialistic development but also for promotion of emotional oneness with the mainland.

Modern education reached this part of State late—as late as the 1960s. Consequently there are not many educated people in this remote part of Arunachal Pradesh. Human resource development is a vital aspect and occupies the central place in the whole process of development. But due to lack of awareness and motivation, people in the remote villages still prefer to engage their children in some of their domestic works for immediate benefits instead of sending them to the schools. So, unless special drive to raise the level of thinking and motivation is ventured the education scenario of the district will not improve and therefore the level of participation of the grassroot level people in the development process will not be forthcoming.

Thus, taking into consideration of above facts and circumstances, if autonomous planning at the local level is implemented it will in all possibility go a long way in the furtherance of interest of the tribes inhabiting this region in preserving their rich traditional cultural heritage, religions, indigenous faith and beliefs, valuable arts and handicrafts with which the people of this district will be able to preserve its own identity. Over and above, this will also help in removing regional disparities and provide insights to the people of this district in particular and Arunachal Pradesh in general.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

8. How many Regional Councils are there in the four North-Eastern states, where the Sixth Schedule is in operation?
9. How many districts are there in the BTAC?
10. Why is connectivity a problem in the West Kameng District?

### NOTES

### 3.6 THE NORTH-EASTERN AREAS RE-ORGANIZATION ACT, 1971

#### NOTES

The North-Eastern part of India is one of the most exquisite parts of the country, predominated by various tribes and groups, each having their unique identity and culture. Today, the North-East comprises of seven different states, namely, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura. However, North-East India at the time of independence consisted of:

1. The province of Assam, which had the following districts :
  - (i) Brahmaputra Valley districts which consisted of:
    - (a) Goalpara;
    - (b) Kamrup;
    - (c) Nowgong;
    - (d) Darrang;
    - (e) Sibsagar; and
    - (f) Lakhimpur.
  - (ii) Surma Valley Districts which consisted of:
    - (a) Cachar; and
    - (b) Sylhet.
  - (iii) Hill Districts which consisted of:
    - (a) Garo Hills;
    - (b) United Khasi and Jaintia Hills;
    - (c) Naga Hills; and
    - (d) Lushai Hills.
2. The North-East Frontier Tracts consisting of:
  - (i) Balipara frontier tract was later on divided into:
    - Kameng Frontier Division; and
    - Subansiri Frontier Division.
  - (ii) Abor Hills district later on named as Siang Frontier Division; and
  - (iii) Mishni Frontier district later named as Lohit Frontier Division;
    - Tirap Frontier; and
    - The Naga or Tuensang Frontier Tract
3. The princely States were:
  - (i) Manipur,
  - (ii) Tripura; and
  - (iii) Khasi states

Thus at the time of independence all states besides Manipur and Tripura became Group-C states, while the rest of North-East was under the administrative setup of the State of Assam. But the system of one administration was not acceptable to the tribes of the hills of North-East. Right since the time of independence there were demands of autonomy for most of the hill districts.

**NOTES**

The Assam Government thus provided for autonomous district councils for various hill tribes, but things were no longer rosy especially after the decision of the Assam government to introduce The Official Language Act (XXIII, 1960) which introduced Assamese as the official language in Assam, this decision of the Assam government had serious repercussions as the leaders of the hills started doubting the motives of the Assam government. In fact the All People Hill Leader's Conference started demanding for the separation of the hill districts from the state of Assam.

In fact, both the government of Assam and India were not in favour of breaking up the State of Assam and hence proposed a series of measures to the leaders of the hills, but they rejected all such measures including the recommendations made by the Pataskar Commission as they realized that such solutions are not going to solve the problems of the Hill areas and would make them a minority within their own State. Thus, the demand for statehood movements gained momentum.

**3.6.1 Emergence of Various States****Formation of Nagaland**

The Nagas, especially under the Naga National Council (NNC) demanded not statehood but sovereignty for the Nagas, as according to them, Nagaland was never conquered by India and hence should be given a sovereign status. In fact, the NNC was offered a solution through the Hydari Agreement, but the NNC under A.Z. Phizo rejected the agreement and declared independence on its own on 14th August, 1947. In fact the Naga Hills also rejected the Sixth Schedule when it was offered to them.

After the India attained independence, the situation in Naga Hills worsened and the Nagas under NNC showed its protest by withdrawing from public meetings of the Prime Minister Nehru in 1953 when he visited Naga Hills. The Naga Hills witnessed a lot of bloodshed and realizing this ever-worsening situation, the Naga Peace Organization Committee was formed which successfully negotiated for a settlement which resulted in the creation of Nagaland as a separate state in 1960. In 1962, the State of Nagaland Act was passed by the Parliament and the State was inaugurated by the President on 1st December 1963.

**Emergence of Meghalaya**

The demand for the State of Meghalaya was the by far most peaceful movement for a separate State compared to the rest of North-East. It was Capt. Williamson Sangma who was considered to be the first person to propose the demand for a separate hill state in a Conference held at Tura on 6th October, 1954. The Conference submitted a memorandum to the State Reorganization Commission (SRC) for the creation of Eastern Hill State, but the SRC did not concede to the demands for a Hill State.

There were other efforts to pacify the leaders of the hills but all proved futile and ultimately the autonomous State of Meghalaya was inaugurated on 2 April 1970 and was given full Statehood on 21 January 1972.

**Formation of Mizoram**

The Mizo Hills, also known as the Lushai Hills, were given ADCs under the Sixth Schedule. As in the case of other hill areas, even the Mizo leaders were dissatisfied with the attitude of the leaders from the government of Assam and were deeply

**NOTES**

agitated when the case of the Mizo Hills was neglected during the famous *Mautam* or the famine of 1959 by the leaders of Assam.

The Language Act also did its part in bringing out the differences between the Mizo leaders and the Assam government in open. In Mizo Hills it was Laldenga, the leader of the *Mizo National Front* (MNF) who demanded the sovereign independent State of Mizoram. The MNF was involved in series of violent attacks and had to go underground. In 1971, Mizo Hills was declared a Union Territory and later when Laldenga accepted for a settlement and signed the 'Memorandum of Settlement' in June 1986, leading to the formation of Mizoram as a full-fledged State.

### **Formation of Arunachal Pradesh**

Arunachal Pradesh, formerly known as North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) was an integral part of Assam. The administrative control of the NEFA was vested in the Government of Assam. After the Chinese aggression, New Delhi realized the strategic importance of the area and decided to restructure it and in 1971 as per the provisions of North-Eastern Areas Reorganization Act, NEFA was made a union territory. When Mizoram was granted statehood in 1986 after the agreement between Government of India and Laldenga, then the people of Arunachal also wanted to have a State of their own.

The Government of India readily agreed to grant statehood to Arunachal. In fact, Arunachal had everything which a state is suppose to have; its 40 member assembly, its Council of Ministers, a common High Court, its own capital, representation in the Parliament and unique history of administrative and constitutional growth. The leadership also proved beyond doubt that they have the capacity to run the state and that they deserved Statehood. Thus the State of Arunachal Pradesh Act was passed by the Parliament and Arunachal Pradesh was inaugurated as the 24th State of the Indian Union in 1987.

### **Statehood for Tripura and Manipur**

Manipur and Tripura were the only two princely states since the pre-independence period. Both the States acceded to the Indian dominion and were put under the Part-C States. However, the State Reorganization Commission suggested that these two princely States should merge with the State of Assam which was rejected by the Government of India. Both the States were given territorial councils to govern their own administration which was to be monitored by the Central government. Manipur and Tripura were later converted into Union Territories in 1963 and finally in 1971 with the passing of the North-Eastern Areas Reorganization Act, Manipur and Tripura were granted Statehood and became full-fledged States in January 1972.

### **3.6.2 Important Provisions of the Act**

The statehood achieved by the different States of North-East officially came out in the North-Eastern Areas Reorganization Act, 1971. The Act had different parts which basically provided the political and administrative setup of the seven different States of North-East. Some of the important provisions of the Act can be discussed as follows.

**NOTES**

Part II of the Act speaks about the establishment of the States of Manipur and Tripura and formation of the State of Meghalaya and the Union Territories of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, this Para basically mentioned the territories that shall be under the new States in North-East. Part III of the Act discusses the representation in the Legislatures for different states. In the Council of States, the newly formed States of Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh shall have one representative each. In the House of The People, Assam shall have 14 representatives, Manipur, Tripura and Meghalaya shall have 2 representatives respectively, while Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh shall have 1 representative each. There is also provision for the Scheduled Castes and Schedule Tribes in the Lok Sabha. This Para also mentions the allocation of seats in the Legislative Assemblies. In Assam the total number of seats shall be one hundred and fourteen (114), in the Legislative Assembly of Manipur it shall be sixty (60), in the State of Tripura the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly shall be sixty (60), and in Meghalaya also it shall be sixty (60). There is also adequate provision for reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assemblies. In matters of election related affairs, the Election Commission of India shall be the final authority.

Part IV of the Act states that there shall be a common High Court for the States of Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura to be called the Gauhati High Court. All the additional rules and regulations and various powers of the judges are also provided in this Para.

Part V of the Act mentions the responsibility for the authorization of expenditure and distribution of revenues for the different States. The Governors in the various States can authorize expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of the State. It also determines the allowances and privileges of the Governors of Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura. This Para also determines the distribution of revenues for the different States.

A very important feature of this Act was Para VIII which provided for 'joint-cadre' for the All India Services. It provided for a 'joint-cadre' for the States of Assam and Meghalaya for Indian Administrative Service, Indian Police Service and Indian Forest Service. In similar terms Manipur and Tripura shall also have 'joint-cadre' or such services. Besides this, the Para also mentions other aspects of the Services such as provisions relating to continuance of officers in the same posts as was under the state of erstwhile Assam. There are also provisions relating to the State Service Commissions especially of Assam.

Besides the above there are many other provisions in the Act in relation to the newly created States of North-East. For instance, the Act allowed the continuance of the District Councils and Regional Councils in certain parts of the North-Eastern region.

### **3.6.3 Conclusion**

Thus, to conclude, the North-East Reorganization Act of 1971 contained various administrative provisions for reorganizing the North-Eastern part of the country. In fact, any change in the basic structure of the administrative structure, be it of executive, legislative or judicial has to be done through an amendment to the Act of 1971. The newly created States of North-East draw their strength from the Act of 1971.

## NOTES

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

11. How many states does the North-East consist of today?
12. What was the basic idea behind the Sixth Schedule?
13. Why did the Nagas demand sovereignty instead of statehood?
14. What was Arunachal Pradesh formerly known as?

**ACTIVITY**

Find out what the Government of India has done to encourage tourism in Arunachal Pradesh. Make a list of efforts carried out to promote tourism.

**DID YOU KNOW**

In Sangti valley you can see almost six species of Parrotbill, Bengal Florican, Pied Harrier, and Blue-naped Pitta.

**3.7 SUMMARY**

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The Sixth Schedule to the Indian Constitution has provisions for the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.
- The Bardoloi Committee conducted an on the spot study of the demands and desires of the tribes from the hilly regions and put forward its recommendation for a clear-cut and reasonable setup (district councils) of the tribal areas, which were later acknowledged and included into Article 244 (2) of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
- In paragraph 2 of the Sixth Schedule to the Indian Constitution, the Government of Assam framed the Assam Autonomous District (Constitution of district councils) Rules 1951 and the Pawi-Lakher (Constitution of Regional Councils) Rules, 1952, for the self-governing region in the Lushai Hills District.
- The rules passed under the Sixth Schedule provide for an Executive Committee (EC) of the District Council to carry on its executive functions.
- The Governor has power to modify laws or rules approved by the district councils, which are an infringement of the prerequisites of the Sixth Schedule.
- This indicates that the Sixth Schedule renders the Governor as head of the Autonomous District Council.
- The Sixth Schedule has provisions that make it mandatory for the State Government to discharge the funds within a specific period to the district councils.
- The interim Government appointed a subcommittee of the Constituent Assembly known as the North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Committee, under the chairmanship of Gopinath Bordoloi, the then

Chief Minister of Assam. This subcommittee was known as the Bordoloi Subcommittee.

- After the Indian Constitution was put into effect, the Government established an Interim Tribal Advisory Council in every district of the hills, with the intent of getting every tribal representative to participate in administration of the areas, even during the provisional period until the formation of district councils.
- Every district council or regional council made available under the Sixth Schedule is a corporate body known as District Council or Regional Council of (Name of the District or name of the Region) having incessant progression and a common seal with the right to file a suit and be sued.
- The number of constituencies in every district councils varies from one another, based on the number of elective seats given for each council.
- The Sixth Schedule visualizes setting up of Autonomous district councils (ADCs). These councils have been given legislative, administrative and judicial powers under the Sixth Schedule.
- The States in the North-Eastern Region were reestablished by the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganization) Act 1971.

