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## **Decentralization under the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Indian Constitution: A Study in the Context of Karbi Anglong District**

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### ***Abstract***

*The literal meaning of decentralization is transferring of decision making powers and functions to the local bodies with a view to inject greater degree of efficiency in administration. The Panchayats as the means of rapid socio-economic development of rural areas has been in operation in different parts of India including in the plain districts of Assam. However, in the hill states of the North East and in the hill districts of the present Assam, the implementation of the concept of Panchayati Raj can hardly be imagined as almost all the hill tribes of the region live a nomadic life changing their habitat after frequent intervals. To suit the needs and aspirations of the hill tribes of the North East India, the 6th Schedule has been inserted in the Indian Constitution which provides a decentralized administration to the hill tribes including the Karbis of the present Karbi Anglong district of Assam. The provisions of decentralization provided under the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the constitution have been able to fulfill the hopes and aspirations of the people of Karbi Anglong district of Assam to a certain extent but still a lot more needed to be done in this regard. Based on primary and secondary data, the paper studies the provisions of decentralization for the Karbi Anglong district under the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Indian constitution and assesses performance of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) in terms of development.*

**Introduction:** With the glorious triumph of democracy over all other political systems as a means of

fulfilling the wishes and aspirations of the people and as a road to speedy development, the concept of



decentralization has achieved renewed dynamism and popularity in the political circle of world. Decentralization is now considered as an important requisite for a strong and vibrant democracy where the citizens are expected to play an active part in the process of governance. In the developing world particularly with a democratic system behind it, decentralization is seen as a magical instrument to bring about development involving the local citizenry.

The literal meaning of decentralization is transferring of decision making powers and functions from the central or state governments to the local bodies with a view to transform the society and inject a greater degree of efficiency. Democratic decentralization seeks to associate people's participation in the decision making process at the grass roots level. Decentralization both political and administrative is the means of promoting people's participation and cooperation in the process of democratic development. There exists a triangular relationship between decentralization, democracy and development. One of the most important reasons for decentralization is to develop more effective popular participation in local affairs including activities of central and state governments that are carried out locally. There operates a close nexus between democracy, decentralization and

district planning. As an effective form of spatial planning, the district planning becomes a viable instrument for the regional disparities and consequently an effective means of the overall development of the rural areas. From the close association with the people of a particular area a detailed understanding not only of their needs, but also of the long term potentialities of that area can easily be found out. The planning of this potential development can be carried out in a greater detail and with a great deal of more understanding of the people of the area who are particularly and primarily concerned with its welfare. In 1962 one UN study termed that the *"Decentralization of government relieves members of the legislature and of national executive from involvement in many purely local issues, frees key officials from onerous and detailed tasks and increases the speed and effectiveness of the administration at all levels; decentralization is essentially important in developing countries where rapid expansion of public services greatly increases the number of government transactions and consequently the hindrances and wasted efforts resulting from over centralization of controls."*<sup>1</sup>

#### **Objectives of the paper:**

The main objectives of the study are as follows:-

1. To study the provisions of decentralization for the Karbi Anglong district of Assam



- provided under the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Indian constitution.
2. To study the background and necessity of the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Indian constitution.
  3. To assess actual performance of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) in terms of development.

**Methodology:** While preparing this paper, both the primary and secondary data were used. The primary sources of data included the official records and data collected from the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of 1995 and the Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) 2012 which have conferred more powers to the Karbi Anglong Council. The Secondary data included the various books related with the topic of the study.

**Decentralization in India:** As far as India is concerned, democratic decentralization seems to be the only medium of progress and prosperity as more than 70% of its people live in nearly six lakh villages.<sup>2</sup> With the time and population growth, the state in India is increasingly faced with varied problems like widespread unemployment, poverty and disease and administration crippled and ineffective because of its inherent maladies, decentralization is seemed an effective answer to all such deep-rooted problems faced by the country. The policy of decentralization expected to help in

identifying the needs and preferences of the people through their direct participation in plan formulation and implementation. It is particularly expected to empower the weaker sections mainly comprising of the Scheduled Castes (SC) and the Scheduled Tribes (ST) and overcome the domination of the elites in the political scene of the country at least a certain extent.

