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The Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution

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Imagine a village in the hills of Meghalaya. A dispute over land comes up. Who decides? Not a far-off state court. A local council, chosen by the people of that area, can settle it under tribal custom. This power comes from the Sixth Schedule. It gives tribal communities in four Northeast states a real say in running their own land and life.



Northeast India, home to the four Sixth Schedule states. Map: Renzut, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

4 states Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram
10 Councils across those states
30 Seats in a District Council (general rule; Bodoland has 46)
Up to 4 Nominated; the rest are elected

1 What Does the Sixth Schedule Cover?

- The Sixth Schedule applies to tribal areas in **four states only**. They are Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
- It comes from **Articles 244(2) and 275(1)** of the Constitution.
- The main tool is the **Autonomous District Council**, or ADC. It runs the affairs of a tribal district.
- If a district has more than one tribe, the Governor can create separate Regional Councils for them.
- A District Council generally has up to **30 members**. The Governor nominates not more than 4. The people elect the rest. Bodoland is the exception, with 46 members: 40 elected and 6 nominated.
- The term is five years.
- Why this design? Tribal communities in these hills had their own customs long before the Constitution. The Schedule lets them keep those customs inside the law.
- The exam trap is the state list. Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh are not under the Sixth Schedule.

Remember: Sixth Schedule means Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. A District Council generally has up to 30 members: not more than 4 nominated, the rest elected. Bodoland has 46.

> **Quick check 1.** All 30 members of a District Council are directly elected. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

> **Quick check 2.** Manipur is one of the four states under the Sixth Schedule. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

2 What Powers Do the Councils Have?

- Councils can make laws on land, forests, water use for farming, village administration, inheritance, marriage and social customs.
- Some of these laws need the **Governor's assent** before they take effect. So oversight is not fully removed.
- Councils also run village courts and district courts. These hear disputes among Scheduled Tribes in their area.
- They can levy certain taxes, tolls and fees. They also get grants-in-aid from the Centre under Article 275(1).
- Put together, this is legislative, judicial and financial power. That is why the Sixth Schedule is called a genuine self-governing system.
- Think of the council as a mini-government for one district. It makes rules, settles disputes and raises money.

3 How Is the Sixth Schedule Different from the Fifth?

- Both schedules protect Scheduled Tribes. That is why UPSC likes to mix them up.
- The **Fifth Schedule** works through the Governor and a Tribes Advisory Council. It is protective and advisory. It does not create a separate elected body.
- The **Sixth Schedule** creates elected councils with real law-making, court and money powers.
- Fifth Schedule states include Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh.
- Here is a simple memory line. Fifth means protected and advised. Sixth means self-governed.
- A quick filter helps in MCQs. If an option names a central or southern tribal state, it belongs to the Fifth Schedule. Drop it.
- The Fifth Schedule has its own article on this site, Polity0353.

4 Which Are the Ten Councils?

- **Ten councils** work across the four states. Knowing the split by state is a common objective-question trap.
- **Assam (3):** Bodoland Territorial Council (2003), Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao.
- **Meghalaya (3):** Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills. These date to 1952, when the area was part of Assam. They took their present separate forms after Meghalaya was formed.
- **Mizoram (3):** Chakma, Lai and Mara. All three were formed in 1972.
- **Tripura (1):** the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council, formed in 1982. It was brought under the Sixth Schedule in 1984.

- Add them up: 3 + 3 + 3 + 1 = 10.
- The Bodoland Territorial Council is the newest and largest. It was formed in 2003 and has its headquarters at Kokrajhar.

5 Where Do Articles 244 and 244A Fit?

- Article 244 applies the Fifth and Sixth Schedules to scheduled and tribal areas.
- **Article 244A** is a separate provision. It was added by the 22nd Amendment in 1969.
- It lets Parliament create an autonomous State, or an autonomous region, inside Assam.
- Meghalaya shows how it worked. Article 244A enabled an autonomous State inside Assam. It was formed on 2 April 1970 under the 1969 Act. Full statehood followed on 21 January 1972 under the 1971 Reorganisation Act.
- So do not say statehood itself came under Article 244A.
- That is why exams test it as a separate point from the Sixth Schedule councils.

6 What Is in the News: Ladakh and Bodoland?

- Ladakh's people have asked for Sixth Schedule status for years. The demand continues to be pressed, including through protests.
- The Centre has so far used its Article 240 rule-making power instead of granting the status.
- In 2025, the Ladakh Reservation (Amendment) Regulation set 85% reservation for local residents in government jobs.