## NOTES

### 3.8 KEY TERMS

- **Superintendence:** Management by overseeing the performance or operation of a person or group
- **Dominion:** The territory of a sovereign or government
- **Decentralization:** An organizational structure in which decision-making authority is located not at the center but at the nodes
- **Homogenous grouping:** A strategy that enables the grouping of students by specific ability, interest, or subject area
- **Interim Government:** A provisional government is an emergency setup when a political void has been created by the collapse of a very large government
- **Constituent Assembly:** A parliament, congress or convention elected for the purpose of drawing up a constitution
- **Scheduled tribe:** A substantial indigenous minority of the population of India
- **Executive committee:** A committee generally made up of an organization's officers as described in the bylaws
- **Jhum cultivation:** A local name for slash and burn agriculture practiced by the tribal groups in the North-Eastern states of India
- **Social security:** An insurance program that provides benefits to retired people and those who are unemployed or disabled

### 3.9 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The Sixth Schedule to the Constitution is also known as the mini Constitution because it provides a special set of administration guidelines for certain tribes of the hills of North-East India.

**NOTES**

2. There are ten different district councils in the North-East India under the Sixth Schedule.
3. Several new groups have started demanding the inclusion of their communities under the Sixth Schedule because it is the only option, according to them, for protecting their identity and development.
4. Some famous tribal leaders who contributed positively in the Bordoloi Subcommittee are: Dr. Ambedkar, Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy and Jaipal Singh and Gopinath Bordoloi.
5. The recommendations of the Bordoloi subcommittee were incorporated in the Sixth Schedule to the Indian Constitution.
6. Members of Autonomous district councils hold office for a period of five years.
7. A person shall not be qualified to be elected as a member unless:
  - (i) He is a citizen of India;
  - (ii) He is not less than twenty five years of age; and
  - (iii) He is entitled to vote at the election of members of the District Council of that Autonomous District.
8. At present there are no Regional Councils in any of the four North-Eastern states where the Sixth Schedule is in operation.
9. The BTAC consists of four contiguous districts—Kokrajhar, Baska, Udalguri and Chirang—carved out of eight districts—Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, Darrang and Sonitpur—an area of 27,100 km<sup>2</sup> (35% of Assam).
10. Connectivity is a problem in the West Kameng District because it is, as a whole, dominated by mountains/hills except little plain area in the foot hills adjoining Assam.
11. Today, the North-East comprises of seven different states, namely, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura.
12. The basic idea behind the Sixth Schedule was to provide the tribal people with a simple and inexpensive administration of their own, so that they could safeguard their own customs, traditions, culture, language, etc. and to provide them maximum autonomy in the management of their tribal affairs.
13. The Nagas, especially under the Naga National Council (NNC) demanded not statehood but sovereignty for the Nagas, as according to them Nagaland was never conquered by India and hence should be given a sovereign status.
14. Arunachal Pradesh was formerly known as North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA).

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### 3.10 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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#### Short-Answer Questions

1. What is the Bordoloi Sub Committee?
2. What are the powers of the district councils?



3. Write a note on the background of Sixth Schedule.
4. What are some of the provisions of the North-East Areas Re-organization Act, 1971?

### Long-Answer Questions

1. What are the powers and functions of the district councils in North-East?
2. What is the North-East Areas Re-organization Act, 1971? Which were the States formed under it?
3. What is the objective of the Sixth Schedule in the North-East India?

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# UNIT 4 MOVEMENTS FOR NEW STATES

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## NOTES

### Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Unit Objectives
- 4.2 Naga Separatist Movement and the Shillong Accord
  - 4.2.1 Naga Separatist Movement
  - 4.2.2 The Shillong Accord
- 4.3 Mizo Movement
  - 4.3.1 The Role of MNF
- 4.4 The Mizo Accord
  - 4.4.1 Restoration of Normalcy
  - 4.4.2 Legal, Administrative and Other Steps
- 4.5 Impact of the Languages Act
- 4.6 Autonomous Hill State Movements of Meghalaya and Karbi Anglong
- 4.7 Political Parties and Electoral Politics
- 4.8 Summary
- 4.9 Key Terms
- 4.10 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 4.11 Questions and Exercises
- 4.12 Further Reading

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## 4.0 INTRODUCTION

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This unit will discuss in detail the various movements in the states of North-East region that led to the formation of the new states. It also discusses the methods adopted by various groups to achieve the objectives for new states. The roles of some eminent leaders and political parties have also been discussed.

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## 4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Identify the necessity of movements for achieving statehood
- Summarize Naga and Mizo movements
- Identify the impact of the languages Act
- Describe the Karbi and Meghalaya movements for statehood
- State the methods and objectives of the movements
- Classify the role of political parties

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## 4.2 NAGA SEPARATIST MOVEMENT AND THE SHILLONG ACCORD

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In this section, we will discuss the Naga Separatist Movement and the Shillong Accord.

### 4.2.1 Naga Separatist Movement

#### NOTES

The separatist movement of Nagaland is perhaps the most revolutionary and interesting one in the North-Eastern Region. The inhabitants of Nagaland constitute various tribes, which are again divided into many sub-tribes and clans and are located on international boundaries with Myanmar. Nagaland shares its internal boundaries with Assam in the West, Arunachal Pradesh in the north and Manipur in the south. The Naga Hills witnessed a lot of bloodshed before it was declared as a separate State on 1st December, 1963.

The Nagas lived an isolated life with predominant tribal culture and it is believed that their first contact with the outside people was with the Ahoms in the 13th century, when the Ahoms passed through the Patkai range of the Naga Hills. So long as the Ahoms were dominant they also commanded the respect of the Nagas who were living within the borders of the Ahom kingdom, but as the Ahom power started declining, the Nagas became free and started governing themselves. The Nagas were free tribes till the British integrated the Naga territories after the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826. However, the British were very cautious with the Naga hills and decided to follow a policy of non-interference with regards to the tribal pattern of life that the Nagas followed and even recognising the Naga traditional village councils as the authority over the general matters of the hills. In fact the British passed the Inner Line Regulation in 1873, which prohibited the plains people from free entry to Naga Hills area. The Nagas also resisted the British rule as was evident by the battle of Khonoma in which some Naga tribes fought a fierce battle with the British, but the British succeeded in defeating the Nagas. In 1880, a full-fledged Naga Hills District was created which marked a new phase in the history of British relations with the Naga Hills.

It needs to be mentioned that the Nagas were forcibly kept under the British control, so there was dissatisfaction among the Nagas. A very important political event in the Naga history was the formation of the Naga Club as early as 1818, which was considered to be a very important forum for expressing the views of the Naga tribes. The Nagas were very clear about one fact which was that Nagaland was never conquered by India and believed that the British conquered a part of their hills and once the British leave, the Naga Hills should revert to its original position of sovereignty. The Naga Club submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission in 1929, demanding that the Nagas be excluded from the scope of proposed constitutional changes and be kept under the direct administration of the British. This clearly reflected that the Nagas were hesitant to come within the dominion of the Indian State. They were very clear that the Indian setup would lead to racial exploitation, economic exploitation and political exploitation of the Hill tribes.

When the World War II came to an end, the Naga Hills District Tribal Council was formed at the initiative of the then Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, C. R. Pawsey. But in 1946 the Naga Hills District Tribal Council was newly christened as Naga National Council (NNC). The NNC declared that self determination was a fundamental right of every Naga, and the NNC led by Angami Zapu Phizo demanded an independent Naga State. In fact Phizo led a delegation to meet Lord Mountbatten and suggested that the Indian government should act as the guardian power and after that the Nagas should be free to determine their own future. But, this was not accepted by the Constituent Assembly. Realizing the gravity of the situation the Hydari Agreement was formulated which almost defused the situation. The

agreement provided for the basic safeguards for the Naga culture and way of life. The Nagas were also assured about the preservation of Naga customary rights over their lands and resources. Hydari agreement conceded that the NNC would be responsible for collection of land revenue and other taxes.

The 9th Clause of the Hydari Agreement mentioned the ten years period of special responsibility of the Governor of Assam as the agent of the Government of India to ensure due observance of the Nine point agreement and that at the end of ten years period the Nagas would be asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a new period or a new agreement for the future of Naga people to be arrived at. The NNC interpreted the last point as the right of the Nagas to move out of India which was never the official version, and hence it resulted in disagreement and ultimately the Hydari Agreement broke down.

Phizo then decided to meet Gandhi and told him about the Naga situation and Gandhi accepted Phizo's views that if Nagas want to stay out of Indian union they were free to do so. However, realizing that there was no reaction to Phizo's proposals for self rule and sovereignty, Phizo decided to declare independence for the Naga Hills on the 14th August 1947.

The NNC continued its separatist movement and its demand for independence gained momentum after Phizo was elected as the president of NNC in 1949. In fact the NNC was turning towards being a militant political organization. In the meantime, the Bordoloi Subcommittee submitted the recommendations for providing separate administrative setup for the hills known as the Sixth Schedule, but this idea was directly rejected by Phizo. The NNC organized a total boycott of the General Elections of 1952. All this was followed by a civil disobedience movement resulting in the mass resignation of school teachers, boycott of Government of India functions, and refusal to pay taxes. These tactics were enough to jolt the Central government about the burning Naga impasse.

The NNC even boycotted the Prime Minister's visit to the hills and influenced the public to abstain from the public meetings to be addressed by Nehru. In fact the NNC announced the formation of the Naga Federal Government in 1956 which started functioning as a parallel government. However, the Government of India managed to divide the Naga national movement and woo over the moderates of Naga Peoples Convention to negotiate for a settlement which resulted in the formation of the State of Nagaland on 1st December 1963. The formation of the State of Nagaland did not resolve the all important issue of self determination as there were still groups who pledged to continue their struggle against the Indian government.

From 1964 the Naga politics moved in two directions. One was the path followed by the Moderate Naga leaders who more or less were under the influence of the Indian leadership at Delhi. A breakaway faction of the NNC came to be known as Naga National Party (NNP), which won the electoral victory in the first Naga Legislative Assembly election held in 1964. The leaders of the NNP were almost one time underground leaders who came over ground and joined the path of peaceful solution to the Naga issues. But on the other hand, the hardcore Nagas still followed the path of violence and wanted to achieve sovereign independent Nagaland although they were without the physical presence of Phizo who flew to England to draw favour from the world community for a sovereign Nagaland. A bigger problem for the Government of India was that the militant Nagas started receiving support

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from then East Pakistan and other neighbouring countries. Violent activities by the underground organization were at its peak during this period. It was at this juncture that the Church leaders took the initiative to act as the mediators between the underground outfits and the Government of India. Therefore the Nagaland Baptist Church leaders held a Convention on February 24, 1964, at Wokha urging the Government of India and the Federal Government of Nagaland to form a Peace Mission. The Convention thus nominated the then Chief Minister of Assam B.P. Chaliha and Jayprakash Narayan, Shankerrao Deo and the Rev. Michael Scott, a British citizen to restore peace in Nagaland. Shankerrao Deo, however, rejected the offer and thus the Peace Mission consisted of only three members. The Peace Mission renewed hopes of bringing peace into an already strife ridden state. The underground militants welcomed this move as the Peace Mission included Michael Scott who was considered to be a sympathiser of the Naga cause.

The first achievement of the Peace Mission was the working of a ceasefire between the Government of India and the underground Nagas which became operative from 6 September 1964. But it was to be noted that both the Government of India and the Federal Government had several objections to some of the provisions mentioned in the cease-fire agreement. There were several rounds of peace talks between both the groups, but all such talks proved to be futile as both the sides were adamant on their original position. The rebel Nagas continued with their demand of a sovereign State whereas the Indian government was not ready to budge. The bigger issue was the interference of China who started fully supporting the rebels with training and arms and ammunition.

The Peace Mission later to dissolve the situation presented a 16-Point Proposal to the Government of India. The Proposal was entirely in favour of the underground views of a sovereign Nagaland and stated that 'Nagas have a right to self determination and no group has the right to dominate the Nagas'. The Government of India rejected such views from the Peace Mission. The 16-point Proposal gave a shot in the arm to the Naga rebels who became all the more determined to achieve the cause of sovereign Nagaland. At a later phase the talks between the rebels and the government moved to a higher level and even to the Prime Ministerial level when Indira Gandhi was at the helm of affairs. But talks at that level also failed and the Peace Mission was also dissolved as it was highly unsuccessful in bringing in any positive developments.

The talks badly failed between the Government of India and the rebels of Nagaland which once again pushed Nagaland into deep trouble of bloody struggles. Militant activities continued and finally the NNC had to be banned as it was involved in the assassination attempt upon Nagaland Chief Minister in 1972. It was once again the Church leaders who pleaded for resumption of talks to generate peace in the State and in 1974 the Nagaland Peace Council was formed (NPC). The NPC was represented by influential leaders were asked to meet the Governor L. P. Singh in Shillong for talks.