It is important to note that decentralized administration in the form of local bodies like the Panchyats have deep roots in Indian soil. We get numerous references about Panchyats in Manusmriti, Mahabharata and Arthasastra which testify that village has been a basic unit of administration since earliest times. These Panchayats were largely free from the state interferences and were mainly concerned with the administrative and judicial work at the village levels. Their working was so efficient that every village community was a sort of small republic. During the Muslim rule also the system continued to operate unobstructed and exercised influence in various spheres of human life. Sir Charles Metcalf, the Provincial Governor General of India (1835-36) goes to the extent of saying, "They (village communities) seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasties tumble down, revolution succeeds revolution. Hindu, Pathan, Moghul, Maratha, Sikh and English- all are masters in turn but the village



communities remain the same.”<sup>3</sup>. In the post independence period the Indian state under constitutional directive given under Article 40 (To organize village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government) made concerted efforts towards the process of democratic decentralization. On 12<sup>th</sup> January 1958, the National Development Council endorsed the recommendations made by Balwant Rai Mehta Committee on democratic decentralization which paved the way for the establishment of Panchayati Raj system in the country. It was in 1959 that Panchayati Raj, as modeled on the recommendations of Balwant Rai Mehta committee was first introduced in Rajasthan and by 1968, almost all the states of the Indian union had introduced it in their respective areas. The 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 further revamped the Panchayati Raj system in the country and tried to ensure its regular, active and efficient working in the rural areas and enable it to help the process of rapid socio-economic development of rural India.

**Decentralization in the hills of North East India under Schedule Six of the Constitution:** The Panchayats as a tool of decentralized governance and as a means of the rapid socio-economic development of the rural India has proved to be quite a success in

different parts of India including the plain districts of Assam. However, in the hill states of the North East as well as in the hill districts of the present Assam, the implementation of the concept of Panchayati Raj can hardly be imagined. From the time immemorial, the tribes living the hills of North East India lived a nomadic life in search of new hills for jhum cultivation which was the sole means of their livelihood. As these hill tribes did not live in cluster villages and a tribal village sometimes consisted merely two or three households with a migratory nature in itself, the concept of Panchayati Raj for these hill tribes was neither viable nor imaginable. The framers of the constitution therefore conceptualized a different form of decentralised administration for the hill tribes of the North East in the form of the District Councils under the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the constitution. This paper will try study the system of decentralization as provided under the Schedule Six of the Indian constitution with reference the Karbi Anglong district of present Assam and also the role of this unique experiment towards the development of the district.

**Historical background of the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule:** The origin of process of the decentralization of administration for the tribals inhabiting in the hills of the then Assam can be traced back to the pre independent period. When the process of annexation of the hills



were completed, the British officials realizing the independent and virile nature of the hill tribes of the hills preferred not to interfere much in their traditional method of administration and decided to leave them as much free as possible in the domain of administration. There was a difference in the administration of the plains and the hills. In the hill areas, there was minimum administration and minimum interference with the powers and functions of the chiefs, village organizations and local authorities. The accepted official view of the British was that the Hills and Plains of Assam could never co-exist as a single entity.<sup>4</sup> The British realized that the complicated procedure adopted for the administration of the plains were unsuitable for the hills and under different Acts that were passed from time to time the policy of minimum interference in the hills was followed.

The Sixth Schedule of Government of India Act of 1935 classified the tribal areas of the then Assam into three parts, namely, Excluded, Partially Excluded and Frontier Areas. The Excluded Areas were the Naga Hills, the Lushai Hills and the North Cachar Hills. The Partially Excluded Areas were Garo Hills, the Mikir Hills (presently Karbi Anglong) and the British portions of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills other than the Shillong Municipality and Cantonment. The Frontier areas

were Balipara, Sadiya and Lakhimpur Tracts inhabited by tribes in the early stage of development. The administration of these Areas did not fall under the jurisdiction of the provincial government and they were under the direct control of the Governor of Assam.

