Rising Autonomy Movement in North-East India: Repercussion of Article 3 and the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India

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Abstract: Today, the region North-East India has been witnessing increasing movements for autonomy in one form or the other. The movements across the region have varied nature. Some of the movements are for Autonomous District Council status while the others are for a separate political entity, the so-called Union Territory or State within the Indian Union. The crux of these movements had its origin in the provisions contained in Article 3 as well as the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. In one way, these provisions licensed the different ethnic groups, both tribal and non-tribal, living in the Region to embark on the politics of regionalism and autonomy as a part of their political gimmicks. This Paper shall analyse the different aspects of the movements now surfacing in the Region as a whole and will suggest its remedies too.

Key Words: Autonomy Movement, District Council, Separate Entity, Greater Territories, Review of Article 3 and Sixth Schedule.

Introduction:

The present North-East India comprises altogether eight federating Units- Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura occupying around eight percent of India’s geographical area while the States are home to four percent of the total population of the country.

The Region is considered pre-eminently a multi-ethnic region with different historical characteristics and experiences. Different ethnic groups of peoples, both hills men and plains men, having diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their origin, inhabited the area. As such, several writers have considered North-East India as a Miniature India for the Region’s heterogeneity in ethnic composition, language, culture and geographical features. Indeed, multi-ethnicity, multi-linguistic, multi-religious and composites—culture is the characteristics of the present North-East India.

Over 220 ethnic groups of people belonging to General, Schedule Tribes, Schedule Caste and OBC and speaking more than 325 languages/dialects are found in the Region. These people followed different religions/sects like the Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Muslims etc. They have been living side by side for decades together, with a sound cultural co-existence and communal harmony. These sub-ethnic groups of people are very proud of their own history, culture, language and identity also. They are, however, rather very much conscious and suspicion of any efforts to dominate them from the outside.

The heterogenic character of the Region is manifested by its demographic features. Assam, the biggest State in terms of geographical area and population, consists of numerous people, both hills men and plains men. The Assamese, who are in majorities, the Bengalis (both Hindus and Muslims), etc. are the plains men while the Bodos, Cacharis, Dimasas, Karbis etc. are the tribes. The Arunachal Pradesh has 26 tribes including the Apatanis, Mishimi, Nishi, Nocte, Singpho, Tonsga, Wancho etc. and nearly 126 sub-tribes. The Garos, Jaintias and the Khasis are the three major tribes in Meghalaya State and other smaller tribes in the State included Babai, Delu, Hajong, Mann and Rabha. Various ethnic groups, both the hills men and the plains men, are found in Manipur. The majority Meiteis and the Muslims are the valley dwellers. The Meiteis are also inhabited in Assam and Tripura States. In Manipur, there are 34 recognized tribes. They included various Naga sub-groups and Mizo-Kuki-Chin tribes. The population of Nagaland is entirely tribal and the social composition, despite claiming as Nagas, comprises various Naga sub-groups. There are as many as 16 major Nagas tribes with their own distinctive languages and cultural features. The major tribes included Ao, Angami, Konyak, Lotha, Sema, Zelang etc. The Nagas also have their presence in some pockets of the adjoining States of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. Mizoram, the only island of peace in North-East India, is also a purely tribal State inhabited by the Mizos. The Mizos are in majorities. Other tribes in Mizoram comprises the Garo, Bhutia, Lhaluk, Lais, Paites, Reangs etc. including a small population of Gorkhalis. The Mizos and Kuki-Chin ethnic groups are also found in the neighbouring States of Assam, Manipur and Tripura. There are Gorkhalis in Sikkim State while the Bengali-dominated Tripura has the indigenous Tripuris, Bengalis etc.
History:
The North East India, as it is today, has had a long history of its own. During the pre-British period, the region was fragmented with a number of small independent political entities ruled by several native kings and chiefs under various forms of indigenous political systems. In due course of time, the region, as a whole, came gradually under the mighty British rule and remained a part of British India till the later quit India in August 1947. The present State of Manipur and Tripura were the only ‘Princely States’ while Assam was then a Province.

During the colonial rule, the British adopted separate administrative systems for the plains and the hills areas. Under the Government of India Act, 1935, the constitutional position of the hills/tribal areas were classified into three – Excluded Areas, Partially Excluded Areas and Frontier Areas. The Excluded Areas were the Naga Hills, the Lushai Hills and the North Cachar Hills (Sub-division) over which the Provincial Government had no jurisdiction whatsoever. The Partially Excluded Areas were the Garo Hills, the Mikir Hills and the British Portions of the Khasi Hills and the Jaintia Hills other than the Shillong Municipality and Cantonment. These areas were administered by the Provincial Government subject to the powers of the Governor to withhold or apply the laws of the Provincial Legislature with or without modifications. Partially Excluded Areas had much more contact with the people of the plains. The Frontier Areas were the Balipara, Sadiya and Lakhimpur Tracts inhabited by the tribes in an early stage of development.