### 4.2.2 The Shillong Accord

There were several rounds of talks between the representatives and the Governor who was the representative of Government of India. The Governor was successful in convincing the rebels that they have to work within the framework of the Indian Constitution which they agreed and were ready to sign the Peace Accord which

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# UNIT 4 MOVEMENTS FOR NEW STATES

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## NOTES

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  - 4.2 Naga Separatist Movement and the Shillong Accord
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    - 4.2.2 The Shillong Accord
  - 4.3 Mizo Movement
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  - 4.4 The Mizo Accord
    - 4.4.1 Restoration of Normalcy
    - 4.4.2 Legal, Administrative and Other Steps
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  - 4.6 Autonomous Hill State Movements of Meghalaya and Karbi Anglong
  - 4.7 Political Parties and Electoral Politics
  - 4.8 Summary
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  - 4.11 Questions and Exercises
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- 

## 4.0 INTRODUCTION

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This unit will discuss in detail the various movements in the states of North-East region that led to the formation of the new states. It also discusses the methods adopted by various groups to achieve the objectives for new states. The roles of some eminent leaders and political parties have also been discussed.

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## 4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Identify the necessity of movements for achieving statehood
  - Summarize Naga and Mizo movements
  - Identify the impact of the languages Act
  - Describe the Karbi and Meghalaya movements for statehood
  - State the methods and objectives of the movements
  - Classify the role of political parties
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## 4.2 NAGA SEPARATIST MOVEMENT AND THE SHILLONG ACCORD

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In this section, we will discuss the Naga Separatist Movement and the Shillong Accord.

## 4.2.1 Naga Separatist Movement

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The separatist movement of Nagaland is perhaps the most revolutionary and interesting one in the North-Eastern Region. The inhabitants of Nagaland constitute various tribes, which are again divided into many sub-tribes and clans and are located on international boundaries with Myanmar. Nagaland shares its internal boundaries with Assam in the West, Arunachal Pradesh in the north and Manipur in the south. The Naga Hills witnessed a lot of bloodshed before it was declared as a separate State on 1st December, 1963.

The Nagas lived an isolated life with predominant tribal culture and it is believed that their first contact with the outside people was with the Ahoms in the 13th century, when the Ahoms passed through the Patkai range of the Naga Hills. So long as the Ahoms were dominant they also commanded the respect of the Nagas who were living within the borders of the Ahom kingdom, but as the Ahom power started declining, the Nagas became free and started governing themselves. The Nagas were free tribes till the British integrated the Naga territories after the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826. However, the British were very cautious with the Naga hills and decided to follow a policy of non-interference with regards to the tribal pattern of life that the Nagas followed and even recognising the Naga traditional village councils as the authority over the general matters of the hills. In fact the British passed the Inner Line Regulation in 1873, which prohibited the plains people from free entry to Naga Hills area. The Nagas also resisted the British rule as was evident by the battle of Khonoma in which some Naga tribes fought a fierce battle with the British, but the British succeeded in defeating the Nagas. In 1880, a full-fledged Naga Hills District was created which marked a new phase in the history of British relations with the Naga Hills.

It needs to be mentioned that the Nagas were forcibly kept under the British control, so there was dissatisfaction among the Nagas. A very important political event in the Naga history was the formation of the Naga Club as early as 1818, which was considered to be a very important forum for expressing the views of the Naga tribes. The Nagas were very clear about one fact which was that Nagaland was never conquered by India and believed that the British conquered a part of their hills and once the British leave, the Naga Hills should revert to its original position of sovereignty. The Naga Club submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission in 1929, demanding that the Nagas be excluded from the scope of proposed constitutional changes and be kept under the direct administration of the British. This clearly reflected that the Nagas were hesitant to come within the dominion of the Indian State. They were very clear that the Indian setup would lead to racial exploitation, economic exploitation and political exploitation of the Hill tribes.

When the World War II came to an end, the Naga Hills District Tribal Council was formed at the initiative of the then Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, C. R. Pawsey. But in 1946 the Naga Hills District Tribal Council was newly christened as Naga National Council (NNC). The NNC declared that self determination was a fundamental right of every Naga, and the NNC led by Angami Zapu Phizo demanded an independent Naga State. In fact Phizo led a delegation to meet Lord Mountbatten and suggested that the Indian government should act as the guardian power and after that the Nagas should be free to determine their own future. But, this was not accepted by the Constituent Assembly. Realizing the gravity of the situation the Hydari Agreement was formulated which almost defused the situation. The



came to be known as the Shillong Accord. The three major points of the Accord were:

1. The representatives of the underground organizations conveyed their decision to accept without condition the Indian Constitution.
2. It was agreed that the arms used by the rebels would be brought and deposited at appointed places.
3. It was agreed that the representatives of underground organizations should have reasonable time to formulate other issues for discussions for the final settlement.

Besides the above there were several other provisions of the Accord which was accepted by the rebels and helped them coming over ground. The Government of India also suspended all operations and actions against the Nagas. There was a general appreciation from both the sides for this Accord. But the problem did not end here as the Shillong Accord was rejected by the hardcore rebels who were undergoing training in foreign countries. The short-lived happiness for the Government of India and the peace loving Nagas who were jubilant with the Accord came to an end when in 1980 a group of rebels headed by Issac Swu, T. Muivah and Khaplang formed a new group named 'Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland' (NSCN). Thus the Shillong Accord also failed in bringing in the desired peace as was expected and instead lead resurgence of hostilities lead by NSCN.

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### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Which are the states that share their boundaries with Nagaland?
2. Which tribes first established contact with the Nagas and when?
3. When did the British pass the Inner Line Regulation?
4. What was the first achievement of the Peace Mission?

## 4.3 MIZO MOVEMENT

The Mizos, until brought under the direct control of the British, were a relatively free tribe and were occasionally invaded by the Chins (Chins are Burma's largest indigenous population) without great harm. The British domination over the administration of the Mizo Hills started in 1891. The administration of the South Mizo hills was entrusted to the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal and that of the North Mizo hills with the Chief Commissioner of Assam. But the two sub-divisions were amalgamated in 1895 and came under the Chief Commissioner of Assam.

The Mizos, who were also known as *Lushais*, had their unique pattern of life and culture and were not in touch with outsiders before the British entered their territory. The British administrative setup in the case of Naga hills followed a policy of non-interference, and decided not to meddle in the internal affairs of the Lushai hills. The system of village administration lead by the chieftains were not disturbed and allowed to continue.

The chiefs had a dominating role in the Mizo politics and village administration, moreover, the Inner Line Regulation of 1873 and the Chin Hills Regulation Act of 1896 required the people from the plains to have special permit

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to enter the hills. This was clearly done to protect the Mizos and moreover, the Mizo hills were excluded from the operation of the British laws, both civil and criminal. In fact the Government of India Act, 1935, placed the hills into 'Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas'. All these measures made the role of the Mizo Chiefs very strong in the hill areas dominated by the Lushais. However, it can be argued that the Chiefs were under the direct control of the British which led H.K Barpujari, a historian, to term them 'puppet chieftains'.

The Mizos were fully under the British control and it was visible as many of the Mizos were influenced by the British Christian missionaries. The young Mizos were increasingly moving towards modernization with the help of education which played a vital role. With the growth of the elite educated class the role of the village chiefs was diminishing rapidly. An important development in the Mizo hills was the formation of the first political party in 1946 known as the Mizo Union which consisted mostly of the educated elite.

The idea for autonomy for Mizoram started in the year 1946 when there was a realization that the British would leave India. To many Mizos, the hills were never under the Indian control and hence should be left as it was before the advent of the British. It was Superintendent Macdonald who first gave the idea of autonomy for the hills. The Bordoloi Subcommittee which visited the hills was informed by the District Conference that the Mizo hills had their own way of life and culture and nothing should be imposed on them and that most of the important affairs such as land system, trade patterns should be under the control of the hills and not Assam.

The subcommittee respected the views of the District Conference advised that Mizo Hills be put under the Sixth Schedule and that District Council should be provided to the Lushais. Thus in 1952, the Lushai Hills District Council was established. The District Council started playing a very vital role in finally abolishing the chiefship. On 16th June 1954, the members of the Executive Councils of all the ADCs of Assam met at Shillong to consider the demand for the separate Hill State for the various tribes, but this view not acceptable to the Lushai Hills and North Cachar Hills District Councils as they demanded for more autonomy but not a separate state.

### 4.3.1 The Role of MNF

The real impetus for the statehood movement came during the year 1959, when Mizoram was affected by *Mautam* or famine, which led to many starvation deaths. The Assam Government was given advance warning about the famine but they failed to act on time. The Mizos felt a sense of betrayal, when the Government did not react to their problems in a serious manner.

The callous attitude of the Government of Assam over the issue of famine led to a rift in the political party East India Tribal Union (EITU). The Mizo leaders in EITU were not happy with the views of some influential members of EITU regarding the famine issue. It was during this time that the All Party Hill Leaders Conference was formed which included the Mizo Union members as they came from the Assam Parliamentary Congress. It was also during this time that the Mizo National Famine Front was formed to help the people affected by famine. R. Dengthuama and Laldenga were President and Vice President of this organization, in due course of time the Mizo National Famine front was converted into the Mizo National Front (MNF), a political party, on 22nd October 1961, with Laldenga as its first elected President.

It was the MNF which played a vital role in Mizo politics which helped in its attaining statehood.

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The neglect of Mizo hills during the famine and the mainly the passing of the Languages Act making Assamese the State language had a very big impact on the political arena of Mizo hills. The Mizos were getting firm in their demand of a separate State and the formation of Nagaland boosted their demand. There was a visible rift in the APHLC when the Mizo Union started protesting its ways of functioning. It looked like the Mizo interests were not addressed by the APHLC and finally on July 10th 1963, the Mizo Union decided to disassociate itself from the APHLC. Mizoram started witnessing extreme form of separatism under the two influential political parties. Thus, after 1963, the MNF and the Mizo Union were the only two major political parties in the hills. But there was a shift in the support base of the MNF as it started becoming more popular due to its extremist nature under the leadership of Laldenga.

Laldenga was inspired by the revolutionary Phizo and the NNC of Nagaland. Laldenga had the charisma and the oratory skills to draw the Mizos to his side. He took advantage of the famine situation and the attitude of the Assam Government towards the Mizos. Laldenga had the support of the people towards achieving his goal through violent means.

The MNF launched an armed revolution and for this purpose it recruited thousands of persons, many of them ex-army men who were ready for a violent struggle. When the MNF launched the armed revolution, all those who were not supporting the Mizo Union were branded as pro-MNF. The Mizo Union took advantage of this situation instigated the army and the administrative personnel to get hold of MNF leaders. But sympathy wave already generated for the MNF was on the rise and hence it was going strong with its violent activities, they attacked all possible political establishments and took firm control over them. In fact the MNF took Aizawl and declared independence. In the meantime, the Government of Assam rushed in the military to control the situation as it declared Mizo hills district as disturbed area under Assam Disturbed Areas Act, 1955. The MNF was declared as an unlawful organization on 6th March 1966, by the Government of India. The military was somewhat able to control the situation in Mizo hills and helped the return of normalcy; it was indeed a dark spot for Indian democracy when it had to bomb certain parts of its own territory in Mizo hills to curb the situation. The underground movement subsided to a great extent and facilitated the return of peace in the valley. As there was normalcy in the hills there was also heated political activity between the rejuvenated Congress and the Mizo Union. In 1971, the Congress led by Dengthuama and the Mizo Union formed a coalition government known as 'United Mizo Parliamentary Party'(UMPP). In 1971 itself, the UMPP passed a resolution for separate Statehood demand to the Central Government and on 17th July 1971, Mizoram was given the status of union territory.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

5. When did British domination over the administration of the Mizo Hills begin?
6. Who was made in charge of the administration of Mizo hills?
7. What led to a rift in the political party, East India Tribal Union (EITU)?

## 4.4 THE MIZO ACCORD

### NOTES

Immediately after the granting of Union Territory status, there were sincere efforts to bring MNF to the negotiating table and the Government of India invited Laldenga for talks which he respected. Talks began with an honest effort from both sides which yielded immediate results as the first stage of peaceful settlement was reached when an official announcement was made in New Delhi on 1st July 1976, in which the MNF acknowledged that Mizoram was an integral part of India and also agreed to work for future settlements within the framework of the Indian Constitution.

Both the parties, that is, the MNF and Government of India agreed to stop hostile activities and resolve all issues through talks. Issues were being settled peacefully when suddenly there was a change in the Central leadership after which the peace talks did not resume due to various factors. The situation took an ugly turn when Laldenga was arrested and put in jail but was released later.