On the eve of independence, the Cabinet Mission which came to India to facilitate the smooth transfer of power to the Indians made special recommendations for the administration of the tribal areas under the new administrative setup of would be independent India. The Mission suggested that an influential committee should be set up to make proposals for the administration of the tribal areas. Accordingly, the Constituent Assembly which was vested with the responsibility of framing a new Constitution of free India set up an Advisory committee in terms of Cabinet Mission settlement of 24 January 1947. This Committee appointed a Sub-Committee, known as the North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas committee with Gopinath Bordoloi as its Chairman. The Sub-Committee co-opted two members from each of the hill districts they visited. The Bordoloi Sub-Committee visited different tribal dominated areas of the region and after prolonged deliberations with the representatives of the different tribal groups suggested special status for the hill tribes of the then



Assam and the decentralization of powers to these tribal areas in the form of the District Councils. The Sub-Committee recommended that the hill districts shall be classified in to two, autonomous and non autonomous areas. The autonomous districts were the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, district excluding the town of Shillong , the Garo Hills district , the Lushai Hills district, the Naga Hills district, the North Cachar sub-division of the then Cachar district and the Mikir( now Karbi) Hills portion of then Nowgong and Sibsagar district. The Drafting Committee and the Constituent Assembly accepted the suggestions and accordingly all the above mentioned tribes were given special status as Hills tribes under Schedule Sixth of the constitution of independent India. All these tribes now enjoy the status of ST (Hills) under the constitution which has proved to be great safeguard not only for the preservation of the tribal identity and culture but also for the socio- economic development of these tribes. The most remarkable thing about the Bordoloi Report was the skill with which the Sub-Committee sought reconcile the hill people's demand for political autonomy with Assam Government's drive to integrate them with the plains.<sup>5</sup> Dr. B.R.Ambedkar, the Chairman of the Drafting Committee was a great protagonist of the inclusion of the Sixth Schedule in the constitution. While debating the special

provisions of the hill tribes of the then Assam, Dr. Ambedkar viewed that there is a difference between the tribals in Assam and the tribals of other places. The tribals in places other than Assam were more or less Hinduised and assimilated with the culture and civilization of the people among whom they lived. This was not the case with regard to the tribals of Assam. They did not adopt the mode life and manners of their neighbors.<sup>6</sup> He therefore strongly felt the need of special protection for these tribes and decentralization of powers to them.

#### **Decentralization vis-à-vis Karbi Anglong district:**

The Karbi Hills, politically known as Karbi Anglong is one of the two Hills districts of present Assam, the other being the N.C. Hills (Presently Dima Hasao). The Karbis, formerly known as the Mikirs are the major community of the district of Karbi Anglong and the district is in fact named after them. The Karbis call themselves as the 'Arleng' which means 'man'. They belong to the Mongoloid racial stock ethnically; while linguistically they belong to the 'Tibeto-Burman' group. Though mainly found in the district of Karbi Anglong, the Karbis also reside in the district of N.C. hills, beside in some parts of Golaghat, Nagaon, Kamrup districts and also in small pockets of Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh. They are also one of the major constituents of the tribal population of North-East



India in general and Assam in particular.

At the beginning, i.e. in 1951, when the districts were carved out (vide Govt. letter no-TAD/R/31/50/151, dt-13.4.51) were known as United Mikir and North Cachar Hills. The political region, so created earlier included parts of the then Cachar, United Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Nagaon and Shivsagar District. The District was granted a District Council under the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Indian constitution on June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1952. The present Karbi Anglong by then was a sub-division, namely, the Mikir Hills and this was further upgraded and renamed as Mikir Hills district with a full-fledged District Council in the year 1971 by separating North Cachar (presently Dima Hasao district) from it. Since 1976, the name of the district was changed to Karbi Anglong. Again in the year 1995, the Autonomous District Council was upgraded to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC.) Again as a result of the prolonged peace talks with

the United People's democratic Solidarity (UPDS) which was in ceasefire with the government and was in negotiations with the central government for an autonomous State, the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) was further given the status of Territorial Council and renamed as Karbi Anglong Autonomous Territorial Council. Of course the implementation of the provisions of the agreement will require the amendment of the provisions of the constitution.

#### **Powers of the District Council:**

Under the Sixth Schedule of the constitution, the Karbi Anglong District Council like other District Councils of the region under the same Schedule was a corporate body, having perpetual succession and a common seal with the right to sue and be sued. The Council consisted of both elected and nominated members (appointed by the Governor) and the strength of the District council was increased within regular intervals to cope-up with the requirement of the time.