Though the British policy was marked by the idea of preserving and protecting the tribes from the onslaught of the plains people, who were more advanced than the hills men, but in reality, the effect of this policy was to encourage isolationism. As a result, their connection with the outer world was ignored and there was little regard for their future. But the tribal people living in such areas were allowed to continue with their traditional arrangements of self-governance.

After India’s independence, the Region was integrated into the newly emerged Indian Union. Then, the North-East India comprised only the then undivided State of Assam and two Part ‘C’ States of Manipur and Tripura administered by the President of India through a Chief Commissioner with all Central Acts extended in the Part ‘C’ States.

Genesis of the Sixth Schedule:
Following India’s independence, there were demands particularly from the tribal peoples of the hills areas of the then undivided Assam State for regional autonomy and better status for them within the framework of the Indian Constitution.

In response to their demands, the Cabinet Mission suggested that an Advisory Committee on the Rights of Citizens, Minorities and Tribals in the Excluded Areas should be constituted to make proposals for the administration of the tribal areas. The Cabinet Mission was serious on how the rights and interests of the many tribes and backward classes would be protected after India become independent. Accordingly, the Constituent Assembly of India set up an Advisory Committee on 25th January 1947 under the Chairmanship of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. And this Advisory Committee again appointed a Sub-Committee known as The North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Committee” on north-eastern tribal areas and the partially excluded and excluded areas, under the Chairmanship of Gopinath Bordoloi, the then Chief Minister of Assam. Since the Sub-Committee was headed by Bordoloi, it was also popularly known as “Bordoloi Sub-Committee”. This Committee was set up to make proposals and recommends for an institutional framework for governance of the hills areas of Assam and to aid and advice the Advisory Committee on the affairs of the North Eastern tribal areas.

On the eve of the British transfer of power to India, the Bordoloi Sub-Committee visited the partially excluded and excluded hills areas of Assam to look into the future pattern of administration of the Hills. The Committee seriously made study of the hopes and aspirations of the hills people, considered their future political set up and suggested the Constituent Assembly a special set up of separate administration for the tribal peoples to meet their demands for regional autonomy. The scheme of separate administrative set up sought to build up was based on the concept of regional autonomy in all matters.

Accordingly, the Bordoloi Committee recommended for the establishment of a democratically constituted autonomous body called Autonomus District Council in the administration of the hills to be set up in each of the hill district of Assam. The Bordoloi Committee, which also recognized the existence of various distinct tribes, also recommended that there should be provision of Regional Council to be constituted within the District Council to protect distinct culture and dialect of smaller tribes or group of people therein.

The proposal for the creation of District Councils and Regional Councils was to secure them the maximum autonomy in the management of their characteristically tribal affairs and to enjoy full freedom in respect of their own village administration. It was to promote and regulate the tribal way of life according to their genius so that they could enjoy uninterrupted freedom, safeguard and preserved their traditional way of life, customs and traditions, culture, laws of inheritance, social organizations, administration of justice, land, forest
etc. This special set up was proposed mainly to *free and protect the hills men* from any fear of exploitation/domination from the advanced sections of unscrupulous plains men.

The Constituent Assembly, after much debate and deliberation, finally accepted and approved the provisions of the Bordoloi Sub-Committee recommendations for setting up Autonomous District Councils and Regional Councils composed of elected and nominated members in the hills areas of Assam. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar strongly defended the creation of Autonomous District Councils on the ground that the tribals of Assam, unlike others in other parts of the country, had their roots in their own civilization and culture, their laws of inheritance, marriage and customs were different from those of others.

In this way, the *demands and aspirations* of the hill tribes of Assam were ultimately incorporated and the character of the *administration* envisaged for them was embodied in the Constitution of India. The provisions of this type of administration were inserted under Articles 244(2) and 275(1) and included in Part-A and B of the Table appended to Paragraph 20 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India.

The scheme of Sixth Schedule confers upon the tribals of Assam a certain degree of *autonomy*. Under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule, there shall be an *Autonomous District Council* for each autonomous district by virtue of the Constitution. The Sixth Schedule also allowed the tribals to set up for *Regional Councils* for the tribes other than the main tribe in the tribal areas.

The principle objective or idea behind the Sixth Schedule was to provide the tribal peoples with a simplified and inexpensive administrative set up of their own, empower them to govern themselves, to remove within a short time the material disparities between the advanced and backward sections of the societies, also to bring all round developments of the backward people. The aim of the Sixth Schedule was also to protect the hills and other tribal communities from the control and power of the groups and the plains.

