

**POLITICS OF PRESSURE GROUPS IN MEGHALAYA
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO STUDENT AND
YOUTH ORGANISATIONS**

ABSTRACT



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INTRODUCTION

The politics of pressure groups is not a novel political phenomenon. However, it has been a matter of academic enquiry since the 1950s. Thus, it appears that the study of pressure groups is only a twentieth century development. Its importance was realised with the academic discovery that in a modern society, there are many different types of groups other than political parties which influence the political process of the state. Therefore, it was considered convenient to study such groups by bringing them under the terminology of “pressure groups”. A pressure group is generally understood as an organised social group whose members share common attitudes, beliefs or interests and try to promote their particularistic interests by influencing public policies.

In this modern world of today, no society is free from pressure groups, in some societies they are more effective while in others they are less effective, however, they seem to be very much a part of every society be it democracy or dictatorship.

The present study is on pressure groups with special reference to student and youth organisations of Meghalaya and the period of data collection is from June 2001 to March 2009.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In order to understand the politics of pressure groups with particular reference to student and youth organisations, the first step is to examine the existing literature on this theme. It appears that A.F. Bentley, an American political scientist, was the first to emphasise the role of pressure groups. His book, *The Process of Government*, published in 1908, was the first systematic study of pressure groups. He argued that the governmental process is essentially a process of the interaction of the various groups that operate in politics and therefore, in order to understand the process of Government, one must understand the role of groups in politics. D.B. Truman in his book, *The Governmental Process*, defines pressure groups as, “any group that on the basis of one or more shared attitudes makes certain claims upon other groups in the society for the establishment, maintenance or enhancement of forms of behaviour that are implied in the shared attitudes. The shared attitudes constitute the interests”.

Many scholars, both Western and Indian have carried out several studies on pressure and interest groups, to cite a few are, Peter Odegard, *Pressure Politics: The Story of the Anti Saloon League* (1928); H. Eckstein, *Pressure Group Politics*, London (1960); Myron Weiner, *The Politics of Scarcity – Public Pressure and Political Response in India* (1962); V.O. Key, Jr., *Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups* (1964); N.H. Brasher, *Studies in Britain Government* (Second edition) (1965); Abraham Holtzman, *Interest Groups and Lobbying* (1966); Francis G. Castles, *Pressure Groups and Political Cultural* (1967). It can be seen that a number of articles have been written in S.M. Lipset (ed.), *Student Politics*, (1967) on the following themes such as, on the approaches to the study of student political behaviour, the articles are as follows, S.M. Lipset, “University Students and Politics in Underdeveloped Countries”; E. Wight Bakke, “Roots and Soil of Student Activism”; P.G. Altbach, “Students and Politics”; George Z.F. Bereday, “Student Unrest on Four Continents: Montreal, Ibadan, Warsaw and Rangoon”; Glaucio A.D. Soares, “The Active Few: Student Ideology and Participation in Developing Countries” and Metta Spencer, “Professional, Scientific and Intellectual Students in India” (1967). Then comes P.G. Altbach (ed.), *Turmoil and Transition: Higher Education and Student Politics in India* (1968); A.Cockburn and R. Blackburn (eds.), *Student Power*, (1969); G.S. Mansukhani (ed.), *Student Power in India*, (1975); Babulal Fadia, *Pressure Groups in Indian Politics* (1980); Indrani Barua, *Pressure Groups in Assam* (1990); L.P. Misquitta, *Pressure Groups and Democracy in India* (1991); P. Malngiang, *Students and Politics in Meghalaya* (1994); A.C. Sinha (ed.), *Youth Movement in North-East India* (1995); Meeta Deka, *Student Movements in Assam* (1996); M.N. Karna (ed.), *Social Movements in North-East India* (1998); A.K. Baruah (ed.), *Student Power in North-East India* (2002).