The Centre however resumed talks after Indira Gandhi came to power in 1980, but unfortunately Indira Gandhi was assassinated during the course of the talks. But talks again resumed under the Prime Ministership of Rajiv Gandhi and Laldenga was once again invited for the final round of talks. The terms of the Peace Accord were almost ready and on 30th June, 1986, the Government of India and the MNF led by Laldenga signed the Mizo Accord, which led to the formation of the full-fledged State of Mizoram. Some of the important provisions of the Mizo Accord are as follows:

### 4.4.1 Restoration of Normalcy

1. With a view to restoring peace and normalcy in Mizoram, the MNF Party, in their part undertake within the agreed time-frame, to bring out all underground personnel of the MNF with their arms, ammunitions, and equipments, to ensure their return to civil life, to abjure violence and generally to help in the process of restoration of normalcy. The modalities of bringing out all underground personnel and the deposit of arms, ammunitions and equipments will be as worked out. The implementation of the foregoing will be under the supervision of the Central Government.
2. The MNF party will take immediate steps to amend its articles of Association so as to make them conform to the provision of law.
3. The Central Government will take steps for the settlement and rehabilitation of underground after considering the scheme proposed in this regard by the Government of Mizoram.
4. The MNF will not undertake to extend any support to the Tripura National Volunteer (TNV), Peoples' Liberation Army of Manipur (PLA) and any other such group by way of training, supply of arms or providing protection or in other matters.

### 4.4.2 Legal, Administrative and Other Steps

1. With a view to satisfying the desires and aspirations of all sections of the people of Mizoram, the Government will initiate measures to confer Statehood on the Union Territory of Mizoram subject to the other stipulations contained in this Memorandum of Settlement.

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2. To give effect to the above, the necessary legislative and administrative measures will be undertaken, including those for the enactment of Bills for the amendment of the Constitution and other laws for the conferment of statehood as aforesaid, to come into effect on a date to be notified by the Central Government.
3. The amendment aforesaid shall provide, among other things, for the following:
  - (i) The territory of Mizoram shall consist of the territory specified in Section 6 of the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganization) Act, 1971.
  - (ii) Notwithstanding anything contained in the Constitution, no act of Parliament in respect of (a) Religion or social practices of the Mizos, (b) Mizo customary Law or procedure, (c) Administration of Civil and Criminal Justice involving decisions according to Mizo customary Law, (d) Ownership and transfer of land, shall apply to the State of Mizoram unless the Legislative Assembly of Mizoram by a resolution so decides. Provided that nothing in this Clause shall apply to any Central Act in force in Mizoram immediately before the appointed day.
  - (iii) Article 170 Clause (1) shall, in relation to Legislative Assembly of Mizoram, have effect as if for the word sixty the word forty has been substituted.
4. Soon after the Bill of Conferment of Statehood becomes law, and when the President is satisfied that normalcy has returned and that conditions are conducive to the holding of free and fair elections, elections to the Legislative Assembly will be initiated.
5. (i) The centre will transfer resources to the new Government keeping in view the change in Status from a Union Territory to a State and will include resources to cover the revenue gap for the year.  
(ii) Central assistance for plan will be fixed taking note of any residuary gap in resources so as to sustain the approved plan outlay and the pattern of assistance will be as in the case of Special Category State.
6. Border trade in locally produced or grown agriculture commodities could be allowed under a scheme to be formulated by the Central Government, subject to international arrangement with neighbouring countries.
7. The Inner line Regulation, as now in force in Mizoram, will not be amended or repealed without consulting the State Government.

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### 4.5 IMPACT OF THE LANGUAGES ACT

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It can be said that the real impetus for a separate hill state movement came when the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) on 22nd April 1960 passed a resolution for making Assamese the State language. The immediate reaction to this decision was the meeting of All Assam Hill Leaders Conference at Tura, Garo Hills on 28th April, 1960 which vehemently opposed the decision of the APCC. The Official Languages Act was introduced in the Assembly and was passed in 1960. The Languages Act hastened the formation of All People Hill Leader's Conference (1960). The APHLC decided to submit a memorandum to the President on 21st August 1960 urging him to look into the cause of a separate hill State. A delegation of APHLC leaders met the Prime Minister, Nehru and apprised him of the situation in

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the hills especially after the imposition of the Act. Nehru himself was not very happy about the Languages Act, however, at the same time he was averse to the idea of separate state as according to him it would not be viable due to various factors. Nehru pointed out that instead of a separate state, he was in favour of giving more autonomy to the hills under the Sixth Schedule and put forward the Scottish Plan to the leaders. The main features of the Scottish Plan were as follows:

1. Regional Committee consisting of all the MLAs from the hill districts with certain powers
2. Set up a statutory State council for looking after planning and development funds
3. The Committee of MLAs from Hills to scrutinise the applicability and extension of legislations to the Hill areas
4. A Cabinet Minister and one or more Deputy Ministers from among the MLAs from the hills to be in charge of the subject concerning the Hill areas
5. Separate budget for the Hill areas
6. More powers to the District Councils
7. The Governor's verdict to be final in case of disagreement between the Assam Assembly and the Regional Committees
8. The appointment of Commission of Enquiry

However, the Scottish Plan was rejected by the APHLC on the basis that it did not solve the basic problem of a separate State. The APHLC threatened direct action if their demands were not met. This led Nehru to make another offer to the Hill leaders which was known as the Nehru Plan, some important provisions under the Nehru Plan were:

1. Amendment of the Sixth Schedule to give more powers to the District and Regional Councils.
2. A Regional Council for all districts, the laws affecting hill areas to be referred to the Council for approval.
3. Each hill district to have one M.P. and one MLA for every 40,000 population.
4. A Cabinet Minister in charge of Hill areas and a Minister of State along with a Deputy Minister.
5. Control of Hill Ministry over education, agriculture, horticulture, forest, health and administration of justice.
6. Separate Secretariat buildings for all the Hill districts.
7. The Hill Minister shall (i) have control over making plans for the hills; (ii) have control of expenditure on subjects under him; (iii) be responsible for the preparation of Budget with the help of the Financial Advisor; (iv) have control over central grants given under Article 275 and revenue collected in the hills; (v) regulate appointments, postings and transfers under his charge; (vi) determine the official language.
8. Continuance of constitutional provisions safeguarding the interest of the tribals in the Hill districts.
9. Provision for a separate University.

10. Measures for faster development.

11. Appointment of a Commission to work out details if the people accept the Plan.

The APHLC, after lots of discussion, decided to accept the offer made by Nehru on the assumption that it would lead to a separate State. Thus, the Pataskar Commission was appointed to formulate the Nehru Plan into action. However, the Pataskar Commission greatly disappointed the Hill leaders as it did not follow the Nehru Plan and hence its recommendations were rejected by the APHLC. There were few other Commissions appointed by the Government of India such as the Nanda Commission and the Mehta Commission to look into the demand of Statehood, but the recommendations of all such Commissions were rejected by the APHLC which became firm in its demand for a separate State. There were peaceful agitations all over the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills for a separate State. The APHLC threatened direct action if their demands were not met and finally the Government of India announced the plan of re-organization, which was as follows:

1. The autonomous State of Meghalaya shall consist of the Garo Hills and the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills districts.
2. The Hill State was to have a Legislative Assembly and council of ministers.
3. It would have the power to levy and collect taxes on minerals, land revenue, excise duty, agricultural and income tax besides others.
4. Fifty-nine subjects of the State list were to be transferred to the Hill State.
5. The executive power and the subjects assigned to the hill state shall be co-extensive.
6. The Bills passed by the Legislature shall need the assent of the Governor.
7. There would be a joint cadre of All India Services.
8. The hill state would continue to have representation in Assam Legislative Assembly and Cabinet.
9. There shall be common High Court, Public Service Commission and Electricity Board for Assam and the Hill State.
10. The District Councils would be given more powers.
11. Shillong would continue to be the capital of both the States.
12. The autonomous State would be a part of Assam.

This plan was rejected by the Assam government but was accepted by the APHLC as it saw in it a provision for a separate State for the hills. The peaceful struggle of the Hill leaders was at last successful when on 24th December, 1969. The 22nd Amendment Act to the Indian Constitution provided for the formation of the Autonomous State of Meghalaya was passed by the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. It received the assent of the President on 25th September, 1969. Thus, finally the autonomous state of Meghalaya was inaugurated on 2nd April, 1970 and with the North-Eastern Areas Reorganization Act, 1971, Meghalaya became a full-fledged State on 21st January, 1972. It can be concluded by saying that Meghalaya was the only state which came into existence using pressure but peaceful tactics by the leaders of the hills.

## NOTES

NOTES

## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

8. When was the Official Languages Act introduced in the Assembly?
9. How did Nehru react to the Languages Act?
10. What would the autonomous State of Meghalaya consist of, according to the Government of India's plan of reorganization?
11. When did the 22nd Amendment Act to the Indian Constitution received the assent of the President?
12. When was the autonomous State of Meghalaya inaugurated?

## 4.6 AUTONOMOUS HILL STATE MOVEMENTS OF MEGHALAYA AND KARBI ANGLONG

### Meghalaya

The Hill State of Meghalaya also known as the 'Scotland of the East' was established on 21st January 1972. The autonomous State movement of Meghalaya has been the most peaceful state movement in the entire North-East India. The State of Meghalaya consists mainly of three major tribes—the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos, besides many other smaller tribes. The total geographical area of the state is approximately 22, 429 sq km and consists primarily of steep hills and deep gorges with very limited areas covering valleys and plains land.

After the independence of India, the British handed over control to the Indian authorities. There was an ever-growing fear among the various hill tribes in Assam that their identity may be threatened if there was no special administrative setup to protect the interest of the hill tribes. In fact, the attitude of some of the Assamese leaders made it amply clear that the interest of the hill tribes was not safe at the hands of the Government of Assam. For instance, the speech of Nilomoni Phukan, an MLA in the Legislative Assembly in 1948 stated that all the different cultures of Assam should be assimilated into one Assamese culture through one language, that is, Assamese.

The recommendations of this Subcommittee resulted in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution, which provided ADCs for various hill tribes of the North-East. It was in the meeting of the Executive Committee of all the ADCs in 1954 that Capt. Williamson Sangma suggested the idea of a separate Hill State for the tribes as the Sixth Schedule was not substantial enough to protect their interests against the dominant culture.

The next step was an Assam Hills Tribal Leaders' Conference held at Tura, in Garo hills, from 6 to 8 October 1954, at this Conference it was decided to submit a memorandum for a separate State to the States Reorganization Commission (SRC). But this demand was rejected by the SRC on the pretext that the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills and the Lushai Hills were not in favour of a separate State and that status quo should be maintained. The failure of the SRC to address the issue of separate State led to the formation of the Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU) which won a good number of seats in the Legislative Elections of 1957 and this gave a fresh impetus to the hill state movement.



## Karbi Anglong

The State of Assam has been witness to several statehood demands and movements ever since the independence of India. Assam is home to various ethnic communities some of whom are the Bodos, the Kacharis, Dimasas, Karbis, etc. The question of greater autonomy in the form of a separate State or District Councils has always haunted the Government of Assam as well as the Central Government in Delhi. The movement for a separate State of Karbi Anglong has been in existence for a very long period of time and it is appropriate to find out the details of the movement. The Karbi Anglong district was formerly known as the Mikir Hills and is one of the largest districts of Assam.

With the colonization of the entire North-East, the British rulers as a part of their colonial policy wanted to separate the hill tribals from the plainsmen of Assam. Under the Government of India Act, 1935, the hill areas of undivided Assam were divided into two categories: The Lushai (Mizo) hills and North Cachar were classified as 'excluded area' whereas United Khasi and Jaintia hills district with partial exception of Shillong town which was also the capital of Assam at that time, the Garo hills, the Naga hills and the Mikir (Karbi) hills were qualified as 'partially excluded areas'. The Government of Assam had no jurisdiction over the excluded areas which were administered under the special power of the Governor.

The idea behind the Sixth Schedule was to provide the tribal people with a simple and inexpensive administration of their own so that they could safeguard their own customs and traditions and to provide them maximum autonomy in the management of their tribal affairs. Thus, the Karbis also had the Mikir Hills District Council on 23rd June 1952, at the beginning, the district was combined with the North Cachar Hills and it was known as the United Mikir and North Cachar Hill district. The Mikir Hills district was officially named Karbi Anglong District in October 1976.

The Karbis had joined the hill State movement along with the other Hill State leaders especially after the call for Hill State was given by some leaders in 1954. The real impetus for the hill state movement came when on October 1960, the Assam Official Language Bill was moved in the Assembly. The Hill leaders in Assam realized that this was an act of betrayal by the Assam government and would lead to the imposition of Assamese language in the hill areas, and this Bill was opposed by the Hill leaders including the MLA from Karbi Anglong.

The Hill State movement became very strong and in 1969, the granting of the Autonomous State to the Khasi-Jaintia and the Garos was finalized, it was at this stage that the Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills felt left out and were given the option of joining the new autonomous State of Meghalaya or remain within Assam. The leaders decided against joining the new State and remain with the State of Assam expecting that Assam would respect their demands. But soon they became disillusioned as the Assam government decided to impose Assamese as the sole medium of instruction in university and secondary levels of education. As a result of this a series of protests were organized in various parts of N.C. Hills and Karbi Anglong.

The Mikir and North Cachar Hills Leaders' Conference decided to submit a memorandum to the Prime Minister stating that the only solution for the Hill people was to have a separate State of their own so that their identity can be maintained

## NOTES

which may be usurped by the dominant Assamese culture. In the meantime, the Government of Assam increased some of the powers of the District Council in Karbi Anglong, the main reason behind this was to keep the demands of Statehood under firm control.