The Sixth Schedule Constitution is regarded as *Mini Constitution* within the main Indian Constitution. The Autonomous District Council is taken as a *State within a State* under the Constitution.

Thus, after India’s independence, these *Partially Excluded* and Excluded hill areas was brought under the *Sixth Schedule* to the Constitution of India to give these tribal areas *greater autonomy* by providing District Councils and Regional Councils. These institutions were expected to integrate such areas with the modern system of administration while preserving the *traditional autonomy* and self-governance of the tribal communities. This led to the creation of District Councils and Regional Councils in the hills areas of Assam.

As a result, the region was divided into two administrative units. The *plains* and the *hills* areas experienced separate administrative systems.

**Creation of District Councils and Regional Councils:**

In the beginning, the *Sixth Schedule* contains provisions as to the administration of tribal areas in the undivided Assam State. The process of protection of tribals began with the formation of the first District Councils and Regional Council in Assam as far back as 1952 and 1953. The Central Government, in 1952, as provided for the establishment of District Councils under the provisions contained in the Sixth Schedule, had created *six autonomous districts* in Assam. Accordingly, in pursuance of the provisions enshrined in the Sixth Schedule, the Government of Assam on 15th October 1951 enacted rules under Paragraph 2 of the Sixth Schedule called the Assam Autonomous District (Constitution of the District Councils) Rules, 1951 for the autonomous districts and the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Constitution of the Regional Councils) Rules, 1952 for the autonomous region in the Lushai Hills District to constitute District Councils and the Regional Council in the hills districts of Assam.

Accordingly, six *Autonomous District Councils* were set up by the then Government of Assam in five of the six hills districts of Assam in 1952 viz. the Garo Hills District Council, the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District Council, the Lushai Hills District Council, the Mikir Hills District Council and the North Cachar Hills District Council. Then, the administrative area of the three district councils was the *revenue district* concerned while that of the North Cachar Hills and the Mikir Hills was the *subdivision*. Under the provision of the Sixth Schedule, *The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council* was also constituted within the Lushai Hills District in 1953. These *District Councils* and *Regional Councils* are among the oldest in the country and established at the time of undivided Assam. The *Governor* was the final authority for the creation, abolition and modification of the administrative areas of the Autonomous District Councils and Regional Council.

The *District Council* was not created in the *Naga Hills District* because the Nagas rejected the idea of the introduction of *District Council* instead of granting *independence*. The Nagas, under the influence of Angami Zapu Phizo, a Naga leader and militant, and *Naga National Council* (NNC) demanded full *independence*. So, the Nagas totally rejected any idea short of independent status for them. The Nagas boycotted the *general elections* to the District Council and continued their struggle for a sovereign Nagaland. The movement inclined...
towards seeking secession from India through armed revolution. Till today, Nagaland State has no District Council other than Village Councils and Village Development Board.

Thus, in the beginning, the then undivided Assam State had five Autonomous District Councils. However, later on in 1967, the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District Council were bifurcated into two separate Autonomous District Councils such as the Khasi Hills District Council and the Jaintia Hills District Council without amending the related provisions of the Sixth Schedule.

Rising demand for autonomy in North-East India:

In North-East India, various forms of movement for autonomy, in one form or the other, have been going on since remote past. Several ethnic groups in the Region, while trying to preserve their ethnic identity, generally resort to the politics of autonomy movement. However, as time went on, the movement and demand for autonomy by several ethnic groups has been escalating in the Region. Some of the movements are democratic while others are armed movement.

Here, this paper will mainly deal with the implications of the Sixth Schedule and the Article 3 to the Constitution of India being adopted as means by the players for their demand in the form of autonomous council, separate political entity or State and greater territories within the Indian Union. In this context, we can have a quick look into the related provisions of Sixth Schedule and Article 3.

Sixth Schedule and its implications:

The Articles 244(2) and 275(1) are concerned with the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. Today, this Provision is related with the administration of Tribal areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura. Under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule, Autonomous Districts and Autonomous Regions can be created.

Autonomous Districts and Autonomous Regions:

1. Subject to the provisions of this paragraph, the tribal areas in each item of Parts I, II and IIA and in Part III of the Table appended to Paragraph 20 of this Schedule shall be an Autonomous District.

2. If there are different Schedule Tribes in an Autonomous District, the Governor may, by public notification, divide the area or areas inhabited by them into Autonomous Regions.

