

Article 244 (A) of Indian Constitution

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Why in News?

In the tribal-dominated Diphu Lok Sabha constituency in Assam candidates from all political parties have pledged to put into action Article 244(A) of the Constitution. Article 244(A) aims to establish an autonomous region, almost like a separate government within the state.

Diphu and its social profile

- Diphu is the most sparsely populated of Assam's 14 Lok Sabha constituencies, with just 8.9 lakh voters.
- It is reserved for Scheduled Tribes (STs), and covers six legislative Assembly segments in three tribal-majority hill districts of Assam: Karbi Anglong, West Karbi Anglong, and Dima Hasao.

- These three districts are administered under the provisions of the **Sixth Schedule of the Constitution**.
- These areas come under two autonomous councils: the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council.
- Voters at the seat belong to various communities: Karbi (the third largest tribe in the state), Dimasa, Hmar, Kuki, Rengma Naga, Zeme Naga, Bodo, Garo, Assamese, Gorkha, etc.

What is Article 244(A) of the Constitution?

• 22nd amendment act of 1969

- The Constitution (Twenty-second Amendment) Act of 1969 introduced Article 244(A), allowing Parliament to create an autonomous region within Assam.
- This region could include certain tribal areas like Karbi Anglong.

• Key highlights

- In this autonomous region, there could be a separate governing body, like a Legislature or Council of Ministers, or both.
- This provision is more advanced than what's currently in place under the Sixth Schedule for these areas.

• Difference from the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution

- Under the Sixth Schedule, there are already councils with elected representatives for decentralized governance in tribal areas.
- However, these councils have limited powers. They can't control law enforcement, and their financial authority is also limited.
- On the other hand, Article 244(A) accounts for more autonomous powers to tribal areas. Among these the most important power is the control over law and order.

Demand for autonomy

• History of Autonomy Demand

- The quest for autonomy in the hill areas of undivided Assam dates back to the 1950s, with a movement seeking a separate hill state.
- This movement eventually led to the formation of Meghalaya as a full-fledged state in 1972.
- Despite this, leaders in the Karbi Anglong region chose to remain with Assam, influenced by the promise of autonomy under Article 244(A).

• Role of Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC)

- The **Autonomous State Demand Committee** (ASDC), established as a mass organization advocating for regional autonomy, played a pivotal role.
- In 1995, the ASDC, alongside local student bodies, reached a Memorandum of Settlement with state and central governments.
- This agreement aimed to bolster the powers of the two autonomous councils in the region by expanding their departmental authority from 10 to 30.

• Political Representation and Insurgency

- Frustrated by the elusive nature of autonomy, the demand for implementing Article 244(A) escalated into armed insurgency over the years.
- Both the Delhi and Guwahati governments have engaged in peace negotiations with militant groups, including the Karbi and Dimasa factions, signing several peace accords in the process.

- **Peace settlement**

- In 2021, a peace settlement was reached with five militant groups in Karbi Anglong.
 - These groups included Karbi People's Liberation Tigers, People's Democratic Council of Karbi Longri, Karbi Longri NC Hills Liberation Front, Kuki Liberation Front, and United People's Liberation Army.
 - Under this settlement, greater autonomy and a special development package of Rs 1,000 crore over five years were promised.
 - In 2023, an agreement was signed with the Dimasa National Liberation Army along the same lines.
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Q.1. What is Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution?

The Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution protects tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram. It was enacted in 1949 by the Constituent Assembly based on the recommendations of the Bordoloi Committee.

Q.2. What is Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC)?

The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) is an autonomous district council in the state of Assam, India. It is responsible for the development and protection of tribals living in the Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts.

Source: [What is Art 244\(A\), the constitutional promise of autonomy that is driving the election narrative at a tribal seat in Assam?](#)

[Indian Kanoon](#)

[Indian Express](#)

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