In Meghalaya, some research work had been carried out on the activities of the student organisations. P. Malngiang in his book, *Students and Politics in Meghalaya*, examined the role of various student organisations prevalent in the State of Meghalaya. Nikhlesh Kumar and A.K. Nongkynrih in their article, “Khasi Students’ Union – A Preliminary Enquiry” have highlighted the nature of the student organisations with particular reference to the KSU and the functioning of the Union within the political context of the state. However, very little has

been written on the youth organisations of Meghalaya including FKJGP. One available literature is Pascal Malngiang's article titled, "The Federation of Khasi-Jaintia and Garo People (FKJGP)". It highlights the role of the FKJGP as a social organisation and as a pressure group in the State politics of Meghalaya. Another article on the youth is "Jaintia Youth Problems" by Emathus Nongtdu where he attempts to highlight the problems faced by the youth of Jaintia Hills.

Another article on student and youth movement which has been published recently is, "Students and Youth Organisations in Meghalaya", written by Pascal Malngiang. In this article, the author made an attempt to examine the historical development of the student and youth organisations in Meghalaya, taking into account their professed objectives, issues raised by them and pressure tactics adopted by them. However, none of the authors mentioned studied student and youth organisations as pressure groups. In this context, it is to be noted that the focus of our work is to study the student and youth organisations in Meghalaya, viz., the KSU, the JSU, the GSU and the FKJGP as pressure groups.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

From the review of the existing literature, it appears that since the 1980s, student and youth organisations of Meghalaya have actively participated in the political process of the State. These organisations have sought to generate public debate on several policies of the Government of Meghalaya and have even exercised their hegemony for mass mobilisation by shaping public opinion according to their own perceptions. Apparently, the major student organisations, viz., the KSU, the JSU, the GSU and the youth organisation, viz., the FKJGP have more or less similar objectives. It may be noted, however, that the allegiance of these organisations to their respective ethnic communities adds a complicated dimension to the politics of pressure groups in Meghalaya.

In the context of the above, the present work has taken up a study of the process of emergence of student and youth organisations as pressure groups in Meghalaya as well as

their influence on policy decisions of the Government of Meghalaya. The study has also focused on the interaction of these organisations with political parties and on the popular perceptions about the issues raised by these organisations.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study was carried out with an attempt to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) To analyse whether the issues raised by students and youth organisations are reflected in the policy decisions of the Government of Meghalaya in order to evaluate the effectiveness of pressure group politics in Meghalaya.
- 2) To examine the similarities and differences in the perceptions of the student and youth bodies on various issues.
- 3) To examine the nature of the relationship that exists between the regional and national political parties of Meghalaya on the one hand and the student and youth organisations on the other and to analyse the responses of political parties and a cross-section of the public to the issues raised.
- 4) To examine the major issues raised by student and youth organisations of Meghalaya from time to time in order to highlight the similarities and differences in their stand vis-à-vis the Government of Meghalaya.
- 5) To examine the similarities or otherwise of the content of these programmes with the demands of some major student movements of the world in the 1960s.

METHODOLOGY

The work was based on both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources of the work include the Constitutions of students' organisations, memoranda submitted by the student and youth organisations to the State Government and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Meghalaya. Informal discussions were also held with prominent political leaders of regional and national parties of Meghalaya, one from each political party except the CPI (Communist Party of India), because in the contemporary political scenario of Meghalaya, the CPI has not been able to intervene significantly in the politics of students. Informal discussions were also conducted with the Presidents and General Secretaries of each of these student and youth organisations as well as fifty citizens who are not political activists, to

understand the perception of ordinary citizens about the politics of student and youth organisations. An attempt was made to ensure representation of different ethnic communities of the State.

The secondary sources include books, dissertations, theses, articles, journals, newspaper reports and so on. This work aims at presenting a description of the major issues raised and its implications for policies and decisions of the Government. In the process, it examines the politics of pressure groups in Meghalaya with special reference to student and youth organisations.

CHAPTERISATION

The study has been divided into six following chapters.