3. The Governor may, by public notification,

(a) include any area in any of the parts of the said table;
(b) exclude any area from any of the parts of the said table,
(c) create a new autonomous district,
(d) increase the area of any autonomous district,
(e) diminish the area of any autonomous district,
(f) unite two or more autonomous districts or parts thereof so as to form one autonomous district,
(g) alter the name of any autonomous district,
(h) define the boundaries of any autonomous district:

Provided that no order shall be made by the Governor under clause (c), (d), (e) and (f) of this sub-paragraph except after consideration of the report of a Commission appointed under sub-paragraph (1) of paragraph 14 of this Schedule. (Bakshi, 2002, P.343).

Corresponding to it, District Council for each autonomous district and Regional Council for each autonomous region under sub-paragraph (2) of paragraph 1 of this Schedule can be created.

In the beginning, there were only five District Councils and one Regional Council in the entire North-East India constituted in 1952 and 1953 respectively. All the five District Councils had remained within the undivided Assam State till 1972. But today, the present Region has altogether 16 tribal Autonomous District Councils. The District Councils, among the north-east States, exist in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur and Tripura only. The States of Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram have 3 each; Tripura has one and 6 in Manipur respectively. This was due to the rising demands made by different ethnic group of people for autonomy leading to the creation of District Councils of their own.

In the case of Assam, after the passing of the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971 by Parliament, as visualised under this Act, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura were elevated and given the status of full-fledged statehood in 1972 while Union Territory status was conferred to Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram. Thereafter, only the North Cachar Hills District Council and the Mikir Hills District Council were left in the State. And the division of the composite State of Assam led to the redrawing of new administrative boundaries. The Dima Hasao District, earlier called as North Cachar Hills District, was created on 2nd February 1970. The Dima Hasao District is an autonomous district enjoying Sixth Schedule status granted by the Constitution of India. The Mikir Hills District section was renamed as Karbi Anglong District on 14th October 1976. As a result of a MOU reached between Government of Assam and leaders of the Karbi movement on 1st April 1995, the name Karbi Anglong District Council was renamed as Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC).On 25th November 2011, a tripartite Accord was signed in New Delhi between the United People’s Democratic Solidarity (UPDS), a Karbi insurgent group operating in the Karbi Anglong District of Assam since 1999, the Central and the Assam Governments, apart from others, to upgrade the existing KAAC to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Territorial Council. On 10th
February 2003, a tripartite Memorandum of Settlement was signed between the Centre, Assam Government and the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) to create an Autonomous self-governing body known as the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) constituted under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. Since then it has been functioning. Earlier Bodoland Autonomous Council was functional with lesser powers.

The present State of Mizoram, then the erstwhile Lushai Hills District, in the post-independent period, remained as the southernmost district of the then undivided Assam State. As provided under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule, the Lushai Hills was granted district autonomy in April 1952. Consequently, being Autonomous District, the Lushai Hills District Council was set up on 25th April 1952. Under the re-organization of the North East Region, the Mizo District became Union Territory in 1972 and the Lushai/Mizo Hills District Council was abolished. In its place, three more District Councils namely Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC), Pawi Autonomous District Council (PADC) and Lakher Autonomous District Council (LADC) were created. Earlier, on 2nd April 1972, the existing Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (PLRC) was dissolved and bifurcated into three Autonomous Regions such as the Pawi Region, the Lakher Region and the Chakma Region. After a month, each of the Autonomous Region of Pawi, Lakher and Chakma was upgraded to the Autonomous District of Pawi, Lakher and Chakma respectively. District Councils were created for each District. Now Pawi ADC is Known as Lai ADC while the Lakher ADC as Mara ADC. These three communities inhabit the southern pockets of Mizoram - the Chakmas in the south-western, the Pawis also called Lai in the south-eastern and the Maras in the southern part. Earlier, the Lakher tribes demanded for creating a separate administration for them that ultimately led to the setting up of an Interim Mara District Council. Later on, the Pawis and the Chakmas tribes, who did not make any demand in the beginning for setting up of separate District Councils for them, also began demanding for a separate body for the preservation of their cultural values, customs and traditions saying that they were also distinct tribes differed from the Mizados. The demand for separate District Councils for the three communities was successful, though the Mizo tribes vehemently opposed to the formation of the three District Councils within Mizoram on the ground that this would lead to petty intra-tribal feelings and feuds among the people in Mizoram.

