

Autonomous District councils of Meghalaya

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Polity-devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein, Local bodies

Recently the 15th Finance Commission headed by its Chairman, Shri N.K. Singh as part of its visit to the State of Meghalaya held a meeting with the representatives of the Autonomous Development Councils of Meghalaya and with Urban Local Bodies(ULBs)

About Autonomous District councils of Meghalaya

- There are 3 Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in Meghalaya namely the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council, the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council and Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council.
- Except for a small part of the area under the Shillong Municipality, the entire state is covered by the District Councils.
- Term of the District Councils is for five years from the date of their constitution.
- e autonomous district council is governed by an Executive Committee.
- Article 243M (1) of the Indian constitution made special provision that nothing in the part IX of the constitutions (provisions for creating Panchayat) shall apply to the Scheduled Areas referred to in clause (1), and the tribal areas referred to in clause (2), of the Article 244. The Sixth Schedule makes provision that these tribal areas will be autonomous districts and be governed by Autonomous District Councils
- **The functions of ADCs as defined in schedule 6 of the constitution included**

1. Making laws on land.
 2. Management of forests, except reserved forests.
 3. Appointment of traditional chiefs and headmen
 4. Inheritance of property, marriage, divorce, social customs.
 5. To administer justice and make rules regulating the constitution of village courts and their powers, to undertake development works like establishment and constructions of markets, fisheries, roads, waterways and to make regulations on trading by persons not being local schedule tribe
- The main Revenue Sources of ADCs as specified by Paragraph 8 of the Sixth Schedule are:
 1. Taxes on professions, trades, callings, and employment
 2. Taxes on animal, vehicles, and boats
 3. Taxes on the entry of goods into a market and sale therein, and tolls on pasenger and goods carried on ferries; and
 4. Taxes for the maintenance of school, dispensaries or roads.

Urban Local Bodies of Meghalaya

- The State has constituted its ULBs under the Meghalaya Municipal Act and Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.
- As ULBs are not constituted under 74th constitutional amendment, the State is not bound to follow certain provisions of the Amendment, for example, (i) hold direct municipal elections (ii) constitute ward committees, (iii) reserve seats for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and women, (iv) continue municipalities for a period of five years, and (v) constitute state finance commission, state election commission and district planning committees
- There are six Municipal Boards in Meghalaya but the elections are not being held regularly in Municipal

Boards.

Revenue source of ULBs of Meghalaya

The Meghalaya Municipal Act 1973 empowers the Municipal Boards to mobilize resources through the levy of taxes as well as non-tax sources;

- Tax Sources include levy of tax on holdings situated within the municipality; water tax; light tax; latrine tax; drainage tax; tax on private markets and tolls on bridges.
- The non-tax sources include license fees on carts, carriages and animals used for riding, or burden; fee on the registration of dogs and cattle; license fee on boats; betterment fee; fees for setting up and maintenance of fire brigade; fees for conducting at the cost of Board, any scheme of social service for the improvement of public health; fee on boats mooring within the municipality; and penalties for various offences.

Their own resources are reported to be insufficient to carry any development work.

The Commission had detailed discussion with the representatives and assured to look into the issues raised by them while making their recommendations on Meghalaya.