The year wise strength of the Karbi Anglong District Council is given below:-

Year	Total membership	Elected members	Nominated members
1952	16	12	4
1957	16	14	2
1962	16	14	2
1970	24	20	4

As in the case of the other District Councils under the Sixth



Schedule, the Karbi Anglong District Council was entrusted with the following powers:

**Legislative Powers:** The Karbi Anglong District Council had the power to make laws on the allotment, occupation or use or the setting apart of land, other than reserved forests for the purpose of grazing or for residential or other non agricultural purposes likely to promote the interests of the inhabitants, management of any forest not being a state reserved forest, the use of any canal or water course for agricultural purposes, the regulation of the practice of jhum or other forms of shifting cultivation, the establishment of town or village councils and the determination of their powers and functions, any other matter relating to village or town administration including town or village police, public health and sanitation, the appointment or succession of chief or headman, the inheritance of property, marriage and divorce, social customs, money lending and trading by persons other than scheduled tribe.

**Executive powers:** As regards the executive powers, Karbi Anglong District Council had the powers to establish, construct or manage primary schools, dispensaries, markets, cattle pounds, ferries, fisheries, roads and waterways. It also had the power to determine the language and the manner in which primary education should be imparted in the primary schools within its jurisdiction.

**Taxation Powers:** The Karbi Anglong District Council had the power to assess and collect revenue, levy a tax on the lands and buildings, tolls on persons residing within the district, tax on professions, trades, calling and employment, tax on the entry of goods, taxes on the maintenance of schools, dispensaries and roads, licenses or leases for the purpose of prospecting or for extracting minerals.

The District Council also had the right of a share in the royalties derives by the state Government from the licences or leases granted for the purpose of prospecting or for extraction of minerals. The rate of sharing is determined by mutual agreement by the parties concerned.

**Judicial Powers:** The Karbi Anglong District Council was also entrusted with certain judicial powers. The Council had and still has the power to constitute village courts for the trial of suits and cases in which both the parties are tribals. It may appoint suitable persons to be the members of the village courts. It may also appoint such officers as may be necessary for the execution of laws made by the District Council. The District Council is a court of appeal in respect of all suits and cases triable by the village council. No other court except the High Court and the Supreme Court of India has jurisdiction over such suits and cases.



**Functions Entrusted to District Council:**

When Meghalay was granted Autonomous Statehood under Article 244(A) of the Indian Constitution on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1970, the Mikir Hills (now Karbi Anglong) and North Cachar (now Dima Hasao) were given the option either to remain in the state Assam or join the state of Meghalaya . To retain them within Assam, the Government of Assam made several costly promises. One of them was the transfer of more functions and powers together with necessary finance and personnel. In pursuance with this policy all the district development departments together with their personnel and finance were placed under the administrative control of the District council with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> June 1970 (Vide-Govt letter No TDR/R/153/70 Dated Shillong the 30th May, 1970).It should be noted that these functions were entrusted to the District Council and not delegated to the District Council. If the District Council failed to discharge its duties these functions could be taken away at any time by the State Government. The District Council had no power to legislate on these subjects. While performing these functions, the District Council had to act as the agent of the State Government. The agent was to free to act in the way it liked. So the condition imposed indicates the subordinate position occupied by the District council in regard to these functions. Again, that state

had no right to entrust these functions to the District Council against its wish.

All together 16 development departments were transferred to the District Council. These included- agriculture , public works , flood control, minor irrigation, soil conservation , animal husbandry, diary & milk supply, forests, fisheries, roads and buildings , general-education, cultural programme, water supply health and family planning social welfare cottage industries , community development programme and panchayat. The officers and staff of the transferred departments were under the immediate administrative control of the District council though they were the servants of the State Government.

**District Council Finances:** The District Council derived its income from various sources, land revenue, forests, administration of justice, taxes on animals, vehicles and boats, taxations on professions, trades, grants in aids from the Governments, loans and market taxes etc.

The major source of the District Council was from forests which were more than 65% of the total income. Another major source of income was from tax on entry of goods in to the market for sale. The grants were given for specific purposes such as development of roads and communications ,, development of rural water supply , rural communications , rural health



and sanitation , maintenance of elementary schools , improvement of transport facilities , improvement of tribal culture and maintenance of forest development schemes and so on .

