

Meghalaya High Court Quashes ST Certificate Rule for GHADC Polls



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The Meghalaya High Court has set aside a controversial notification that made possession of a Scheduled Tribe (ST) certificate mandatory for candidates contesting the upcoming elections to the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC).

Delivering the judgment on March 10, Justice H. S. Thangkhiew ruled that the February 17, 2026 notification issued by the GHADC Executive Committee lacked legal authority and did not follow the procedure required under the **Assam and Meghalaya Autonomous Districts (Constitution of District Councils) Rules, 1951**.

The court observed that the notification effectively barred non-tribal voters and candidates from participating in the council elections without any legislative backing.

In the order, Justice Thangkhiew noted:

“By the impugned notification... the same has effectively barred non-tribal voters from voting or contesting in the upcoming elections to the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council.”

The court further emphasised that eligibility for membership is already defined under the existing rules. Citing Rule 8 of the 1951 Rules, the judgment stated:

“A person shall not be qualified to be elected as a member of the District Council unless he... is entitled to vote at the election of members of the District Council of that autonomous district.”

The judgment also highlighted that historically both tribal and non-tribal residents have participated in the council’s electoral process. The court noted that:

“Since the inception of the District Council... non-tribals who have featured in the voters list, have freely voted and served as members of the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council till date.”

Justice Thangkhiew held that any change to such rules would require a proper legislative process, including approval by the District Council and assent from the Governor.

“The impugned notification... to have effect in law would also have to pass the rigours of Rule 72... and finally for assent before the Governor.”

Concluding that the required process had not been followed, the court ruled:

“The impugned notification therefore cannot pass legal scrutiny and as such, is accordingly set aside and quashed.”

The order came amid heightened tensions in parts of West Garo Hills during the nomination phase of the GHADC elections. According to reports, clashes and incidents of violence were reported in areas of the plains belt following protests over the eligibility rule. [Two people were killed](#) in police firing in the Chibinang area after security forces attempted to disperse a violent crowd during curfew hours, while vandalism and arson were also reported in some localities.

Authorities [imposed curfew](#) in parts of the district and suspended mobile internet services temporarily as additional security forces were deployed to maintain order.

The GHADC elections are scheduled for April 10, with the nomination process continuing under heightened security.

Reference: https://assamtimes.org/sites/default/files/211100000932026_1.pdf

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