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Q5(d)

Status of Sixth Schedule Areas

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2024 · Anthropology GS 2 · 10 marks · Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization

1.1 Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization-Prehistoric (Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Neolithic-Chalcolithic), Protohistoric (Indus Civilization). Pre-Harappan, Harappan and post-Harappan cultures. Contributions of the tribal cultures to Indian civilization.

Core demand of the question

- State what the **Sixth Schedule** is and where it applies
- **Describe Autonomous District Councils:** powers and limits
- **Give present status:** success, capture, new demands (BTR, Ladakh, others)

Revision summary

Sixth Schedule creates Autonomous District Councils in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

Councils can legislate on land, forest (non-reserved), shifting cultivation, village government and social custom.

They have limited alienation better than many **Fifth Schedule** areas, but elites and minorities remain problems.

BTR is a thicker later council; Ladakh and others now ask for the Schedule.

It is not PESA and not a pan-Indian tribal government.

Introduction

The **Sixth Schedule** to the Constitution provides **Autonomous District Councils** (and regional councils) for specified tribal areas in **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram**. It is a stronger, older autonomy device than PESA. Its present status is mixed: real law-making on land and custom, uneven democracy, and rising demands to copy it elsewhere.

Body**Design**

Paragraphs of the **Sixth Schedule** allow councils to make laws on **land, forest (other than reserved forest), shifting cultivation, village administration, marriage and social custom, inheritance, and some local taxes**, subject to the Governor. Councils have elected members and nominated seats. They run local courts for specified disputes. **Article 244(2)** is the hook. This is **not** the **Fifth Schedule**, which uses Tribes Advisory Councils and the Governor's regulations, and which PESA later tried to democratise.

Meghalaya's whole state is under **Sixth Schedule** councils (Khasi, Jaintia, Garo). Assam has several ADCs (including Karbi Anglong, Dima Hasao, and the **Bodoland Territorial Region** after successive accords). Mizoram and Tripura have councils for Chakma, Lai, Mara, and

Tripura tribal areas.

Present status

Councils have protected **land alienation rules** better than many **Fifth Schedule** districts. They have also been **captured by local elites**, accused of excluding women and smaller minorities (Bru/Reang, non-Bodo in BTR, non-Khasi in Shillong). Funds and state departments often bypass them. **Inner Line** and **Sixth Schedule** together structure the North-East's ethnic federalism.

Demands to extend Sixth Schedule - Ladakh after 2019, some Gorkha and hill groups, parts of Arunachal and Manipur hills - show that the Schedule is now a political brand of autonomy. Parliament can amend the Schedule; it has not become a general tribal law for all India. Status today: constitutionally robust in four states, socially contested, fiscally dependent, and politically attractive to regions that lack it.

Flow diagram

Sixth Schedule -> ADC law on land custom
ADC law on land custom -> Assam Meghalaya Tripura Mizoram
New demands -> Ladakh hills others

Conclusion

Sixth Schedule Areas are autonomous council territories in four North-Eastern states with law-making on land and custom. They work as ethnic federalism, not as perfect local democracy. Their prestige now exceeds their delivery.

Facts & figures

Article 244(2)

Applies the **Sixth Schedule** to tribal areas in the four listed North-Eastern states.

ADC powers

Land, non-reserved forest, jhum, village administration, marriage, inheritance and specified courts and taxes, subject to the Governor.

Bodoland Territorial Region

Autonomous arrangement in Assam after peace accords, under the **Sixth Schedule** framework with expanded territory and subjects.