CHAPTER-I: INTRODUCTION: PRESSURE GROUPS-A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Chapter one begins with a conceptual understanding of pressure groups and then tries to examine the politics of student and youth organisations as pressure groups in India today. It may be noted that the study of pressure groups was initiated by the group approach to politics introduced by Arthur F. Bentley in his book, *The Process of Government*, published in 1908 and later by David B. Truman in his book, *The Governmental Process*, published in 1951. A very interesting point to be noted in this context is that, the term ‘pressure group’ was neither used by Bentley nor Truman, though initiated by them. It was perhaps, used for the first time by Peter Odegard in his book, *Pressure Politics: The Story of the Anti – Saloon League*, published in 1928.

In this context, it is interesting to examine the Western theories on pressure groups and their applicability to Indian conditions. A.F. Bentley was of the opinion that no interest could be considered to exist unless it manifested itself in group action, he was more concerned of the interest of the group as a whole rather than individual or national interest. David Truman’s “disturbance theory”, envisage people as being stimulated to organise as their relationship with other groups or institutions undergoes disturbance or alteration. He argued that “the increasing complexity of our society and the rapidity with which changes have occurred – create greater intensity as well as frequency of disturbances – have made the association the

most characteristic and pervasive sort of political interest group". John C. Calhoun's theory of "concurrent majority" envisages men with conflicting and opposite interests' unite together to form a majority group to promote the common good of all. However, this theory based on numerical majority seldom succeeds, for example, Government based on numerical majority seldom lasts long, such as, the coalition Government of Meghalaya as observed in the recent years. Then comes the "exchange theory" propounded by Robert Salisbury which postulates that individuals enter into inter-personal relationships because they derive some benefit from the relationship in exchange - so it seems to be a give and take policy and the success of the group depends on the leader who initiated the formation of the group. Mancur Olson Jr. in his book, *The Logic of Collective Action*, (1968), propounded the by-product and special interest theories, his theory of collective action revolves around self-interest and personal economic aggrandisement. Self-interest is a human weakness which stems from the fact that each individual has personal goals to achieve apart from the joint goals of the whole group. Thus, here men enter into groups not for the benefit of the group as a whole but for their own individual benefits. Some Western thinkers, such as, James Madison, Theodore Lowi, Robert Paul Wolff and E.E. Schattschneider criticise the pressure groups proliferation as bad for the democratic process or a good government. In India, Olson's special interest theory is more applicable because of the economic conditions and the permit and quota systems prevailing in the country since independence.

Furthermore, this chapter has highlighted some definitions of pressure groups given by different scholars, both Western and Indian. H. Zeigler defines it as, "an organised aggregate which seeks to influence the content of governmental decisions without attempting to place its members in formal governmental capacities". V.O. Key, Jr., stressed on the political character of the pressure group. According to him, "such groups while they may call themselves non-political are engaged in politics, theirs is a politics of policy in the main". F.F. Castle defines it as, "any group attempting to bring about political change whether through government activity or not and which is not a political party in the sense of being represented at that particular time, in the legislative body". An Indian scholar observes that, "a pressure group is a group that has a clearly identifiable formal structure where the members are linked to each other in terms of their common attitude or interest and it seeks to influence the process of public decision making". C.N. Somarajan observes that, pressure group is, "a group organised

for promoting the interests of its members by influencing the government without being part of it". Babulal Fadia is of the opinion that, "pressure groups are interest groups as well as influence groups, they are private associations formed to influence public policy".

After summing up the definitions given by a number of scholars, it may be observed that pressure groups are those groups which are organised and have a formal structure whose members share common attitudes or interests and collectively work together to realise their particularistic interest, by pressuring the government to make policies favourable to their interest. Last but not the least, the pressure groups make use of pressure tactics to pressurise the government for conceding to their demands. However, the effectiveness of a pressure group can be judged by the extent of governmental response to its demands.