## NOTES

The leaders of the Karbi Hills thought of improving the condition of the hills through the District Council, but there was a growing section among the youth who felt that the only solution to the Karbi problems was the formation of a separate State. The youths felt aggrieved for not being able to manage their socio-political affairs and a section of the youth felt subordinated under the Government of Assam. The demand of the youths for a separate State for asserting their political rights and privileges got strengthened through massive victory of the youth in 1980 District Council election under the banner of the Karbi Autonomous State Demand Committee (KASDC). In 1987, the KASDC and the Karbi Students Union in a memorandum to Rajiv Gandhi demanded Statehood on the grounds that the Karbis have been over-exploited by the mainstream Assamese mainly by the contractors and the businessmen and that they did not prefer Assamese as the medium of instruction in the educational institutions. The government of Assam was ready to look into all demands of the Karbi Hills except the Statehood demand. The Assam government, whenever there is a Statehood demand replied with greater autonomy for the District Councils, but according to many leaders this was not the solution and the only answer to their problems lay in the granting of statehood.

Karbi Anglong has also witnessed the rise of insurgent group such as United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS) in 1999, which was formed to put pressure on the government for the formation of a separate State for Karbi Anglong. But presently the insurgent group is holding several rounds of talks with the Centre for its various demands after they entered into a ceasefire with the Government of India in 2002.

### Recent Trends

The issue of separate state has always been there, but the recent announcement of the Central government to create Telangana has added fuel to the already simmering tension in the hill districts with activists of various organizations agitating for a separate state on the lines of Telangana. The protest went violent when the homes of the sitting MPs were torched by a violent mob. In fact, by announcing the state of Telangana, the Centre has opened up the Pandora's box in North-East and other places where various organizations both from the hills and the plains have come out to the streets demanding statehood and Karbi Anglong is only one among them. The political elites of Karbi Anglong point out that the provisions of the Sixth Schedule has failed to solve the burning issues of the hills and hence there has to be another alternative, i.e., statehood.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

13. What is the Hill State of Meghalaya also known as?
14. Who suggested the idea of a separate Hill State for the tribes?

## 4.7 POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTORAL POLITICS

### NOTES

The idea of electoral politics with the active role of political parties in North-Eastern region has been of great significance ever since the pre-independence era of the country. In fact, the role of political parties becomes very important to a student of political science especially in terms of the movements for statehood in the entire North-East, in the post independence era. The people find a source of expression through the agency of political parties which became a very important source of tool for the people demanding a separate hill state in various places of North-East.

The statehood movement after independence saw the emergence and active role of several political parties in North-East India. Some of the parties which played a very important role in the movement for Statehood were Naga National Council (NNC), Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU), All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) and the Mizo National Front (MNF).

The Naga National Council (NNC) was the first political party formed in the Naga Hills in 1946 and it is considered to be the most important political party in the Statehood movement. In 1946, the NNC was in favour of participating in free India with certain special conditions. In 1947 the NNC presented a memorandum to the then Viceroy Lord Mountbatten and demanded the setting up of an 'Interim Government' for the Nagas for a period of ten years, at the end of which the Naga people should be free to decide their own future.

The NNC and the Government of India agreed upon nine points for an 'Interim Government' popularly known as 'Hydari Agreement', but the ninth point of the Agreement created confusion between the two sides as the Nagas thought that after ten years they can have complete sovereignty whereas Government of India never had such plans and the NNC was agitated with the misinterpretation of the ninth point by the Government Agreement and decided to declare independence a day before the Indian independence. The NNC under A.Z. Phizo also held a successful plebiscite in 1951 to press their demands for a sovereign State. It later decided to oppose the imposition of District Councils under Sixth Schedule and led to a successful boycott of the 1952 general elections. The NNC, under Phizo, at the beginning was by and large peaceful but at a later stage turned towards violent tactics.

The Bordoloi Sub Committee of the Constituent Assembly could not answer the tribal aspirations through the Sixth Schedule as the Hill leaders believed that the Sixth Schedule was not a proper solution for their demands. The tribal leaders thus formed the Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU) in 1954 to press the demand for a separate Hill State to be carved out of Assam. However, their demand did not draw any encouraging attention from the States Reorganization Commission. In the meantime the Assam Official Language Bill, by which Assamese was to be made the official language. This decision of Government of Assam triggered off a series of events.

The tribal leaders decided to form the All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) to demand a separate Hill State. The APHLC in 1962 decided to launch vigorous but peaceful struggle to force the Government to allow a separate Hill

## NOTES

State. The APHLC consisted of leaders of almost all the Hill areas of North-East who were firm on their of a Hill State. The Hill State movement under the APHLC began focussing mainly on the Khasi, Jaintia and the Garo hills, which led the leaders of MiXo, Mikir and North Cachar Hills to opt out of the APHLC.

In the meantime, in 1969 the Autonomous State of Meghalaya was established. But the decision of Autonomous State of Meghalaya did not satisfy a minority group within the APHLC under the leadership of Hopinstone Lyngdoh who met with the other dissidents in Shillong on 8th November 1968 and decided to launch the Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP), and continued its struggle for a full-fledged state of Meghalaya. Thus the APHLC and HSPDP played a vital role in the formation of the State of Meghalaya.

In 1959, Mizoram was affected by Mautam or famine, which led to many starvation deaths. The Assam Government was given advance warning about the famine but they failed to act on time. The Mizos felt a sense of betrayal when the Government did not react to their problems in a serious manner. The callous attitude of the Government of Assam over the issue of famine led to a rift in the political party East India Tribal Union (EITU), the Mizo leaders in EITU were not happy with the views of some influential members of EITU regarding the famine issue.

It was during this time that the All Party Hill Leaders Conference was formed which included the Mizo Union members as they came from the Assam Parliamentary Congress. It was also during this time that the Mizo National Famine Front was formed to help the people affected by famine. R. Dengthuama and Laldenga were President and Vice President of this Organization, in due course of time the Mizo National Famine front was converted into the Mizo National Front (MNF), a political party on 22nd October 1961, with Laldenga as its first elected President. It was the MNF which played a vital role in Mizo politics which helped in its attaining Statehood.

There was a visible rift in the APHLC when the Mizo Union started protesting its ways of functioning, it looked like the Mizo interests were not addressed by the APHLC and finally on 10th July 1963, the Mizo Union decided to disassociate itself from the APHLC. Mizoram started witnessing extreme form of separatism under the two influential political parties. Thus, after 1963, the MNF and the Mizo Union were the only two major political parties in the hills. But there was a shift in the support base of the MNF as it started becoming more popular due to its extremist nature under the leadership of Laldenga.

The MNF resorted to many tactics before turning violent in 1966. The people in Mizo hills supported the policies of MNF and there was a public sympathy for the MNF. In fact the Government of India had to use force to bring back normalcy to the hills. In 1986 Laldenga the MNF Chief signed an Accord with the Government of India which led to the formation of the State of Mizoram.

Thus the above were the role and activities of some of the major political parties during the Statehood movement in the various regions of North-East India. In fact, it can be argued that besides the common people it was these political parties who played the most vital role in achieving Statehood for their respective Hill areas.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

15. Which parties played an important role in the movement for Statehood?
16. Which was the first political party formed in the Naga Hills in 1946?
17. Which party was formed by tribal leaders to demand a separate Hill State?

### NOTES

### ACTIVITY

Make a presentation on the tribes of Nagaland, with focus on their lifestyle and customs.

### DID YOU KNOW

The names of the places in Meghalaya are total tongue twisters and the best part is that the locals pronounce them completely differently.

## 4.8 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The Naga separatists formed the Naga National Council (NNC) in 1946, with the purpose to bring together different Naga's tribes to avoid the merging of Naga land into the Indian Union and to demand it as an independent region.
- Naga separatists carried out sporadic guerrilla wars since 1952, until Nagaland was formally designated as an independent state of the Indian Union in 1963 and a truce was signed in 1964.
- The Shillong Accord of 1975 was a treaty signed between the Government of India, which was also referred to as the Central government of India and Nagaland's underground government, also referred to as the Naga Federal government, or Naga guerrillas, or Naga rebels. The aim of this Accord was to accept the authority of the Constitution of India without condition, give up their weapons and reject their demand for the secession of Nagaland from India.
- The Mizoram Accord was signed between the Mizo National Front and the Government of India on 30 June 1986.
- The MNF was a rebel movement to protest against the disregard and apathy of the Government of India towards the people of Mizoram at the time of acute famine, in the late 1950s.
- After a key revolt, followed years of resistance in subversive activities, the movement agreed to work within the Indian Constitution and to give up violence and turbulence that had spread all over Mizoram.
- The approved paper entitled *Mizoram Accord, 1986, Memorandum of Settlement* was a breakthrough that reinstated peace and harmony in the state.

## NOTES

- The Languages Act has provisions for languages that are likely to be used for official purposes of the Union, for commercial transactions in the Parliament, for central and state acts and for specific objectives in high courts.
- Meghalaya was created as an independent state within Assam in 1970 and attained complete statehood on 21 January 1972.
- Ever since the late Sixties, different Karbi groups and leaders have been persistent about an autonomous state under Article 244 (A) of the Constitution, also including the two districts of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao.
- Although India's north-eastern states have been under intense observation by the media, academicians and policy-makers, the political affairs of these states seem to confront some of the major hypotheses of the politics of democratic India, yet considerable efforts at electoral analysis of the region have rather been inadequate.

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### 4.9 KEY TERMS

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- **Separatist Movement:** A movement that advocates a state of cultural, ethnic, tribal, religious, racial, governmental or gender separation from the larger group
- **Convention:** A large meeting or conference, esp. of members of a political party or a particular profession
- **Statehood:** The status of being recognized as an independent state
- **Legislative Assembly:** A law-making body of elected representatives; sometimes called the House
- **Electoral politics:** The activity of seeking to achieve political goals by campaigning to elect favourable candidates for political office

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### 4.10 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

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1. Nagaland shares its internal boundaries with Assam in the West, Arunachal Pradesh in the North and Manipur in the south.
2. The Nagas lived an isolated life with predominant tribal culture and it is believed that their first contact with the outside people was with the Ahoms in the 13th century, when the Ahoms passed through the Patkai range of the Naga Hills.
3. The British passed the Inner Line Regulation in 1873, which prohibited the plains people from free entry to Naga Hills area.
4. The first achievement of the Peace Mission was the working of a ceasefire between the Government of India and the underground Nagas which became operative from 6 September 1964.
5. The British domination over the administration of the Mizo Hills started in 1891.
6. The administration of the South Mizo hills was entrusted to the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal and that of the North Mizo hills with the Chief Commissioner of Assam.

## NOTES

7. The callous attitude of the Government of Assam over the issue of famine led to a rift in the political party, East India Tribal Union (EITU).
8. The Official Languages Act was introduced in the Assembly and was passed in 1960.
9. Nehru himself was not very happy about the Languages Act. However, at the same time, he was averse to the idea of separate state as according to him it would not be viable due to various factors.
10. According to the Government of India's plan of reorganization, the autonomous State of Meghalaya shall consist of the Garo Hills and the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills districts.
11. The 22nd Amendment Act to the Indian Constitution, provided for the formation of the Autonomous State of Meghalaya received the assent of the President on 25th September, 1969.
12. The autonomous state of Meghalaya was inaugurated on 2nd April, 1970 and with the North-Eastern Areas Reorganization Act, 1971, Meghalaya became a full-fledged State on 21st January, 1972.
13. The Hill State of Meghalaya is also known as the 'Scotland of the East'.
14. Capt. Williamson Sangma suggested the idea of a separate Hill State for the tribes as the Sixth Schedule was not substantial enough to protect their interest against the dominant culture.
15. Some of the parties which played a very important role in the movement for Statehood were Naga National Council (NNC), Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU), All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) and the Mizo National Front (MNF).
16. The Naga National Council (NNC) was the first political party formed in the Naga Hills in 1946.
17. The tribal leaders decided to form the All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) to demand a separate Hill State.

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## 4.11 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### Short-Answer Questions

1. What was the Languages Act of 1960?
2. What was the role of MNF in Mizo Hills?
3. What was the Bordoloi Sub Committee?
4. What was the Shillong Accord?

### Long-Answer Questions

1. Describe the Naga Separatist Movement in detail.
2. What was the immediate cause for the rise of MNF? Discuss its role in the Mizo Movement.
3. Explain the movement for the demand of Meghalaya as a separate state.