Earlier, Tripura State had no District Council. It was only on 23rd March 1979 that the Tripura Legislative Assembly, under the provisions contained in the Fifth Schedule to the Constitution of India, unanimously passed the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) Bill, 1979 to form a Council for the tribal peoples. After a series of democratic movements launched by the indigenous people of Tripura, the Indian Parliament also passed the Act, 1979. Under the TTAADC Act, 1979, an Autonomous District Council was created in the State but it actually came into being from 18th January 1982 after the Council was constituted through vote by secret ballots held on 15th January 1982. The Tripura Legislative Assembly again passed a Resolution on 19th March 1982 and again on 11th February 1983 urging the Government of India to apply provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the tribal areas of Tripura. The Tripura Government recommended amendment of the Constitution for the purpose. It was considered necessary to give it constitutional sanctity with a view to meet the aspirations of the tribal population. Subsequently the 49th Amendment Bill to the Constitution of India was unanimously passed on the floor of the Indian Parliament on 23rd August 1984 for the introduction of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to the ADC of Tripura. With the passing of the Bill, the TTAADC was upgraded with effect from 1st April 1985 under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of Indian. A fresh election under the Sixth Schedule had been held on 30th June 1985. The present TTAADC was a successor to an earlier Council formed in 1982 under the provisions of the Fifth Schedule to the Constitution of India. It is an independent Council administering the tribal areas of the State of Tripura. Earlier, the tribal people of Tripura had been struggling for autonomy since the late 1960s of the last century. Their struggle finally achieved success with the support extended to them by the non-tribal peoples of the State and with both the State and Central governments taking appropriate initiatives for constituting ADC. The ADC was launched essentially in tribal-compact area with the aim to introduce internal autonomy and thereby to protect the social, economic and cultural interests of the tribal population as a whole. The TTAADC is a symbol of unity, integrity and harmony of tribal and non-tribal people of the State.

The Autonomous District Council in Manipur came into existence after 20 years of India’s independence. While Manipur was a union territory, the Parliament passed the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act, 1971 which paved the way for the establishment of ADCs in the Hill Areas of Manipur. Following the attainment of statehood in 1972, the Manipur Government immediately adopted this Central Act by issuing the Manipur (Adaptation of Laws) Order, 1972. The Government of Manipur, as per the provisions of the Manipur (Hill Areas) District Council Act, 1971 constituted on 14th February 1972 six District Councils for the tribal people of the hill areas in the State. In accordance with the powers vested on the...
Governor of Manipur, six Autonomous Districts were constituted for the purpose of creating ADCs under the Act, 1971. However, these six District Councils were not established under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule. These Councils were outside the purview of the Sixth Schedule. Unlike the ADCs created under Sixth Schedule, this Act, 1971 does not provide legislative and judicial powers to the respective ADCs. It merely provides limited Administrative powers under the pervasive control of the State Government. Later on, the State Government brought amendments to the Act three times in 1975, 2006 and 2008 respectively. Meanwhile, from the late 1970s there had been strong demands by the hills people and NGOs to do away the ADCs and demanded for greater autonomy. Finally, the State Government gradually dissolved all the elected ADCs during October 1988 to November 1993. From 1980s, hill people started demanding extension of Sixth Schedule. The Manipur Legislative Assembly enacted Manipur (Hill Areas) Autonomous District Council Act, 2000 by inserting the word ‘Autonomous’. The six ADCs thus constituted are only a statutory body created under the Act, 1971 but not a constitutional body as established under the Sixth Schedule. On 18th January 2013, members of the six ADCs launched agitation and demanded autonomy, adequate devolution of powers and a separate budget to enable functioning effectively to the satisfaction of the hills people. They threatened to resign en masse if their demands are not met. Now the demand of the tribal peoples is for the implementation of the Sixth Schedule in the hill areas.

Thus, a large part of North-East India today is governed by the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. These Councils have been given Legislative, Administrative and Judicial powers under the Sixth Schedule.

**New demand for District Councils:**

Today also, there are demands in certain pockets of the Region for the grant of autonomous district councils as well as inclusion and delegating of powers under the Sixth Schedule. Let us analyse it briefly.

**Mizoram and Manipur:**

Mizoram has been facing the Reang and Hmar problems for a long time. Both the Reang tribes concentrated mostly within Mamit District and the Hmars inhabiting the north and north-eastern pockets of Mizoram have been struggling and demanding for Autonomous District Council of their own. Already the Hmars has had a Sinlung Hills Development Council. Despite it, the Hmar Peoples’ Convention (Democratic) militants are demanding for Autonomous District Council status for the Hmars. There is the Sinlung Hills Autonomous District Council (SHADC) Demand Committee under the Chairman of Lalmalsawma Darangawn. The Hmar Welfare Committee (HWC) Vice-Chairman Lalnuanpuia Punte said our (the Hmars) ultimate goal is to achieve Sinlung Hills Autonomous Council under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, not a mere Development Council. In October 2013, the Paite Tribe Council (PTC) in eastern Mizoram had issued a press statement saying that they will contest the 2013 assembly polls in Mizoram to push for an Autonomous District Council for Paite tribes. But in the case of Manipur, the demand of the hills men is to extend the provisions of Sixth Schedule to the existing six Autonomous District Councils.