In this context, it may be observed that interest groups and pressure groups are, in fact, different terms used for the same group. In any society there exists a number of interests or 'shared attitudes', some are organised, others are not. Therefore, an interest group is a "shared-attitude group that makes certain claims upon other groups in the society". It is to be noted that for those groups which exert pressure, the term 'pressure group' is generally used, e.g. Trade Unions and manufacturer's associations are interest groups when they interact with each other over questions like hours of work and wages. But when they try to influence the content of legislation by acting through or upon the institution of government, i.e., when they assume direct political significance, they become pressure groups. Therefore, in a way, all interest groups may eventually become pressure groups. Furthermore, this chapter examines the differences between the political parties and the pressure groups. A major distinction between the pressure group and the political party is in the focal points of their attention. The political party is mainly concerned with government and seeks to staff the major policy-making positions in Government. Pressure groups on the other hand, are spokesmen for sectional interests, are mainly concerned with particular issues of public policy affecting their own interest.

In this context, it has been observed that the Student Union since the 1990s are referred to as NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) in newspapers and journals in Meghalaya. A point to be noted here is that NGOs are totally different from a Student Union. It is a non-profit, voluntary citizen's group which is organised on a local, national or international level. NGOs do not promote a particular section of the society but are organised

around specific issues, such as, human rights, health, environment, etc. which affects the whole of humanity, whereas, the Student Union on the other hand, tries to promote the students just as the Trade Union tries to promote the working class, to provide them with the best possible working conditions and wages. A point to be noted is that, both Student Union and Trade Union becomes pressure groups when they try to influence the policy decision of the Government for their own respective advantage. Thus, it appears that pressure groups are a universal phenomenon in the sense that such groups may be found in both developed democratic countries like USA, Britain, etc. as well as in dictatorial regimes and in developing countries like India. However, pressure groups are found to be most active in developed countries because the needs and interests of such societies are too many to be handled adequately by primary groups and political parties alone. In all the under-developed societies of Asia and Africa, barring a few exceptions like Singapore and Malaysia, few pressure groups are found to be active.

In India, the study of pressure groups is gradually gaining ground but, it seems that such groups in India do not operate with as much vigour as in developed democratic countries. The politics of pressure groups in India seems to be influenced by caste, religion, language, cultural inheritance and region and thus, the pressure groups in India combine in themselves, elements of traditionalism as well as of modernity. It has been observed that in India, group pressure has been directed towards influencing the administration and implementation of policy rather than towards its formulation. These groups seem to have succeeded in forestalling certain government actions and in modifying policy rather than in initiating it. For example, in the State of Meghalaya, the State Government in October, 1998 raised the age of superannuation of State government employees from 58 to 60 years which came into force from 25th September 1998. However, this order was opposed by the pressure groups, especially, the student and youth organisations which pressurised the government to revoke it. Ultimately in December 1999, the State Government had to concede to this pressure and passed an order to reduce the age of superannuation of State Government employees from 60 to 58 years and this came into force from 31st March 2000. Thus, it may be observed that in India, though most pressure groups lack the kind of maturity and influence that have been acquired by groups in the western developed societies, it appears that student and youth

organisations have the potential to play an important role in the politics of the country as a whole.

The student organisations are only one among a multiplicity of pressure groups operating in India and it has been observed that they raised issues, both campus oriented as well as societal ones. Moreover, it seems that their role is becoming increasingly important. As Lipset has stated, it would be an error to ignore students in any effort to analyse the future of politics, whether domestic or international scene. In this context, it has been observed that in recent years, some student groups in India have succeeded in gaining considerable political mileage by not only emerging as receptive and hegemonic sections of the intelligentsia but have even transcended their role as pressure groups by taking the shape of full-fledged political parties. For example, In Assam, the agitation led by the All Assam Students Union in collaboration with the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad ultimately culminated in the formation of Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), which captured political power in the State under the leadership of some prominent student leaders.

It has also been observed that youth organisations constitute an important category of pressure groups operating in the country today. In Meghalaya, the non-student youths have played an active role and have rendered support to the activities of the various student groups. In fact, the success of various agitations led by the students is due to the support extended by such youth groups of various localities. This indicates the important role played by the youth organisations in alliance with student organisations in modern society. This chapter also tries to bring out the differences between the youth and the student organisations, although the fact remains that both act as pressure groups in the state politics of today.