## 4.12 FURTHER READING

### NOTES

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## NOTES



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# UNIT 5 POLITICAL PARTIES AND PRESSURE GROUPS

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## NOTES

### Structure

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Unit Objectives
- 5.2 National Political Parties
  - 5.2.1 Indian National Congress
  - 5.2.2 Bharatiya Janata Party
  - 5.2.3 Communist Party of India
- 5.3 Regional Political Parties
  - 5.3.1 Assam - Asom Gana Parishad (AGP)
  - 5.3.2 Meghalaya - HSPDP (Hill State People's Democratic Party)
  - 5.3.3 Mizoram-Mizo National Front (MNF)
  - 5.3.4 Politics Dynamics in Nagaland
  - 5.3.5 Conclusion
- 5.4 Student Movements
  - 5.4.1 Factors for Emergence of Student Bodies
  - 5.4.2 First Student Organization in India
  - 5.4.3 Student Movements in North-East India
- 5.5 Summary
- 5.6 Key Terms
- 5.7 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 5.8 Questions and Exercises
- 5.9 Further Reading

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## 5.0 INTRODUCTION

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Throughout most of the 20th century and into the 21st century, political parties have been the central actors in the running of the nation. Robert Huckshorn defines a political party as 'an autonomous group of citizens having the purpose of making nominations and contesting elections in the hope of gaining control over governmental power through the capture of public offices and the organization of the government.' Joseph Schumpeter defines a party as '....a group of men who intend to promote the public welfare upon some particular principle on which they agreed. It is a group whose members propose to act in concert in the competitive struggle for power.'

Political parties perform a number of functions that are central to the operation of modern states and in particular to modern democracies. Some of the important functions of political parties are:

**Coordination:** The first function of political parties is that of coordination within the government, within society and between government and society at large.

**Contesting elections:** The second function of political parties is the conduct of electoral campaign and of political competition in general.

**Recruitment:** A third major function is the recruitment and selection of personnel with the balance between recruitment (finding someone to do the job) and selection (choosing among multiple aspirants) depending both on the party and the nature of the position to be filled.

## NOTES

Regional political parties with strong emotional bases in their communities or region have been a feature of Indian politics since Independence. By definition, regional political parties are those which generally and exclusively operate within a limited geographical area of a state or which represents primordial loyalties.

Broadly speaking the regional political parties fall into two categories. First, there are the classical regional ethnicity or cultural based parties such as the Dravida Munnetra Kazagham (DMK) in Tamil Nadu, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) in Punjab, the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, the Jharkhand party in Bihar, Telegu Desam in Andhra, Asam Ghana Parishad in Assam, National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir and the tribal dissent groups in North-East India. Second, there are various dissident Congress groups which came into being at specific time for specific purposes but then survived and succeeded (temporarily at least) and were beginning to be accepted as significant regional parties. These include the onetime Bharatiya Kranti Dal in Uttar Pradesh, the Bangla Congress in West Bengal, the Kerala Congress in Kerala and the Utkal Congress in Orissa. However, due to the very nature of their origin and *raison d'etre* they soon went out of existence.

Regionalism was the first and foremost manifestation of the diversity of India. Whereas communalism means the love of the community in preference to the nation, regionalism meant the love of a particular region in preference to the state of which the region was a part. Whereas communalism was limited largely to two communities namely, Hindu and Muslims, regionalism is a country-wide phenomenon and often took the form of well conceived and well organized agitations and campaigns. It assumes in the political field mainly four forms—demand of people of certain states for secession from the Indian union, demand of people for separate statehood, demand for full fledged statehood and interstate disputes.

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### 5.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- List the national political parties of India
- Categorize regional political parties
- Identify the various student movements of India

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### 5.2 NATIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES

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A political party shall be treated as a recognized National party, if, and only if, either:

(A)

- (i) The candidates set up by it, in any four or more States, at the last general election to the House of the People, or to the Legislative Assembly of the State concerned, have secured not less than six percent of the total valid votes polled in their respective States at that general election; and
- (ii) In addition, it has returned at least four members to the House of the People at the aforesaid last general election from any State or States; or

(B)

- (i) Its candidates have been elected to the House of the People, at the last general election to that House, from at least two percent of the total number of parliamentary constituencies in India, any fraction exceeding one-half being counted as one; and
- (ii) The said candidates have been elected to that House from not less than three States.

NOTES

### 5.2.1 Indian National Congress

The Indian National Congress was formed on the 28th of December 1885. This party was developed due to the rise of national consciousness in the 19th century. It was exclusively due to the work of the new middle class created by the impact of the British rule in India. Even before the rise of this class, a pride in the glory of the past started the constitutional agitations for political rights by the masses that were under the British Rule. This had risen in sporadic rebellion in different parts of the country, thus, for example, there were the Sannyasi rebellion in Bengal, the Wahhabi and Fairazi Movements in Northern India, the Molpah rising in the South (1849-55) and the Indigo Agitation (1859-60), which drew the attention of the educated middle class to the suffering of the masses and made them understand the oppressive character of British Rule in India.

The middle class agitations which began in the third decade of the 19th century, however, had a completely different character and significance and was the product of an entirely different set of circumstances. English education began to spread rapidly among the upper middle classes in the Indian cities since 1830s onwards. The impact of this system was to have a share in the government of their country and it could be achieved only through the development of representative institutions and the appointment of Indians in government services, especially the higher ranks.

These events and circumstances have played a central role in Indian political life. Though the party was formed with the motive to capture power during that phase it became a platform for people to unite to attain independence and to be ruled by its own people when it had achieved its target under the leadership of Gandhi, Nehru and others. Thus, after independence, this party could garner the support of the entire nation. Its role was vast in political mobilization, governance, formulation and implementation of economic and social policy in the working of a democratic government. Its major role in the independence movement gave it a unique platform in which, it emphasized the role of Nehru in the construction of a modernist India, and the state role was reserved for economic development and nation building.

### Meghalaya

Meghalaya, which has seen a very high turnover of Chief Ministers over the last many years, is generally expected to return the Congress to power. The incumbent Chief Minister Mukul Sangma of the Congress has been at the helm since April 2010.

Journalists and civil society activists have lamented the inability of political parties to raise major issues affecting the state during their campaigns. Rather,

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electoral outcome is expected to be determined mostly by the emotional bonds between the voters and individual candidates.

The state faces enormous social and environmental challenges due to massive coal- and limestone-mining; and there is a perception that the deteriorating law and order situation must receive greater attention. Several media reports have also raised concerns about the exponential growth of the assets of politicians in the state.

According to the Meghalaya Election Watch (MEW), a non-governmental organization, the assets of 111 candidates grew at an astonishing 252 per cent. MEW noted the average assets of these 111 politicians, worth ₹ 66.20 lakhs in 2008, rose to ₹ 2.33 crore in the course of five years – average growth of ₹ 1.66 crore.

P. Sangma, former Lok Sabha Speaker and former Chief Minister of the state, who unsuccessfully contested the presidential election against Pranab Mukherjee last year, has since launched a party, the National People's Party (NPP). However, he is expected to have a limited impact on the fortunes of the Congress. He is expected to win a handful of seats in his stronghold, the Garo hills. Should there be a fractured mandate, he could however end up playing kingmaker along with other regional players like the United Democratic Party (UDP). In the last elections in 2008, when Sangma led the state unit of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), the party bagged 15 seats from across the state.

Having allied with the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) over the presidential election, Sangma may be looking to play a bigger role in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls and is said to be pinning his hopes on an NDA victory in the general election.

Besides Congress, among the national parties, BJP has fielded nine candidates while the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) has fielded 21 candidates.

### **Nagaland**

In Nagaland, which has seen unrest for the last six decades, security has been a crucial issue during the electoral campaign. As many as 180 additional companies of the central paramilitary forces have been asked to supplement the two battalions of Central Reserve Police Force, 26,000 police personnel, 9,000 village guards and more than 2,000 home guards already in the state.

In a state reported to be flush with money during elections, expenditure monitoring has been beefed up. Observers and flying squads – each comprising a magistrate, a police officer and a videographer – have been deployed in all the districts.

The powerful Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) has called for a 'clean election' and issued 13 guidelines that included an appeal to the people not to falsify the date of birth in order to register as voters. Other guidelines included: 'keeping only one voter identity card, honouring individual right and freedom of choice and exercise one's wisdom to vote for god-fearing, principled and capable candidates'.

The main contest here is between the current ruling Naga People's Front (NPF) led by Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio – which has a pre-poll alliance with the BJP and JD-U under the banner of Democratic Alliance of Nagaland (DAN) – and the Congress on the other side. Rio is seeking a third term as Chief Minister.

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The main campaign issues are economic development and the finding of a solution to the Naga problem. Congress has alleged that despite the Central Government allocating adequate funds to the state, the benefits have not reached the people. Prominent in the manifestos of the political parties are the issues of youth empowerment and the promise of job opportunities for the youth.

While the peace talks are ongoing, the powerful apex body of Naga traditional organizations, the Naga Hoho, had asked for a deferment of the elections and urged that a settlement be reached first. Last year, all 60 legislators, cutting across parties, had conveyed their willingness to step down to pave way for a political solution if it helped. The Naga Hoho is of the view that the political negotiations are at a critical juncture and that elections would derail and delay the process.

### 5.2.2 Bharatiya Janata Party

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has for long been rightly perceived as the political wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Recent electoral history, however, suggests that the party is ambivalent about the extent to which it should assert its Hindu nationalist identity. One section in the BJP is of the view that a militantly pro-Hindu image cuts both ways and may, therefore, have to be used selectively. The pro-Hindu stance certainly served its purpose in the early 1990s and catapulted the BJP to within a stone's throw of power in New Delhi.

Yet, this same image limited its further growth in the second half of the 1990s and on occasions was a distinct liability. It was a liability primarily in terms of alienating almost all the minority communities and also large sections of the majority Hindu community. It was also an image that made other parties wary of joining hands with the BJP. This latter fact was brought home to the BJP the hard way, when it failed to win over any new allies to its side in May 1996, despite having formed the Union government. Thereafter, the party's leadership took pains to project a more moderate and secular face while the BJP-led NDA was in power in New Delhi even though the veneer kept slipping from time to time. After the NDA was voted out of power in 2004, the BJP was in a state of shock. The party had anticipated a clear victory for the NDA and some even believed that BJP could obtain a majority—or close to a majority—of seats in the Lok Sabha on its own. The outcome of the 14th general elections, the results of which were declared on May 13, 2004, made the party realize that its 'India Shining' campaign had badly backfired—far from enthusing voters to re-elect the NDA, the mandate indicated that large sections of the electorate of the country were not just unimpressed by the high profile publicity campaign but in fact had rebuffed the BJP's claims that close to six years of NDA rule had benefitted the country's ordinary people. What is noteworthy is that it took a long time for many party sympathisers to come to terms with the factors that had contributed to the NDA losing power. What was worse for the BJP was that the party appeared to be in the throes of an internal power struggle with the 'old guard' represented by Vajpayee and Advani getting marginalised by a younger group. However, the divisions within the party were not as stark or as simple as that. The unexpected defeat in the elections gave the younger leaders an opportunity to press their claims to lead the party. At the same time, sections within the party which had been uncomfortable with the party's 'dilution' of its core ideology during the NDA government also sensed a chance to push for a return to the 'hard Hindutva' strategy. The leadership struggle that followed reflected both these currents. A development

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that precipitated the internal crisis in the BJP was a series of remarks made by Advani during a visit to Pakistan in June 2005. Advani was at the time the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and had been invited by the Government of Pakistan. Advani created quite a stir by describing Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the Father of the Nation of Pakistan and the most important leader of the Muslim League in Independent India, as a great man and a secular person. He quoted from Jinnah's speech to the Constituent Assembly in August 1947 to substantiate his point. Advani's unexpected endorsement of a man whom the BJP had traditionally demonized as the architect of India's Partition created a storm within the party and outside. Barring Jaswant Singh who publicly came out in support of Advani and Vajpayee who made some cryptic remarks that were open to interpretation, most other BJP leaders were clearly unhappy with Advani's apparent attempt to present a moderate face before the Muslim community. Some like Yashwant Sinha even openly criticised Advani, saying that his remarks on Jinnah were 'unnecessary and avoidable'. Another BJP leader and former Chief Minister of Delhi, Madan Lal Khurana, also expressed his displeasure with Advani's comments on Jinnah. The RSS leaders who were also extremely unhappy with Advani's comments decided it was time to flex their muscles and ensure that the BJP was led by a person they had confidence in.

On 7 June 2005, Advani offered to resign from the post of party president, but took back his resignation three days later. Sinha meanwhile suggested that Advani should step down from the post of the Leader of the Opposition as well. He said, 'Advani has resigned as BJP president, he should also consider whether he can be an effective leader of the opposition'. By taking back his resignation, Advani had temporarily averted a leadership crisis within the party, but it soon became evident that he would have to quit. There were reports of the RSS insisting on his exit, though these were predictably denied. The denials seemed hollow when barely three months later, on 18 September, Advani himself announced that he would soon resign from the post of party president, though his term was till the end of 2006.

