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Cabinet Decides to Strengthen NE Autonomous Councils

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Cabinet has approved the **amendment to Article 280** and **the sixth schedule to the Constitution** in order to increase powers of Autonomous Councils in Sixth Schedule areas of North East.

The sixth schedule to the Constitution includes **10 autonomous district councils of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura.**

The 10 autonomous councils **among the 4 states** under schedule six to the Constitution are:

Assam

- Bodoland Territorial Council
- Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council
- Dima Hasao Autonomous District Council

Meghalaya

- Garo Hills Autonomous District Council
- Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council
- Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council

Tripura

Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council

Mizoram

- Chakma Autonomous District Council
- Lai Autonomous District Council
- Mara Autonomous District Council

Approved Amendments

- Amendment in article 280 to **mandate the Finance Commission to recommend devolution of financial resources**. This will significantly improve the financial resources and powers of the autonomous districts councils.
- Transfer of **additional 30 subjects**, including departments of Public Works, Forests, Public Health Engineering, Health and Family Welfare, Urban Development and Food and Civil Supply to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Territorial Council and Dima Hasao Autonomous Territorial Council in Assam.
- **Renaming of few existing autonomous councils** as the present jurisdiction of these councils extend to more than one districts.
- **Increase in seats** in Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (from 30 to 50 seats), Dima Hasao Autonomous District Council (30 to 40 seats), Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (30 to 42), Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (30 to 40) and Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council (30 to 34).
- Provide for **elected village municipal councils** which will be empowered to prepare plans for economic development and social justice, including those related to agriculture, land improvement, implementation of land reforms, minor irrigation, water management, animal husbandry, rural electrification, small scale industries and social forestry.
- Elections to these **village and municipal councils** will be conducted by the State Election Commission. There will be a provision for **anti-defection too**.
- Reservation of at least **one-third of seats for women** in the village and municipal councils in the sixth schedule areas of Assam, Mizoram and Tripura.
- At least **two nominated members** in all autonomous councils will be women.
- **Meghalaya** has for the time being **kept out of the purview** of the provision for elected village and municipal councils and one-third reservations for women.

Sixth Schedule

- The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution deals with the **administration of the tribal areas in the four northeastern states** of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram **as per article 244**.
- The **governor is empowered** to increase or decrease the areas or change the names of the autonomous districts. While executive powers of the Union extend in Scheduled areas with respect to their administration in 5th schedule, the 6th schedule areas remain within executive authority of the state.
- The acts of Parliament or the state legislature **do not apply to autonomous districts** and autonomous regions or apply with specified modifications and exceptions.

- The Councils have also been endowed with wide **civil and criminal judicial powers**, for example establishing village courts etc. However, jurisdiction of these councils is subject to **jurisdiction of the concerned High Court**.