It is also seen that student and youth organisations have been studied interchangeably, however, there is a difference between them, students constitute a minority of the group called youth, students constitute those studying in colleges and universities whereas youth constitute a heterogeneous members of society on the basis of age criteria and beyond this there is nothing in common amongst them, they have a close affinity with other groups in the society having different labels.

CHAPTER-II: STUDENT ORGANISATIONS AS PRESSURE GROUPS IN MEGHALAYA

Beginning with a brief background of the formation and organisational structures of the Khasi Student Union (KSU), the Jaintia Student Union (JSU) and the Garo Student Union (GSU), this chapter has tried to analyse the issues raised by these student organisations and has also examined the similarities and differences in their perceptions on various issues.

In Meghalaya, the politics of pressure groups is a recent development. However, it may be noted that student organisations existed even before the formation of the State of Meghalaya. It appears that the visit of Subhas Chandra Bose and Maulana A.K. Azad to Shillong, inspired the youth of this area to form a new representative organisation, viz., The Shillong Students' Federation in 1938. On 30th July 1955, another Student Organisation called Khasi Students' Association (KSA) was formed and it lasted till 1970. In the 1960s, another organisation called Hills Students' Union (HSU) was formed. However, this union lasted only for a short period. During this decade, the Khasi-Jaintia Students' Union (KJSU) was formed in 1968. Unlike the KSA, the KJSU took active part in the Hill Movement along with the hill state leaders. Then on 23rd May 1970, just after two months of formation of the State of Meghalaya, a student organisation called Meghalaya Students' Association (MSA) was formed. Then in 1975, the Meghalaya Students' Union (MSU) was formed, although this union did not last long. However, it may be noted in this context, that in the MSU, one of the main constituents was the Khasi Students' Union (KSU), which was formed on 30th March 1978.

With regards to the Garo Hills, the first student organisation was the All Assam Garo Students' Union (AAGSU) which was formed during the Hill State Movement. Then in June-July 1987, the Garo Students' Union (GSU) was formed and the move for the formation of the GSU came from the Shillong Achik Students' Union (SASU). In the Jaintia Hills, the first students' organisation which emerged was the Khad-ar-Daloi Students' Union (KDSU) and it lasted till 1971. The Jaintia Students' Union (JSU) was formed in 1970 and the KSU, the GSU and the JSU are the most active student organisations operating in the State today.

In this chapter, the Constitutions of the three student organisations, i.e., the KSU, the JSU and the GSU have been discussed in detail and the major issues being raised by these student organisations have also been analysed. An attempt has also been made to examine the similarities and differences among these three student organisations in their perceptions on various issues.

An interesting point to be noted here is that these three student organisations represent their respective communities, each professing to protect and promote their respective communities. Thus, in contrast with student politics in the rest of India, politics of Student Unions in Meghalaya is mainly marked by ethnicity. The reason for this lies in the fact that in Meghalaya, class polarisation has not taken place because of lack of industrialisation. This means that clan based politics takes precedence over class based politics in Meghalaya. It is also seen that these Student Unions seem to acquire longer duration compared to the intense short-lived student agitations of the west and they also seem to be playing a major role in shaping the consciousness of a whole society.

From the provisions in the respective Constitutions of the three student organisations, it is seen that the main objective of the three Unions is to protect, preserve and uplift their respective communities. Based on the findings of their respective Constitutions, it is seen that the Central Body of the three students unions seems to be the highest Legislative and Executive Body of the respective unions. In the KSU, the Central Executive Council (CEC) is at the apex, then comes the General Executive Council (GEC) and then comes the units. Likewise, in the JSU, the CEC lies at the apex, and then comes the circles and the units respectively. Unlike the two former unions, which are similar in their organisational structure, the GSU consists of a Central Organisation, Central Executive Body, Zonal Organisation, Zonal Executive Body, Regional Units and the State Organisation. Thus, it seems that the three students' organisations are formally organised in a systematic manner. Here it may be noted that the units and circles of the KSU and JSU can operate independently within the area of their respective jurisdiction, but they cannot go against the decisions and orders of their respective Central Body. In the same manner, the zonal and regional units of the GSU operate under the supervision of the Central Body of the Union.

