

## **Manipur: A case for asymmetric federalism**

### **What is the issue?**

The dissolution of Article 370 in 2019 and the integrationist approach followed by Manipur government were in lines with the majoritarian idea of homogenous nation opposing the asymmetric federalism

### **Why is it said that India has asymmetric federalism?**

- There are some differences in the way some States and other constituent units of the Indian Union relate to the Centre.
- This creates a notable asymmetry in the way Indian federalism works.
- Article 370, Art 371, Art 371A to Art 371H contains special provisions for certain states
- The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution contains provisions for the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram through autonomous councils

*Even though States are sovereign in their prescribed legislative field, and their executive power is co-extensive with their legislative powers, "the powers of the States are not coordinate with the Union".*

*Hence Indian federalism is often described as 'quasi-federal'.*

### **What is the case of Manipur?**

- **Article 371C** of the Constitution contains special provisions with respect to Manipur
  1. The President may provide for the constitution of a committee of elected members from the Hill areas in the Assembly
  2. It entrust "special responsibility" to the Governor to ensure its proper functioning.
- Recent attempts by Manipur government has been viewed as a move to delegitimise the demand for constitutional asymmetry
- **The Manipur (Hill Areas) Autonomous District Council (Amendment) Bill, 2021** seeks to increase the autonomy by increasing

the membership of the six district councils to 31 members each and securing more powers to the councils

- The government stalled the introduction and passage of the bill terming it to be sensitive
- Induction of nine Assembly members from the valley areas into the Hill Areas Committee is seen as a direct assault on the constitutional protection conferred under Article 371C
- Recent attempts of declaring areas around Chivu in the Indo-Myanmar border as a protected site and replacement of one of the three controversial monoliths, invoking the Forest Reserve Act are matters of concern
- Also the hill areas attracted barely 1.91% out of Rs. 21,900 crore budgetary expenditure of Manipur from 2017-18 to 2020-21

### **What does this call for?**

- Apprehensions that tribal “self-rule” would leverage “tribalstan” or “communistan” and threaten India’s security should not promote a homogenous nation
- Sincere commitment to promote tribal development, identity and culture as envisaged in Art.371C is needed
- Institutionally tribal distinctiveness should be accommodated to promote the State’s integrity

**Source: The Hindu**