**Article 3 and its implications:**

Realising fully the future need for re-organization of States in India, the Constitution, under Article 3, laid down that Parliament may by law:

(a) form a new state by separation of territory from any state or by uniting two or more states or parts of states or by uniting any territory to a part of any state:

(b) increase the area of any state:

(c) diminish the area of any state:

(d) alter the boundaries of any state:

(e) alter the name of any state:

The only conditions laid down for making of such a law are, provided that:

(a) No bill for the purpose shall be introduced in either House of Parliament except on the recommendation of the President and unless, where the proposal contained in the Bill affects the area, boundaries or name of any of the states.

(b) The President shall, before giving his recommendation, refer the Bill to the Legislature of the state which is going to be affected by the changes proposed in the Bill, for expressing its views on the changes within the period specified by the President.

The President is not, however, bound by the views of the State legislature, so ascertained. The Constitution does not require that the consent of the legislature of the State (s) is necessary for enabling Parliament to make such laws. By a simple majority and by the ordinary legislative process, Parliament may form new States or re-organize States or alter boundaries etc. of existing States and thus thereby change the political map of India. (Bakshi, 2002, P.7).

Thus, the territories of the federating units may be altered or distributed if the Union Executive and Legislature so desire. On many occasions, since the commencement of the Constitution, the forging powers has been used by Parliament to enact Acts for the creation of new states, redefining of States boundaries etc.

As a result of Article 3, the North-East India experienced gradual disintegration into smaller political units under independent Indian polity. The States of Arunachal Pradesh,
Meghalaya and Mizoram were carved out of the then undivided Assam State. At first, Meghalaya was separated from Assam as an Autonomous State within Assam State which was inaugurated on 2nd April 1970. Following relentless agitation for full-fledged statehood and in response to a request made by the Meghalaya Assembly on 30th September 1970, the Parliament passed the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971 during the Winter Session and thereby converted the Autonomous State of Meghalaya into a full-fledged State, which came into force in January 1972. As visualised under this Act, 1971, Manipur and Tripura was also elevated and given the status of a full-fledged statehood in 1972 while Union Territory status was conferred to Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram. Earlier, there was agitation for statehood movement in the neighbouring Manipur and Tripura. Tripura was formally declared a Union Territory on 1st November 1957 while Manipur was elevated to the status of union territory in June 1963 under the Government of Union Territory Act 1963. The States of Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura emerged together as three separate States on 21st January 1972. To pacify the people of the Mizo Hills District, the Central Government made the Mizo Hills a Union Territory. Then the insurgent Mizo National Front (MNF) under the charismatic Leadership of Laldenga had been waging a war for a sovereign Mizoram. Arunachal Pradesh was formerly known as North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) and it was created out of the Frontier Tribal Areas of Assam. Its present name Arunachal Pradesh was given with the conferment of Union Territory status in 1972. Both Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram became States in 1987. Mizoram was granted full-fledged statehood following the signing of the Peace Accord between the underground MNF leader Laldenga and the Union Government on 30th June 1986.

Though the Nagas went for complete independence, the present State of Nagaland comprising the former Naga Hills District of Assam and the former Tuensang Frontier Division of the NEFA was made a Centrally Administered Area in 1957. In January 1961, Nagaland State was created and became a full-fledged State of the Indian Union. However, the State of Nagaland was officially inaugurated on 1st December 1963.

Thus, from being a Region comprising only the then undivided Assam State and two Part ‘C’ States of Manipur and Tripura, now the Region has eight States altogether with the incorporation of the Sikkim State.

New demand for States:

Today also further demands for the creation of new separate States is going on in the Region. The Re-organisation of States did not satisfy all. Some of those who were not happy with the result of Re-organisation of States began to agitate their

movements in the States of Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura for the formation of new States. Let us discuss it briefly.

Assam:

Assam has been experiencing both democratic as well as armed movements demanding for separate States. The Bodos are not satisfied with the Bodoland Territorial Council. So they are demanding for a separate State of their own. The Autonomous State Demand Committee was changed into Hills State Demand Committee (HSDC) from 20th January 2013 to create a separate Bodoland State in Assam. On the other hand, the Karbis also do not satisfy with their present status of Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council. The Karbis are demanding complete separation from Assam under the Karbi Anglong N.C.Hills Autonomous State Demand Committee (KANCHASDCOM). To recall here, since 1986, the people of Karbi Anglong have been calling upon the Union Government to implement Article 244A for the formation of an Autonomous State within the State of Assam.