Advani's impending exit from the post of BJP president precipitated a deepening of the fissures within the party. Various individuals from the 'young' section of the BJP were perceived as serious contenders for the party president's post. These included Pramod Mahajan, Sushma Swaraj, Arun Jaitley and Rajnath Singh. Eventually Rajnath Singh became the new party president, though only for the remaining part of the term that originally Venkaiah Naidu and then Advani were supposed to have completed. The scheduled three-year term starting January 2004 had thus seen three individuals occupy the post. Rajnath Singh was later re-elected for a full term as party president in November 2006. Soon thereafter, he 'reorganized' the party hierarchy, in the process 'sidelining' Narendra Modi and Arun Jaitley, two relatively young party stalwarts. While the game of musical chairs was going on as far as the party president's post was concerned, a number of leaders of the BJP who had held prominent positions had openly started rebelling against the party leadership as a prelude to their eventual exit from the BJP. Such leaders included not just Khurana, but also Uma Bharti, former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh and Union Minister. K N. Govindacharya, who had once been a prominent party ideologue and general secretary, joined Uma Bharti in criticising the BJP leadership for having lost its ideological moorings.



### 5.2.3 Communist Party of India

The Communist Party of India was founded in December 1925 to be a part of the nations' freedom struggle and also to envision a socialist India. The fusion of militant anti-imperialist patriotism and internationalism in the struggle for national liberation and the class struggle for socialism led to the party's creation.

Social equality for women, adult franchise and nationalization of privately-owned enterprise have been some of the party's crucial issues. The CPI has been forthright about backing issues like nations' wealth in the nations' hands (nationalization), land to the tiller (land reforms), social justice for the untouchables, democratic rights of organizations, right to protest through demonstrations and strikes, etc.

The main slogan of the party, 'People's Democracy' was substituted by 'National Democracy' in 1951. In 1957, CPI emerged as the strongest opposition party in the assembly elections in Kerala and won. This was the first time in independent Indian history that an opposition party won control over an Indian state. But soon, in 1964, some ideological differences within the party brought about a major split, leading to the creation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), which CPI as the smaller of the Communist entities in India. The CPI was also the government in power in Kerala between 1970 and 1977, with Congress support. Achutha Menon was elected as the chief minister. CPI has also been a part of the Left Front government in West Bengal, Tripura and intermittently in Kerala in the last 20 years. In Tamil Nadu, it is part of the Progressive Democratic Alliance.

CPI also has some incorporated organizations, some of which were created to look after employee welfare at the lower levels of society:

- All India Trade Union Congress
- All India Youth Federation
- All India Students' Federation
- National Federation of Indian Women
- All India Kisan Sabha (peasants organization)
- Bharatiya Khet Mazdoor Union (agricultural workers)
- All India State Government Employees Federation (State government employees)

CPI is recognized as a 'national party' by the Election Commission of India. Today, the Communist Party of India is known to be the only national political party from India which has contested in all general elections with the same electoral symbol.

On the national level, CPI supports the Indian National Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government, but without taking part in it. The party is part of the coalition of leftist and communist parties, also known as the Left-Front in national media. The party has been against India's recent nuclear treaty with the United States and even withdrew support to the Manmohan Singh government over the issue.

A. B. Bardhan is the present general secretary of CPI. The party has fraternal relations with other Communist-aligned parties like CPI (M), Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) and Forward Bloc (FB).

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1. When was the Indian National Congress formed?
2. Since when did English education begin to spread rapidly among the upper middle classes in the Indian cities?
3. When and why was the Communist Party of India founded?

## 5.3 REGIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES

To get a better understanding of regional parties, one has to look at North-East India. Some of the prominent parties in the region are discussed as follows:

### 5.3.1 Assam - Asom Gana Parishad (AGP)

Asom Gana Parishad is a regional party in the state of Assam. It owes its existence to the prolonged student agitation against the foreign migration in Assam which resulted in Assam Accord in 1985. A brief glance at the performance of the AGP in the assembly and at the central level, shows that in 1985, AGP won 7 seats with 33.4% votes in the Lok Sabha. In 1986, it got a majority in Assam assembly and formed its government.

However, in 1991 state assembly elections, the party witnessed a humiliating defeat with only 19 seats. It was stated that the voters of Assam had punished the AGP and its president cum Chief Minister, Mr Prafulla Mahanta because the AGP government could not control the rampaging United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA). The defeat of AGP was followed by the formation of congress government under Hiteshwar Saikia.

In 1996, the AGP won 59 seats out of the 116 seats in the state Assembly where it again came back into power under the leadership of Mr Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, It was also a party in the United Front Government at centre. However, in the 1998 in the Lok Sabha elections AGP could not win even a single seat. The recent trend is that due to leadership differences and non commitment of party members the party may not come into power, but it is committed to identifying the illegal migrants from Bangladesh and their deportation.

### 5.3.2 Meghalaya - HSPDP (Hill State People's Democratic Party)

The HSPDP is an offshoot of the All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) which spearheaded the Hill State Movement in Assam during the 1960s. The APHLC had a volunteer Wing called the Non-violent Direct Action Volunteers (NVDVA), who were actively involved in the movements and who the strongest supporters were during hartals, demonstrations, procession etc. The volunteers' role in the Hill state movement reached its zenith on 10 September 1968 when in response to the call of the APHLC they came out in hundreds with green caps to paralyse the administration of the government of Assam at Shillong by way of peacefully picketing the secretariat buildings in the most disciplined way.

However, in October 1968, there was dissent among the various leaders of the party, especially the hard core leaders of the NVDVA who did not agree with the government proposals of an autonomous state plan, and formed another group known

as the Hill State Volunteers Ad hoc Committee (HSVAC). Their motive was to attain a fully fledged state, thus HSVAC continued their protest in the form of a memorandum and a resolution was submitted to the Prime Minister of India.

The annoyance of the HSVAC had also penetrated to a section of the political leaders, especially the political leaders of the APHLC, which was a decision making body of the movement. After the Tura session in October 1968, one of the leaders, Mr Hopinstone Lyngdoh was served with an expulsion notice from the APHLC. The leaders of the HSVAC then invited him to join their group and continue their struggle for a full fledged state.

All the dissenters got together in Shillong on 8th November 1968 and formally formed a party under the name and style of the HSPDP with Hopinstone Lyngdoh as the President and Mr Aries Basaiamoit as General Secretary. Thus under this party the movement did not stop, although, with the introduction of the Indian Parliament of sub state passed by the Assam (Meghalaya) Reorganization Act 1969, before Christmas day, the volunteers under this party had to suffer but ultimately the target was achieved when the government of India announced the creation of a full-fledged state.

However, this party was not merely satisfied with public demonstration. In 1971, the party had sent two candidates for the parliamentary seats of Shillong and Tura, but had lost the election. However, the party was able to create an impact in the state: it can be said that after that years the party had its representative, starting from the first general elections of the state since 1972. However it had its ups and downs sometimes with only Mr Hopinstone Lyngdoh who remains the only undefeated candidate since its inception, but as of now in the 2013 election to the Legislative Assembly, there are four elected representatives with the motive of promoting and protecting the integrity of the state.

### **5.3.3 Mizoram-Mizo National Front (MNF)**

The MNF is one of the most dominant parties in Mizoram, but it cannot be disregarded that this party was formed after the famine of 1961 due to lack of initiation to transform the famine front into a political party which was a voluntary service organization working for the famine stricken people under the government of Assam. The MNF came to the forefront on 28th October 1961 with Laldenga as the Chairman and A. Rohuna as the joint secretary along with other members.

The main objective of the MNF leaders since its inception was a call for Greater Mizoram and sucession from the Indian Union. It believed in the concept of political self-determination as the birthright of any national group. In order to achieve this aim, its leaders, while accepting the non violence method as a means of achieving independence, were secretly negotiating with the then Pakistan (East Pakistan) to supply arms and ammunition. This step taken by the leaders at that point of time and the crossing of Laldenga and two top leaders to Pakistan created a rift but at same time with the initiation of the then chief minister of Assam, they were released.

The discontentment of the leaders of the Congress and the MNF basically due to the Mizo movement, led to the use of arms by the MNF volunteers trained in handling modern weapons. This act by its members received an enormous amount of support from its own people no, doubt, but the damage has been done in 1966 when MNF looted the Aizawl treasury before the arrival of the 18th battalion of the

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Assam rifles to help the 1st Battalion to keep laws and order. Then the government of India had to use military force due to activities like the abrupt declaration of independence. The movement no doubt had a flow of emotions especially from the younger generation and no doubt the party was formed with the intention of getting a free independent Mizo state but it got entangled in a battlefield with the army and attacks on government servant in their districts.

Since its inception, the motive of the MNF was to attain independence where Laldenga through his contact with the foreign states made many pleas to the world leaders, but this was not possible due to various reasons, like a discontentment among the leaders, and the efforts of the Indian government to bring it to the peace table were not fruitful. But in the end it took a turn in 21 June 1986, when the draft agreement of the Mizoram Accord was finalised, followed by the signing of the political settlement on 25th June 1986, between Mr Laldenga and Mr Arjun Singh, providing for an interim government between the MNF and the Congress(I).

This was followed by the signing of the Mizo Accord on June 30 1986 between the union Home Secretary, Mr R.D Pradhan, Mr Laldenga, Mr Lalkham, and Chief Secretary of Mizoram. The Accord provided among other things, full statehood for Mizoram with 40 members of the Legislative Assembly. Mizoram State was inaugurated on 20 February 1987 and the first election in 1987 was bagged by the MNF with 24 seats and emerging as the ruling party. Though later there was dissent within the party that had also led to the toppling down of the MNF Government in 1989, in the recent times it has been one of the major players in Mizoram politics.

### 5.3.4 Politics Dynamics in Nagaland

India's democratic pattern of administration rests on people's participation in the electoral process for choosing their representatives. In Nagaland, regular elections have been held since 1964 on the pattern followed in the rest of the country. The first three general elections of 1952, 1957 and 1962 could not be organized in the state due to insurgency and violence. But once the people participated in the elections in 1964, an era of electoral politics dawned over the state, the people's performance has been exemplary despite many disparities.

Political participation is not successful without the prevalence of political parties in a state. Nagaland has its own regional political parties besides the Congress which have been playing a prominent role in the politics of Nagaland. Though the NNC (Naga National Council) remained the sole representative body till 1957, it was with the initiative of the moderate Nagas who realized that through violent means they may not achieve anything. Thus they organized the first Naga Peoples Convention (NPC) in August 1957, in Kohima, which in turn advocated a negotiated settlement of the Naga problem and proposed to constitute a new administrative unit combining the Naga Hills Districts of Assam and Tuensang frontier. The Government of India accepted the proposal, which with the emergence of the NPC, heralded an era of peace in the strife ridden hill area.

With its handling of the complex Naga problem, the NPC proved to be a more representative and rational representative of the Nagas than the NNC. In fact, NPC may be treated as overground organization of the Naga during that period of time. We can also see that it got the people's mandate just after the creation of the new state in the first general elections held in January 1964.

### 5.3.5 Conclusion

It can be said that a country of vast diversity like India where political fluidity continues indefinitely because of the transition from the traditional caste politics to the democratic mass politics, primordial groups were the first one to demand regional identity and personality of their own. These regional parties have been growing and developing more in view of the growth of the processes of regionalism.

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4. What was the first and foremost manifestation of the diversity of India?
5. What does communalism mean?
6. When did the Asom Gana Parishad get a majority in Assam assembly to form its government?
7. When did the MNF come to the forefront?

### 5.4 STUDENT MOVEMENTS

Philip M. Burgess and C. Richards Hofstetter argue that the development and the existence of a massive student movement—embodying common attitudes, lifestyles, and orientations toward modern life—has been widely assumed by those writing both the popular and professional literature. Student attitudes related to demands articulated and key factors identified by student activists were surveyed during the course of campus-wide disruptions that led to the closing of a major Midwestern multiversity in the spring of 1970 in order to examine the extent to which functionally interdependent systems of attitudes that characterize those in social movements aptly characterize students. Factor analytic criteria and survey methodology revealed that a greater degree of functional interdependence among attitudes and opinions exists among university students than is congruent with “student movement” interpretations of campus disruptions in particular and youth culture notions of student attitudes in general. In fact, the pluralistic structure of attitudes among students appears to be more approximate to that of the general population than to widespread contemporary assumptions on which are based ‘youth culture’, ‘student movement,’ and ‘generation gap’ hypotheses.

The roots of the international student movement extend back to the early years of this century and in some instances even earlier. The World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) and the international YMCA organization had their origins in the mid-nineteenth century. The WSCF journal, *Student World*, which began publication in 1908, featured articles on students and student groups and was perhaps the first journal to give coverage to university affairs in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Christian student movements held international conferences which brought together students from both advanced and colonial nations, and this interaction stimulated early student nationalism in a number of countries, most notably in China.

In India, the student movement is not a phenomenon only in the 20th century: its beginning goes back to the 19th century. Even though the students’ population of a modern type was small due to the small number of educational institutions, but with the passage of time this was not so and this has also led to an anti British

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tendency. Traditional education was losing its utility with the spread of urbanization and industrialization and modern education was gradually spreading, being more useful for jobs, career and social status.

In the 19th century, education and social reform was at the centrestage. This consciousness was one of the consequences of modern western education which made the educated youth conscious about the social religious inequalities, discrimination and rigidities. This gave rise to serious reactions among the educated middle classes and was exemplified more coherently in the ideas of Ram Mohan Roy, Young Bengal movement and several other streams.