But, a time when the young elements with high political ambitions started to get prominence in Karbi politics. Alleging apathy on the part of the State Government towards the District Council, these Young Turks of the Karbi Politics under the banners of Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC-formed on 17<sup>th</sup> May 1986) and Karbi Anglong and NC Hills Autonomous State demand Committee (KANCASDCOM-formed on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1986) started demanding more decentralization of powers in the form of autonomous statehood under the provision of the Article 244(A) of the Indian Constitution for Karbi Anglong and NC Hills. The protracted autonomy movement that followed in district culminated in to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the representatives of the agitating parties of the district, the representatives of the State and central Government in New Delhi on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1995. The agreement followed with necessary constitutional amendments upgraded the Karbi Anglong District Council (KADC) to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC).

**Powers of the KAAC:** As per the provisions of the MoU, the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council along with its counterpart of the NC Hills was given additional executive, legislate and financial powers –

**Executive Powers:** The KACC was given the executive authority over 30 departments (including already existing 16 departments). These included, (1) industry (2) animal husbandry (3) forest (4) agriculture (5) PWD (6) sericulture (7) education from primary to higher secondary level and adult education (8) cultural affairs (9)soil conservation (10) co-operation (11) fisheries (12) panchayat and rural development including DRDA (13) handloom and textile (14) health and family welfare (15) public health engineering (16) irrigation (17) social welfare (18) flood control (19) sports and youth welfare (20) weight and measure (21) food and civil supplies (22) town and country planning (23) college education-general including library services , district museum & archeology (24) land reforms (25) publicly/public relations (26) printing and stationary (27) tourism (28) transport (29) excise and (30) finance including sales tax on purchase of goods other than news papers , excise , professional tax.

**Legislative Powers:** The MoU of 1995 vested legislative powers to the KAAC on the following subjects in addition to the subjects already available to it under the



Sixth Schedule of the Constitution - (1) industries (2) communication-roads, bridges, ferries and other means of communication not specified in the list (3) preservation, protection and improvement of stock and prevention of animal diseases, veterinary training and practice and cattle pounds (4) primary and secondary education (5) agriculture including agricultural education and research, protection against pests and prevention of plant diseases (6) fisheries (7) water supplies, irrigation and canals, drainage and embankments (7) social security and social insurance (8) flood control schemes for protection of village ,paddy fields , markets, town etc.(not technical nature) (8) theaters and dramatic performance (9) public health and sanitation, hospitals and dispensaries (10) minor irrigation (11) trade and commerce and (12) libraries, museums and other similar institutions controlled and financed by the state .

**Financial Powers:** As per the provisions of the MoU of 1995, the State Government before the beginning of every financial year has to give an indication to the Council of the overall financial allocations for it. The Council will therefore prepare and pass its own budget and forward it to the State Government for being included in the overall State budget. Ordinarily no change is made in the budget as proposed by the KAAC. However,

if for any reasons it becomes necessary to do so, the Council would have to be consulted and would have to be explained the reasons for the change<sup>7</sup>

**Karbi Anglong Autonomous Territorial Council (KAATC):** On 25<sup>th</sup> November 2011, the Karbi insurgent outfit United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS) which was pursuing peace negotiates with the Government after formally entering in a ceasefire agreement in 2006 signed a tripartite Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) with the representatives of the Central and State Governments in New Delhi. With a view to expedite process of development in the district the MoS has envisaged a new formula for more decentralization powers to the Karbi Council by upgrading the existing Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council(KAAC) to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Territorial Council (KAATC)<sup>8</sup>

The MoS states that the "Government of India and the Government of Assam have been making persistent efforts to fulfill the legitimate aspirations of the people of Karbi Anglong regarding all round development including preservation and promotion of their cultural identity and language, while economically facilitating devolution of the development process to bring the fruits of education and economic development to the people."<sup>9</sup>



As per the provisions of the MoS the existing Autonomous district under the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Constitution will be reorganized in to four administrative districts for better administrative and developmental administration. The Proposed KAATC will have 50 Members Council out of which 44 will be elected and 6 to be nominated by the Governor of Assam. The responsibility of conducting the election of the KAATC will be entrusted to the State Election Commission. The Chief and the Deputy Chief of the KAATC will have the status equivalent to the Cabinet Minister and other Executive Members will have the status equivalent to the Minister of State of Assam for protocol purposes within the jurisdiction of the KAATC.

