

Article 244(A) of the Constitution

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In news : Ahead of 3rd phase of Assam polls, the Congress leader Rahul Gandhi promised to implement Article 244 (A) of the Constitution to safeguard the interests of the people in Assam's tribal-majority districts

What does the Article 244(A) of the Constitution say?

- It allows for creation of an 'autonomous state' within Assam in certain tribal areas, it also has a provision for a Legislature and a Council of Ministers.
- It says "formation of an autonomous State comprising certain tribal areas in Assam and creation of local Legislature or Council of Ministers or both".
- The article was inserted into the Constitution (Twenty second Amendment) in 1969 by the then Congress government

Difference between Article 244 and 6th Schedule of the Constitution

- **Sixth schedule-Articles 244(2) & 275(1):** It is a special provision that allows for greater political autonomy and decentralised governance in certain tribal areas of the Northeast through autonomous councils that are administered by elected representatives.
- **Areas under 6th schedule in Assam:** The hill districts of Dima Hasao, Karbi Anglong and West Karbi and the Bodo Territorial Region are under this provision.
- **Article 244(A):** It accounts for more autonomous powers to tribal areas. As per experts, it provides control over law and order. However the 6th schedule does not give such powers

History of Demand for separate state

- A demand for a separate hill state arose around certain sections of the tribal population of undivided Assam in the 1950s
- **All Party Hill Leaders Conference 1960:** Various political parties of the hill areas including the leaders of the Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills merged to form this conference demanding a separate state.
- They were given the option to stay in Assam or join Meghalaya. They stayed back as the then Congress government promised more powers, including Article 244 (A).
- **Violent form of the movement:** This demand took the form of a movement with a number of Karbi groups resorting to violence in 1980s. It soon became an armed separatist insurgency demanding full statehood
- **Giving up violence:** In February 2021, 1,040 militants of five militant groups of Karbi Anglong district ceremonially laid down arms at an event in Guwahati in the presence of Chief Minister of Assam, the entire political discourse here still revolves around the demand for grant of 'autonomous state' status to the region.
- After this the Karbi groups approached Home Minister Amit Shah reiterating the demand.

Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution

- **It applies to the Tribal Areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram**
- It provides for autonomy in the administration of these areas through Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) and the Regional Councils empowered to make laws in respect of areas under their jurisdiction, which cover land, forest, cultivation, inheritance, indigenous customs and

traditions of tribals, etc. and also to collect land revenues and certain other taxes