### 5.4.1 Factors for Emergence of Student Bodies

The gradual spread of education and educational institutions was the material source for the emergence of the student body. Several important colleges were opened in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and elsewhere, at the beginning of the 19th century. In fact when Hindu college of Calcutta was established in 1817, it was destined to play an important role in the history of student movements.

It was also pointed that the growth of industrialisation in the middle of the 19th century speeded up the growth of modern education. Establishment of jute, textile, railway and other industries put up new demands on the colonial administration of British India. Widespread network of bureaucracy to manage colonial rule needed qualified persons in larger numbers. By the end of the 19th century, there was substantial system of educational institutions catering to the primary needs of the foreign rule but at the same time helping a certain growth of modern consciousness among some educated sections. The new modern education was quantitatively different from the old traditional ones. It brought the students in contact with the worldwide modern developments of the industrial age and made them aware, in particular, of European events in all the fields of knowledge.

### 5.4.2 First Student Organization in India

Academic Association, founded in 1828, was the first student organization in India, which functioned in an organized and regular manner with certain aims. There were several factors which acted as background to the formation of the Association and related movements. The rising consciousness, generally termed as renaissance, among a section of the well-to-do, educated gentry of Bengal, was an important source of increasing awareness towards social problems. The new consciousness was not so political as it was a reaction to the social disparities and discrimination in terms of caste, class, sex, tradition and religion.

Many enlightened persons reacted to the rigid socio-religious practices inherent in Indian society. There also was certain dissatisfaction with the foreign rule or with some of its aspects. The French revolution and the movements for Italian unification proved to be a source of inspiration for the educated youth. The Academic Association was set up as a debating society mainly of students, but with others also participating. The main inspiring figure was Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831), who was a teacher and a journalist. His watchwords were free thinking and humanism and was inspired by the French revolution and English radicalism.

Teaching in Hindu college and continuing his activities later too he left behind a band of followers who displayed powerful intellect in their attempts to break the old Hindu beliefs. In a sense Derozio was the first student and youth leader of India.

Besides this organization there are other organizations like the Bengal Youth Movement (1830s). It is this organization that raised its voice against the injustices and repression of the British authorities, especially on the unprotected peasant of the permanent settlement, advocated abolition of the political power of the company and demanded freedom of press under the leadership of Ram Gopal Ghose.

Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge was formed at a meeting in Sanskrit College Calcutta on 13 March 1838, with the object of promoting mutual improvement. It started with 200 members including famous names like Krishna Mohan Banerjee, Peary Chand Mitra, Ramtanu Lahiri, etc. This organization acquired political undertones and was perhaps the first organization of intellectuals where anti-British sentiments began shaping up.

With these organizations, in the late 19th century, one of the most important developments was the attempt to organize the conscious Indians, ultimately leading to the formation of the Indian national Congress in 1885 and the simultaneous growth of the organized student movements of political nature leading to the establishment of the Students Association in 1876. Here it can be reflected that it was the Young Brahmos, under the leadership of Anand Mohan Bose who founded the Students Association in 1876. The movement was deeply inspired by Mazzini and the struggle for Irish independence. The organization was not only involved in the independence movement but also for raising the age limits for the ICS (Indian Civil Services). It also raised the demand for simultaneous exams in England and India. The movement led to the establishment of a number of organizations and the activation of a section of students.

### **5.4.3 Student Movements in North-East India**

North-East India has been a hotbed of student politics for quite some time. Students of this region have been launching massive movements for the issues of cultural identities and economic backwardness at time with secessionist overtones. Politics and societies of all the states in North-East India are today greatly influenced by these movements. To have a better understanding of the student movements in the region, let us trace some students' organization of the region.

#### **1. Assam Student Movement**

The beginning of the Assam student movement goes back into the 19th century. This is reflected in 1912 when Assam became a separate province under a chief commissioner from 1 April 1912, due to the organization of the different states in the country by the government of Britain. Assam as a province has an old tradition of protest and organization and of struggle for social reforms. The youth was severely tested in 1836 when Bengali was made the official language in the schools and courts of Assam province. There was a wave of protests from the Assamese youth. Anandaram Dhekial Phukon (1829-1859) made the most important contribution to the movement. He left behind a rich legacy of literature, making it possible to struggle for the revival of the Assamese language. He also compiled Assamese English dictionary which however remained unpublished. It was his initiative that the latter leaders like Hem Chandra Barua and others that Assamese was adopted as a medium of instruction in missionary schools. Assam saw several agitations and activities on the language question. It was only on 7th March 1872 that a memorandum was signed by 130 educated Assamese headed by Bronson that ultimately lead to the reintroduction of Assamese in schools and courts.

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The Bodo Student movements came into existence in the 20th century; Bodos are one of the ethnic tribes in Assam who have been voicing their grievances over and over again at various forums of different levels. Some of their problems and complaints have been found to be genuine calling for sympathetic approach towards their permanent problems.

### **The beginning of the Bodos**

Discontent can be traced as far as 1912 when the legislative council headed by chief commissioner for Assam administration was created; the Bodos and the other tribals were not represented in the council. Since then the issue which began to agitate the minds of the tribals in the plains of Assam was maintenance of a separate identity. Even after independence, the Bodos always had the feeling that though India claims follow to a democratic system of representation, in practice it was not so. Another reason that has led to these movements is their economic backwardness. Though the group is mainly agriculturist and their lands are their only source of livelihood, a majority of them are landless and hence poor. This is due to the fact that from the colonial period till today no government has ever been serious enough to consider their economic plight. There is hardly any initiative on the part of the government. It has also been stated that the plight of this community has been rendered more acute due to the neverending flow of illegal migrants from Bangladesh. Besides these grievances there are many others. For redressal of the grievances of the Bodos and to help in promoting their all round development, a number of organizations were formed and one of these is the student organization formed first in 1921 known as Nikhil Assam Bodo Chhatra Samellan, which however remained inactive. However in 1930s the college-going students formed the Bodo Chhatra Samellan, but it was only in 1967 that All Bodo Student Union (ABSU) was formed which was an integration of the various Samellans, unions, etc., of all levels into one known as ABSU which was formally inaugurated on 15th February 1967 at Kokrajhar. Baneshwar Basumatry and Kanakeswar Nazari were the first president and general secretary respectively.

The basic aim of the ABSU is to unite all Bodos to promote better and mutual understanding among them and create consciousness about the needs for all round development of the Bodo community at large in terms culture, language and literature, to help in achieving the socio-economic aspirations to safeguard the ethnic identity to undertake programs of social service and reforms through periodic meeting, conference, writings etc. The main issues taken up by the ABSU were the introduction of Bodo as medium of instruction in primary level for the Bodo children, adoption of the Roman script for Bodo language and the movement of a separate state, known as Bodoland, which began on 2nd March 1987, under the leadership of Upendra Brahma and is continuing till date, under various leaders of the organization from time to time.

### **2. All Arunachal Students' Union**

The student union in Arunachal Pradesh was first started during the last part of the 1940's at Pasighat by a few ADI and Mishing students called the Adi-Mishing Students Union with its headquarters at Pasighat. Its main aim in the initial stages was to spread the light of education among the innocent tribals by convincing the guardians to send their wards to school, social service, organization of cultural activities and to propagate the idea of cleanliness of the people and their



surroundings'. In the second stage the Students union started demanding developmental schemes and programs from the government. After creation of several branches, the name of the union was changed to All NEFA Students Union. With the coming up of this agency level students union covering the entire area of the then NEFA, its demands also covered broader aspects like the demand for establishing of higher education institutions, educational facilities for the tribal students, change of medium of instruction from Assamese to English with Hindi as second language in NEFA and to upgrade NEFA administration to union territory reservations of seats in various science and technical institutions of the country for the students of NEFA. It can be noted that the government responded to these demands of the students and implemented them in a phased manner. However, after creation of the Union Territory in 1972 and its naming as Arunachal Pradesh, the NEFA Students Union was also named as the All Arunachal Pradesh Students Union (AAPSU), having a federal structure to promote unity and fraternity among the students.

The AAPSU as an organization has its own objectives. Some of which are the Assam-Arunachal border problems, detention and deportation of foreign nationals from its territories, withdrawal of land allotment permit and trade license from non-Arunachalis and effective check against further infiltration of foreign nationals.

### 3. Khasi Students' Union

The important student's organizations existing in Meghalaya are the Khasi Students' Union (KSU) formed in 1978, the Jaintia Students' Union (1969) and the Garo Students' Union (1987). Among the more active students' organizations, the KSU seems to play a very significant role. It led major agitations in the years 1979 (movement against foreigners and illegal migrants into the state), 1987 (anti foreigners drive, when the KSU claimed that the state was flooded with foreigners not only from Bangladesh but also from Nepal) and 1989. A recent major agitation of the KSU was in September 2000 known as the 'Ksan Rngiew Movement', literally meaning the 'Upliftment of the Essence of Man'. The demands of this agitation included the implementation of the Inner Line Regulation, the introduction of the Inner Line permit so as to curb influx to the state and acceptance of 1951 as the cut off year, to generate ten thousand jobs in the different departments for the unemployed, to reduce the number of ministers, officers, Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of various corporations in the state, to amend the land transfer Act in order to prevent the tribals from other states to acquire land in Meghalaya and to abolish the power of attorney system to acquire land, to reserve employment opportunities. During 2004 to 2007, the uranium mining in Domiasiat (West Khasi Hills) became a major issue for the organization.

#### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

8. What kind of articles featured in the WSCF journal?
9. Why was traditional education losing its utility?
10. What was the material source for emergence of the student body?
11. Which was the first student organization in India functioning in an organized and regular manner with certain aims?
12. When did the Bodo Student movements come into existence?
13. What is the basic aim of the ABSU?
14. When and by whom was the first student union started in Arunachal Pradesh?

#### NOTES

NOTES

### ACTIVITY

Pick any other Indian state and trace the various regional parties that have emerged there.

### DID YOU KNOW

Assam was known as *Pragjyotisha* or the place of eastern astronomy during the epic period and later named as Kamrupa.

## 5.5 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The intense urge for autonomy and independent existence has been the cause of the setting up of regional political parties, for the expression of their desires by a certain ethnic community or group of communities.
- India has a multi-party system with prevalence of small regional parties. It is a requisite for political parties that desire to contest local, state-level or national-level elections to be registered in four or more states and thus be recognized as national parties by the Election Commission of India. All parties that have not registered likewise are state parties.
- Student movement is a description given to the ideas and activities of student groups occupied in social protest. In the past, student movements have been in subsistence nearly as long as educational institutions themselves.

## 5.6 KEY TERMS

- **Asom Ghana Parishad:** A state political party in Assam
- **Hartal:** Stoppage of work as sign of mourning or protest
- **Secretariat:** A permanent administrative office or department, esp., a governmental one
- **Mobilization:** Act of assembling and putting into readiness for war or other emergency

## 5.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The Indian National congress was formed on the 28th of December 1885.
2. English education began to spread rapidly among the upper middle classes in the Indian cities since 1830s onwards.
3. The Communist Party of India was founded in December 1925 to be a part of the nations' freedom struggle and also to envision a socialist India.
4. Regionalism was the first and foremost manifestation of the diversity of India.

5. Communalism means the love of the community in preference to the nation.
6. In 1986, the Asom Gana Parishad got a majority in Assam assembly and formed its government.
7. The MNF came into the fore front on 28th October 1961.
8. The WSCF journal, Student World, which began publication in 1908, featured articles on students and student groups and was perhaps the first journal to give coverage to university affairs in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.
9. Traditional education was losing its utility with the spread of urbanization and industrialization and modern education was gradually spreading, being more useful for jobs, career and social status.
10. The gradual spread of education and educational institutions, was the material source of the emergence of the student body.
11. Academic Association founded in 1828 was the first student organization in India functioning in an organized and regular manner with certain aims.
12. The Bodo Student movements came into existence in the 20th Century.
13. The basic aim of the ABSU is to unite all Bodos to promote better and mutual understanding among them and create consciousness about the needs for all round development of the Bodo community at large.
14. The student union in Arunachal Pradesh was first started during the last part of the 1940's at Pasighat by a few ADI and Mishing students.

## NOTES

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## 5.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### Short-Answer Questions

1. Define a political party.
2. Indicate the two characteristics of regional political parties.
3. Distinguish between regionalism, regional political party and nationalism.
4. What was the main objective of the MNF in Mizoram?
5. Do you think that the AGP, in present situation is able to meet its objective of checking illegal immigrants from Bangladesh into Assam? Give reasons for your answer.

### Long-Answer Questions

1. What are the factors that led to the growth of regional political parties in North-East India?
2. Do you think that the feeling of discontentment of the members of the MNF led to its insurgent activities? Answer in detail.
3. Explain the reasons that lead to the formation of the HSPDP.
4. Regional political parties are a healthy trend in Indian politics. Do you agree? Elaborate on your answer.

## 5.9 FURTHER READING

### NOTES

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