Meghalaya:

In Meghalaya also there are demands for separate States. The demand to bifurcate the State has been a long standing demand of the Hill State Peoples’ Democratic Party (HSPDP), the oldest regional political party in the State. The President of the HSPDP, (also Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister of Meghalaya) H.S. Lyngdoh submitted a Memorandum to the President of India stating the demand of the party to bifurcate the Meghalaya State into a Garo State and a Khasi-Jaintia State. Lyngdoh said that he is going to continue his demand for a separate State for the Khasi and Jaintia people till we achieve it. At the same time, the Garo Hills State Movement Committee and the Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA) has been demanding for the creation of a separate new State for the Garos or Garoland within Garo Hills area in southern Meghalaya.

Mizoram:

In Mizoram, in the southern parts of the State, where District Councils are working, in the aftermath of the Centre’s decision to create a new separate Telangana State out of Andhra Pradesh, the Maraland Democratic Front (MDF), a political outfit formed in1970s, was reported to have demanded a separate State for the Maras to be carved out from Mizoram. The concept of Maraland was born around the time when Mizoram was declared a Union Territory in 1972 but it remained dormant. The MDF, comprising primarily of Maras and some Chakmas, said that after remaining 61 years in the District Council, the Sixth Schedule is unable to safeguard and promote the Mara tribe in Mizoram because of interference by the State government. Preservation of identity is
the rationale for the demand. The MDF recently approached Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Union Home Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde to upgrade the Mara Autonomous District Council into the Union Territory status as their political right. Sources also said that the Lai Autonomous District Council is also thinking on similar lines to demand for Union Territory status.

**Manipur:**

In Manipur too, there is demand for a separate homeland for the Kukis under Article 3 of the Indian Constitution. The Kuki armed groups have been demanding separate Kuki Homeland. The Kuki State Demand Committee (KSDC) has reiterated its resolute demand that Kuki people will never bow down under any circumstance till a Kuki State is created. It said that the Kukis were independent people and remained under the administration of their chieftains before the British came to the region in the 19th century. They had never been under any foreign regimes until their territory was sliced out and given to other foreign rulers. On 15th June 2016, the first ever tripartite political dialogue has been initiated by the Central Government along with Government of Manipur and Kuki National Organisation and United People’s Front for political settlement within the framework of the Indian Constitution.

**Nagaland**

Recently, Nagaland State has also faced the demand for a separate State to be carved out of it. In December 2010, various Naga communities namely Chang, Konyak, Khenmungan, Phom, Sangtam, and Yimchunger formed an Organisation known as Eastern Nagaland Peoples Organisation (ENPO). On 7th January 2011, under the umbrella organisation ENPO, they came out together openly and a Rally was organized in the four districts of Kiphire, Longleng, Mon and Tuensang demanding the creation of a separate Frontier Nagaland State within Nagaland State by carving out half of Nagaland’s territory. The Region demanding to form the separate Frontier State has a population of nearly 9 lakhs, around half of the Nagaland’s population and geographically covering half of State’s territorial area. The demand to dismember the State of Nagaland by forming into Frontier Nagaland has been since a long time back by these Naga groups. In the demand for Frontier Nagaland, the Konyak tribes, Nocte, and Wancho Nagas from Tirap District of Arunachal Pradesh are also included. Apart from others, backwoodness of the Region was the main cause of demand for a separate Frontier Nagaland State. These Naga groups said that the demand for a separate Frontier State is a demand within the Indian Constitution.

**Tripura:**

In Tripura also, despite strong opposition from the major political parties in the State, there has been continuing demand for a separate State for the indigenous tribal people. The Indigenous People’s Front of Tripura (IPFT), a tribal-based party in Tripura, has been demanding to upgrade the existing Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) into a full-fledged State. The name of the proposed State is Twipraland. In Tripura, 33 per cent or one-thirds of the State’s population is indigenous tribal people comprising 19 different tribes and groups. The demand Area constitutes two-thirds of the State’s territory covering geographically the hill areas inhabited by the tribal people. N.C. Debbarma, President of IPFT, said we are the original people of Tripura. The Tipra / Borok people are a Nation. The demand for a separate State is a rightful claim of the people. A new separate State can be formed out of Tripura under the provisions of the Indian Constitution. The demand for a separate State is not a secessionist intention rather it is to seek a solution to the problems being faced by the indigenous people of Tripura. The main grievances of IPFT for their demand for a separate State are in several issues that the indigenous people in Tripura have been faced over the years. Apart from others, the party stated that the indigenous people today are being reduced to a minority in their own home State due to massive influx of outsiders. The party maintained that unequal development is visible in terms of hills and plains. The hill areas inhabited by the indigenous people are comparatively underdeveloped socially and economically and are further being exploited, oppressed and deprived of their basic rights. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act implemented in the hill areas has resulted in several human rights violations of indigenous people.

