



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** “The Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution provides autonomy to certain regions but has also posed challenges in governance”. Discuss the relevance of the Sixth Schedule in contemporary India. **(250 words)**

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### Approach

- Introduce the answer by briefing about Sixth Schedule and delve into the Autonomy Granted by it
- Highlight the Challenges in Governance Under the Sixth Schedule
- Give Relevance of the Sixth Schedule in Contemporary India
- Suggest Measures to Align Relevance of Sixth Schedule with Evolving Needs
- Conclude the answer with a forward looking approach.

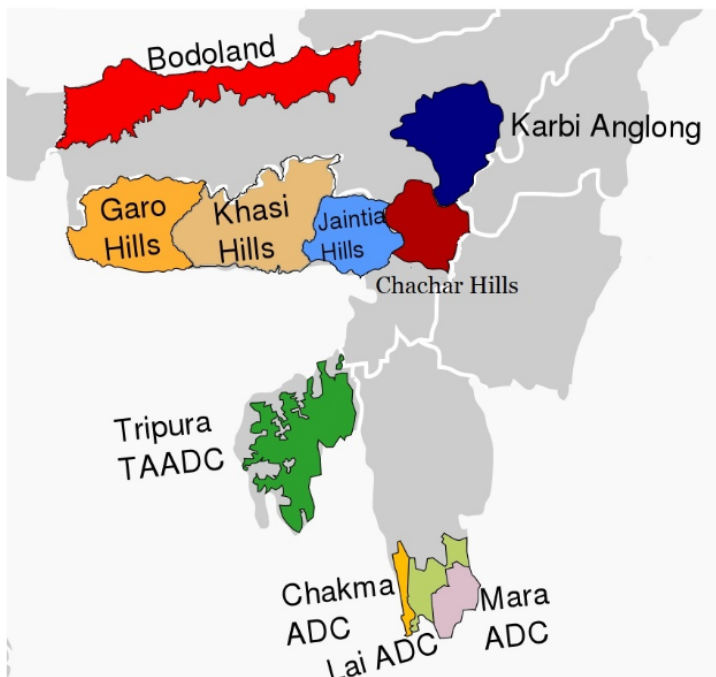
### Introduction

The **Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India** is based on the reports of the Bordoloi Committee formed by the Constituent Assembly. Under **Article 244(2)**, the Sixth Schedule grants autonomy to tribal areas in **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram** through ADCs, safeguarding tribal rights and cultural identity.

### Body

**Autonomy Granted by the Sixth Schedule:**

## AUTONOMOUS DISTRICT COUNCILS



- **Self-Governance through ADCs:** Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) have **legislative, executive, and judicial powers** to govern key areas such as **land, forests (excluding reserved forests)**, inheritance, and administration of justice.
- **Decentralized Governance:** Empowers **local tribal bodies to administer development activities, revenue collection**, and regulation of trade within their jurisdiction. (e.g., **Bodoland Territorial Council** managing local education and welfare schemes)
- **Special Provisions for Development** - The Schedule allows the Governor to modify or exempt laws, ensuring laws cater to local socio-economic conditions. (e.g., Special exemptions for **Nagaland under Article 371A** in line with Sixth Schedule principles.)

### Governance Challenges Under the Sixth Schedule

- **State and Central Policy Divergence:** Policy directives from the central and state governments are often not implemented by **district councils**, citing a lack of capacity or resources, thereby **delaying or obstructing intended governance reforms**.
- **Inter-Tribal Conflicts:** A single ADC often represents multiple tribal communities with diverse interests, leading to competition and friction (e.g., **conflicts in Dima Hasao, Assam**).
- **Financial Constraints:** Inadequate financial devolution from the central and state governments limits developmental activities.
  - The **allocation of funds based on population size rather than developmental needs creates disparities**.
- **Exclusion of Other Tribal Regions:** Several tribal-dominated areas, such as **Ladakh and parts of Manipur**, demand inclusion under the Sixth Schedule to secure similar protections.

### Relevance of the Sixth Schedule in Contemporary India

- **Tribal Identity and Cultural Preservation:** The provisions help protect tribal customs, traditions, and language, preventing **cultural dilution due to external influences**. (e.g., Khasi and Garo languages in Meghalaya recognized and promoted through ADCs)
- **Protection of Tribal Land and Resources:** Prohibits the **transfer of tribal land to non-tribals**, ensuring economic security and preventing exploitation. (e.g., **Supreme Court's ruling against coal mining in Meghalaya** is a historic win for indigenous people, safeguarding their land and resources.)
- **Economic Development with Cultural Sensitivity:** The Sixth Schedule facilitates balanced economic growth by allowing tribal communities to **benefit from regional development without compromising their traditional lifestyles**.

- It helps promote sustainable development initiatives that align with tribal values.

### Measures to Align Relevance of Sixth Schedule with Evolving Needs:

- **Financial Empowerment:** A need-based fund allocation mechanism instead of a population-based approach can ensure equitable development.
- **Transparent and Accountable Governance:** Establishing **independent auditing mechanisms and social audits** can improve transparency and curb corruption.
- **Conflict Resolution Mechanisms:** Special commissions can be established to address inter-tribal disputes and ensure equitable representation.
- **Collaboration with Civil Society:** Encouraging collaboration between ADCs, NGOs, and local tribal organizations can help bridge gaps in governance and ensure that developmental projects reflect the actual needs of the local communities.
  - These organizations can also help raise **awareness about the rights provided under the Sixth Schedule.**
- **Policy Reforms and Review:** A **regular review of the Sixth Schedule provisions** and their implementation is necessary.
  - The **evolving needs of the tribal population should be considered** in any policy reforms to ensure that the protections offered remain relevant and effective.

### Conclusion

The **Sixth Schedule remains a vital instrument for safeguarding tribal rights and fostering self-governance.** Periodic review and strategic enhancements, encompassing financial empowerment, administrative reforms, and greater inclusivity, **are necessary to optimize its impact and ensure its continued relevance** in addressing the evolving needs of tribal communities.

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