The proposed KAATC will be vested with executive and legislative powers on the following subjects--

1. Animal Husbandry & Veterinary
2. Forests ,other than reserved forests
3. PWD
4. Sericulture
5. Education – (a) primary and secondary (b) higher secondary including vocational training (c) adult education (d) college education (general)
6. Cultural Affairs
7. Soil Conservation
8. Co-operation
9. Fisheries
10. Panchayat Raj and Rural Development including DRDA
11. Handloom & Textile
12. Health and family Welfare, Public Health and Sanitation, hospital and dispensaries
13. PHE ,Water supply and water

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- storage ,water power up to 5 Mega watt
14. Irrigation & Minor Irrigation , Canals , Drainage and embankments
15. Social Welfare
16. Sports and Youth Welfare
17. Weight & Measure
18. Food & Civil Supplies
19. Agriculture, including agriculture education & research, protection against pest & preservation of plant disease
20. Publicity & public relation
21. Printing & Stationary
22. Tourism
23. Urban Development –town and country planning
24. Tribal Research Institute –controlled and financed by the state government
25. Land & Revenue, Land Reforms
26. Planning & Development
27. Municipal Corporation, Improvement Trust, District Boards and other local authorities
28. Welfare of Hill Tribes
29. Markets & fairs
30. Lotteries
31. Statistics
32. Intoxicating liquors, opium and derivatives
33. Labour and employment
34. registration of births and deaths
35. Industries – small ,cottage & rural industry
36. Transport
37. Flood control (not technical nature )
38. Theaters and dramatic performances, entertainment and amusement
38. Libraries, museums and other similar institutions controlled and financed by the state.

**Development provisions under the MoS:** It is provided in the MoS that (A) Concerted efforts will be made by the Government of Assam and State Government in



collaboration with the KAATC to improve the level of general and technical education including medical education. An Engineering College and a Medical College will be established in Karbi Anglong. <sup>10</sup>

(B) Immediate up gradation of district hospitals and PHCs will be taken by the newly restructured authority with assistance from the Government of India and Government of Assam. (C) The Government of India and the Government of Assam will encourage the KAATC to take up new projects in the area of Health Care and Education including professional and higher technical education to achieve the potential of Karbi Anglong emerging as a regional healthcare and educational hub.

In addition to the above provisions, the MoS also contains clause for additional economic package meant for the proposed KAATC. These include –

(A) The Government will initiate steps for undertaking a feasibility study of a direct road link between Diphu and Umpanai (both in Karbi Anglong) as a High Way linking NH-36 (Karbi Anglong) and NH-44 (Meghalaya).

(B) Construction of roads for improvement of road connectivity in Karbi Anglong will be considered under existing schemes in phased manner on submission of Detailed Project Report (DPR) by the KAATC.

(C) Council will submit projects for water supply to Diphu and other notified towns in Karbi Anglong which will be considered expeditiously for implementation.

(D) A special economic package of Rs 350 Crores (Rs 70 crores per annum) over and above the Plan fund over the next five years will be provided to the KAATC to undertake special projects that will be proposed by the Council.

It is also provided in the MoS that the preparation of Five Year plan and Annual Plan by the Council for all the subjects after the proposed restructuring will be a major exercise. To enable the restructured Council to handle this responsibility effectively, the State Government Will initiate steps to make available adequate number of experienced officers to the Council for the purpose. Besides, the Ministry of Home Affairs shall co-ordinate the task of capacity building in the Council to deal effectively with enlarged responsibilities relating to the transferred subjects by imparting suitable training to officers and staff of the Council. A sum of Rs 10 crores will be made available as one time grant for the purpose.

**A peep in to actual development in Karbi Anglong:** The main purpose of decentralization of powers under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution was to ensure rapid socio-economic



development of the hills areas of the North Eastern region having any entirely rural background. It has been more than sixty years that Karbi Anglong has been entrusted with the District Council and later Autonomous Council. The time is more than sufficient to evaluate the achievement or failure of the experiment of decentralization in terms of the development of the region. No doubt some concerted efforts were made by the local government to expedite the process of development in the district, the success of these efforts are often doubted, debated, propagated and many a time repudiated. Despite frequent allegations of wastage, mismanagement, corruption,

nepotism and favoritism in the Council the achievement of the KAAC in some of the fields of development can not be overlooked. It is a matter of common knowledge that the roads in Karbi Anglong district are far better than the roads of the plain districts of Assam. The NH-36 and NH-39 passing through the district are glaring examples of the better roads condition of the district, though the some roads particularly in Hamren sub-division are still in dilapidated condition.