**Demand for greater territories:**

Besides the demand for new States, another headache is the demand for greater territories. The NSCN (IM) which has been waging a war for an independent Nagaland since 1980s, deviating from its earlier hardliner demand for a sovereign Nagalim, has been, apart from others, demanding for Greater Nagaland to find an amicable solution to the long drawn Naga issue and to end one of South Asia’s longest running insurgencies since 1947. The demand for Unification of Naga-inhabited Areas has been an important issue of concern for the North-East India over the years. The NSCN (IM) demand-area comprises amalgamation of the adjoining Naga-inhabited territories in North-East affecting the States of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur under the call for a Greater Nagalim. However, this has been opposed strongly by the affected States. The NSCN (IM) and the Centre has been under ceasefire/peace talks since 1997. Though the outfit has recently signed a Framework Agreement with the Centre on 3rd August 2015 for finding final solution to the vexed Naga issue, but things are still in the dark.
Earlier, the Laldenga-led insurgent MNF, after realising the failure of the secessionist demand, made such similar demand to amalgamate the territories of the Mizo inhabited areas of Assam, Manipur and Tripura for Greater Mizoram. But it was not successful. However, some of the Mizo political leaders still advocating unification of the Mizo kindred tribes.

**Concluding observations/Suggestions:**

History tells us that, during the brief span of over six decades after India’s independence, a number of District Councils, Union Territories and States had been created in North East India as a result of several movements for autonomy by different ethnic groups of people. As a result, the number of Autonomous District Councils and States has been increased manifold in the Region during this short period since the commencement of our Constitution.

On the other hand, there has been precedence of getting demands in one form or the other. The Central Government, instead of settling the issues, on many counts, has responded to these demands. For instance, several rounds of re-organisations of the North-East Region have been carried out by carving out new States of Meghalaya, Mizoram etc. of the then undivided Assam State. The then princely States of Manipur and Tripura were also elevated to the status of union territories and then to full-fledged statehood.

The creation of new more Autonomous District Councils and States indeed encouraged other ethnic groups to organise similar movements and agitation for autonomy. Consequently, of late, other groups in the Region also followed the suit by launching movements demanding autonomy of varying degrees.

From our (past) experience, it has also been learnt that in the beginning most of the demands were for some sort of autonomy for District Council, Territorial Council or Development Council. But later, in due course of time, it is transformed into the movement for union territory or full-fledged state. This ultimately led to the birth of new ideas for separate state demand. For example, from Bodoland Territorial Council, the Bodos now is demanding for a separate state for the Bodos in Assam.

Apart from others, existence of the provisions of Sixth Schedule and Article 3 in the Constitution of Indian are solely responsible for the emergence of regional outlook in the minds of several ethnic groups of people in the Region. The ultimate result has been the demand for autonomy which is emanated from the existing Constitutional provisions. The incorporation of Sixth Schedule and Article 3 to the Constitution of India may be considered as a License to increase the movement for autonomy in the Region culminating into various demands by several ethnic groups as the demand for it is sanctioned by the Constitutional provisions. Had there been no such constitutional provisions, such a unmanageable demands would have not been made in this tiny Region.

**Suggestions:**

The demands for the creation of new Autonomous District Councils, States or redefining of States’ boundary by one section of the people at the cost of others may not bring an end to the existing differences and problems permanently.

And if all the aspirations and movements of the people are to be fulfilled and given a concrete shape in this way, then, in North East India the creation of more new Autonomous District Councils, States, redefining of boundaries etc. will also remain an unending process as the Region, though geographically very small area, presents regional diversity and heterogeneity ethnically with the factors of tribal, identity, language, uneven economic development, etc.

So, unending demands for autonomy in various forms from different ethnic communities in the Region are likely to spring up in the years to come. There are still chances to separate the entire Region into small administrative areas on ethnic and sub-ethnic lines if the (distinct) ethnic tribes/ groups of people ultimately go for autonomy in the form of autonomous council, union territory, separate homeland/state and greater territory as permitted by the related constitutional provisions.

Hence, there is a need for relook. It is suggested that the related Constitutional Articles under Sixth Schedule and Article 3 that allows formation of new autonomous districts, autonomous regions, states, and alteration of areas, boundaries or names of the existing entities should be reviewed and bring changes to it to suit the changing needs of time. To amend or modify the related provisions are required from this juncture to minimize or solve to some extent the increasing issue of autonomy in the Region in particular. At the same time, it is also necessary to explore new areas which may address the long standing demands of various ethnic groups in the Region. It is the exigencies of the hour in order to check the possible movements to be ensued later. Otherwise, the Region will remain a boiling cauldron of ethnic issues and tension. Let us not allow the Region divide into Greek City States.

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