- A High-Powered Committee set up by the Home Ministry in 2023 keeps talks going.
- Ladakh's tribal population, commonly cited at around 97%, keeps the Sixth Schedule case alive.
- In Assam, the Bodoland Territorial Council held elections on **22 September 2025**.
- The Bodoland People's Front won 28 of the 40 seats. Hagrama Mohilary became Chief Executive Member.
- Current-affairs questions often pair a fact like this with the static Sixth Schedule rules.

7 What Should You Remember for Exams?

Must Know

- The Sixth Schedule covers Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
- It works through Autonomous District Councils generally with up to 30 members: not more than 4 nominated, the rest elected. Bodoland has 46.
- It follows from Articles 244(2) and 275(1).

Good to Know

- Councils make laws, run courts and levy taxes.
- Some laws need the Governor's assent.
- The Fifth Schedule works through a Tribes Advisory Council and has no elected council **(Trap)**.

Great to Know

- There are ten councils: 3 in Assam, 3 in Meghalaya, 3 in Mizoram and 1 in Tripura.

- Article 244A came through the 22nd Amendment in 1969 and enabled the autonomous State of Meghalaya in 1970 **(Trap: full statehood in 1972 was not under 244A)**.
- Meghalaya became a full state on 21 January 1972 through the 1971 Reorganisation Act.

8 How Has This Been Asked in Exams?

Practice MCQs

1. The Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution provides for self-governing tribal councils in which four States?

A. Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram

B. Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, and Sikkim

C. Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura, and Manipur

D. Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Madhya Pradesh

See answer ↓

2. An Autonomous District Council under the Sixth Schedule can have up to 30 members. How are they selected?

A. 4 nominated by the Governor, 26 elected by adult franchise

B. 15 nominated by the Governor, 15 elected by adult franchise

C. All 30 elected by adult franchise

D. 4 nominated by the Chief Minister, 26 elected by adult franchise

See answer ↓

3. How does the Sixth Schedule differ in approach from the Fifth Schedule?

A. Sixth Schedule areas are self-governed by directly elected councils; Fifth Schedule areas are protected and advised through the Governor and a Tribes Advisory Council

B. The Sixth Schedule applies only to Union Territories, while the Fifth Schedule applies only to States

C. Fifth Schedule areas are self-governed by directly elected councils; Sixth Schedule areas are protected and advised through the Governor

D. Both schedules use the same elected-council model, just in different states

See answer ↓

4. The Bodoland Territorial Council, the newest and largest of the ten Sixth Schedule councils, was formed in which year?

A. 1996

B. 1972

C. 2011

D. 2003

See answer ↓

5. The Bodo Accord that created the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was signed on which date?

A. 2 March 1987

B. 10 February 2003

C. 27 January 2020

D. 20 February 1993

See answer ↓

6. As of early 2026, how has the Union Government responded to Ladakh's demand for Sixth Schedule status?

A. It granted full Sixth Schedule status to Ladakh in 2025

B. It merged Ladakh's councils with Jammu and Kashmir's legislature

C. It transferred Ladakh's administration to the Fifth Schedule framework

D. It used Article 240 regulations instead, such as raising Ladakh's local reservation cap to 85% under a 2025 amendment

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **A.** The Sixth Schedule, under Articles 244(2) and 275(1), applies only to Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram. Tribal areas in states like Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand instead fall under the Fifth Schedule.

   ↑ Q1

2. **A.** A District Council has up to 30 members. Up to 4 are nominated by the Governor, at the Governor's pleasure, and the rest are elected by adult franchise. Elected members serve five years. The Bodoland Territorial Council is an exception, with up to 46 members.

   ↑ Q2

3. **A.** The Sixth Schedule sets up self-governing, directly elected District and Regional Councils with real legislative, judicial, and financial power. The Fifth Schedule takes a more protective approach, working through the Governor and a Tribes Advisory Council, with no separately elected body.

   ↑ Q3

4. **D.** The Bodoland Territorial Council, headquartered at Kokrajhar in Assam, was formed in 2003. It is the newest and largest of the ten Sixth Schedule Autonomous District Councils.

   ↑ Q4

5. **B.** The 2003 Bodo Accord was signed on 10 February 2003 between the Centre, Assam, and the Bodo Liberation Tigers, creating the BTC with real legislative and executive powers. ↑ Q5

6. **D.** Rather than granting Sixth Schedule status, the Centre has used its Article 240 rule-making power for Union Territories, including the Ladakh Reservation (Amendment) Regulation 2025, which raised the local reservation cap to 85%. The government's stated position is that the Sixth Schedule was designed specifically for the Northeast's tribal areas.

   ↑ Q6

Quick-check answers

1. **False.** ↑ 1
2. **False.** ↑ 2

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