Apart from roads, Health and Educations are two of the important indicator to assess the development of any region. The following records will give an idea in this regard-

List of Medical Institutions under Jt. Director of Health Services, Karbi Anglong District –

A	Civil Hospital	2(two)
B	Community Health Centre or 30 Beded Rural Hospital	5(five)
C	Primary Health Centre	26(twenty six)
D	State Dispensary	7 (seven)
E	Subsidiary Health Centre	7(seven)
F	Leprosy Control Unit	2(two)
G	Medical Sub-Centre	9(nine)

As far as literacy filed is concerned, as per the census record of 2011, the literary rate of the district is 73.52%. During the census of 2001 the literary rate in the district was 58.63%. It may be mentioned that when the district was carved out in the year 1951, the literary rate of the district was pity

5%. The record shows that over the years the KAAC has done commendable work as far as the literary record in the district is concerned. A large number of educational institutions have been established even in the remotest corners of the district. The

following table bears a testimony in this regard –

List of Educational Institutions in Karbi Anglong –

Edu institution	Govt.	Provincialized	Recognized
L.P.School		1413	29(Karbi Medium)
M.E	14	172	140
High	1	77	194
H.S.	2	9	-
College	1	5	5

All the recognized educational institutions receive regular financial assistance from the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council. The financial assistance is provided from the plan head of the KAAC. It may be noted that in 2008, the KAAC undertook altogether four colleges of the district under the special deficit system of management and provide salaries to the teaching and non teaching staff on a scale formulated by the KAAC for these colleges.

Coming to the question of substantial development in the district, a close observation gives the impression that the decentralization of powers to the Council authorities under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the constitution has failed to fetch desired dividends. The economy of the district is still entirely dependent on the grants provided by the state and the central government. The complexity and dillydally by the state government in releasing the development funds meant for the district is often alleged by the

KAAC authorities. The authorities at Diphu often attribute their failures in implementing the development of projects to the failure of the State Government in releasing the fund for the KAAC at appropriate time. The district lags far behind in terms of infrastructural development despite possessing enormous potentialities in this regard. The untapped hydel power, mineral resources, virgin forests and water resources of the district could have been utilized in a far better manner.

**Conclusion:** It is often said that decentralization of powers leads to decentralization of corruption. Karbi Anglong is not an exception in this regard. Mismanagement of Council funds and flouting all government norms by the authorities in ensuring benefits to the favorite sections are rampant in the KAAC. The huge inflow of funds for developmental purposes seems to have given rise to a contractorist culture with some people changing their destiny over



the night. Personal development rather than public development has assumed prominence among these sections. The nexus between the ruling clique and the contracturist element has pushed the developmental scenario of the district to the backburner to a great extent .Another important factor that has substantially affected the development process in the district is the vexed insurgency problem which brought a sense of insecurity not only among the common people but among officials related with the implementation of the development projects in the district. The officials served with huge extortion demands by different insurgent groups often flee from the district hampering the development projects to a considerable extent.

But against all odds it must be accepted that decentralization is the not only the need of the time but it is the lone way for involving the tribal groups in the process of nation building and ensuring an equitable development of the country as a whole. To check the different drawbacks of decentralization a proper check and balance mechanism has to be evolved instead of adopting a centralizing tendency. The fact cannot be overlooked that decentralization is the effective method of deconcentrated administrative organ for relieving administrative congregation, since over centralized governance did not have a way to find out what needs to be done for different places and what needs and desires of the people are to be met.



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7. Section 3 .III of the Memorandum of Understanding of 1995
8. It will come in to force only after necessary Constitutional Amendment is affected in the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Constitution
9. Section 1.1 of Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) between Govt. of Indian, Govt. of Assam and the UPDS of 2011
10. Section 5.1 of the MoS between Govt. of India, Govt. of Assam and the UPDS of 2011