



Constitutional Promise of Autonomy: Article 244(A)

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Why in News?

Recently, in Assam's predominantly tribal **Diphu Lok Sabha constituency**, candidates from all political parties have pledged to implement [Article 244\(A\) of the Constitution](#), aiming to establish an autonomous 'state within a state.'

- The demand for autonomy in the region dates back to the 1950s movement for a **separate hill state**.
 - Despite the creation of **Meghalaya in 1972**, leaders of the Karbi Anglong region opted to remain with Assam, hoping for autonomy through **Article 244(A)**.

What is Article 244(A) of the Indian Constitution?

- **Article 244** in Part X of the Constitution envisages a special system of administration for certain areas designated as '**scheduled areas**' and '**tribal areas**'.
- **Article 244(A)** was added to the Constitution through the **Twenty-second Amendment Act** in 1969.
 - It allows Parliament to enact a law to establish an autonomous state within the State of Assam comprising **all or some of the tribal areas specified in the Sixth Schedule**.

What is the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution?

- **About:** [Sixth Schedule](#) covers provisions relating to the administration of tribal areas in the states of **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram**.
- **Autonomous Districts:** Tribal areas in **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram** are governed as **autonomous districts** but remain under the state's executive authority.
 - The governor holds the power to reorganize these districts, including **adjusting their boundaries, names**, and even dividing them into multiple autonomous regions if there are diverse tribal populations.
 - Acts of Parliament or state legislature might not apply directly to these districts unless adapted with specified modifications.
- **Autonomous District Councils:** Each autonomous district has a district council consisting of **30 members**, with 4 nominated by the governor and the remaining **26 elected through adult franchise** for a standard term of 5 years, unless dissolved earlier.
 - They can make laws on certain specified matters like land, forests, canal water, shifting cultivation, village administration, the inheritance of property, marriage and divorce, social customs and so on.
 - But all such laws require the **assent of the Governor**.
 - They can **constitute village councils** or courts for trial of suits and cases between the tribes. They hear appeals from them.
 - The jurisdiction of the [high court](#) over these suits and cases is specified by the governor.
 - The **governor** also has the authority to **appoint commissions to review district administration** matters and can dissolve councils based on their recommendations.

What are the Other Demands For Autonomy in India?

- **Gorkhaland:** The Gorkha-majority areas of Darjeeling and nearby regions in West Bengal have seen demands for a **separate state of Gorkhaland** due to **cultural and historical reasons**.
- **Bodoland:** In Assam, the **Bodo-majority areas** have witnessed movements for a separate state of Bodoland, citing issues of **ethnic identity and socio-economic development**.
- **Vidarbha:** The region of Vidarbha in Maharashtra has seen periodic demands for statehood, citing issues of **regional underdevelopment** and neglect by the state government.
- **Bundelkhand:** Parts of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh comprising the Bundelkhand region have witnessed demands for a **separate state** due to perceived economic backwardness and neglect by state governments.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. Which of the following provisions of the Constitution of India have a bearing on Education? (2012)

1. Directive Principles of State Policy
2. Rural and Urban Local Bodies
3. Fifth Schedule
4. Sixth Schedule
5. Seventh Schedule

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 3, 4 and 5 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 5 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Ans: (d)

Mains

Q. Why are the tribals in India referred to as 'the Scheduled Tribes? Indicate the major provisions enshrined in the Constitution of India for their upliftment. (2016)