An interesting point to be noted here is that none of the Constitutions of the three Student Unions made a mention of female members or of their eligibility to hold important posts in their respective unions. However, in the interviews held with the leaders of the three Unions, it emerged that even though there is no such provision in their respective Constitution, the female members are welcome to join the organisations at any time. The question which arises in this context is, if women members are welcome, what prevented the provision of women's membership in the Constitutions of these Unions? The answer to this

may perhaps be sought in the patriarchal norms of the matrilineal societies of Meghalaya which legitimise womens' exclusion from politics in general.

Regarding the issues raised by these three Student Unions, it is seen that most of the issues raised by them apparently pertain to the interests of their respective ethnic communities and in certain cases, they have raised common issues, such as influx of foreigners, Inner Line Permit (ILP), work permit and inter-state boundary issue. Furthermore, it is seen that in realising their objectives, they supported each other's agitational programmes. However, there are certain issues such as, reservation policy, implementation of EPIC and so on where one can see their differences. Thus, here the compulsions and contradictions of ethnicity based politics come to the fore, particularly on the reservation issue. These differences have in turn, unleashed social forces under whose leadership the demand for a separate Garoland is gaining momentum. This is again a manifestation of ethnic polarisation in the State.

In this chapter, an attempt has also been made to analyse the similarities and differences in the issues raised by the student movements of the 1960s and the present Student Unions in Meghalaya. One such instance is the movement which took place in America, whereby the Black students demanded recruitment of more African students and faculty and a curriculum that predominantly featured Afro-American history and experience. Similarly, the Khasi and Jaintia students are demanding for more reservations for the Khasi and Jaintias regarding admission in colleges and employment. Another point to be noted here is that students in Britain demanded adequate student participation in the decision-making process and enough contact with faculty. In the same way, the Italian students have also demanded for more student power in universities. In this context, the similarity is that the KSU had also placed a demand before the authorities of North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU) for inclusion of its members in the Academic Council. One of the differences between the students in socialist countries and the students of Meghalaya is that, the latter is not against the government or the ruling regime as such, but is against government policies which in the opinion of these student organisations were not in favour of their respective communities whom they profess to represent.

It is also seen that in comparison with the students of developing nations, such as of Latin America, the demands made by them is similar to that made by the students of Meghalaya. Just as the KSU demanded the inclusion of its members in the Academic Council,

similarly, the students of Cordoba in Argentina demanded the introduction of student participation in academic affairs through Cogobierno (student membership in all university committees and governing bodies. It has also been observed that the Student Unions of Meghalaya like their counterparts in the North East such as, All Assam Students' Union, All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union (AAPSU), etc., raise issues which concern their respective ethnic communities such as infiltration of foreigners, boundary issues, etc.

Thus, it may be observed that whether the student movement takes place in a developed or a developing country, the fact remains that students' problems are more or less similar all over the world and thus there are certain similarities with a few exceptions of differences among them.

CHAPTER-III: YOUTH ORGANISATION AS PRESSURE GROUP IN MEGHALAYA

The third chapter has taken up a discussion on the circumstances that led to the formation of the Federation of Khasi-Jaintia and Garo People (FKJGP) as a youth organisation trying to influence the politics of Meghalaya, followed by an analysis of the issues and demands raised by the Federation. An attempt has also been made to examine the contradictions and complementarities between the stands taken by the three student organisations formed along ethnic lines on the one hand and the perception of the FKJGP, as an umbrella organisation of the youth representing the three ethnic communities on the other.

Prior to the formation of the FKJGP, attempts were made by student bodies to set up some kind of an umbrella organisation to embrace the students belonging to the various ethnic groups and districts, such as, the Meghalaya Students' Association (MSA), the Meghalaya Students' Union (MSU) and the All Meghalaya Students' Union (AMSU). However, all these student bodies were short-lived and their activities and membership were confined to the Khasi Hills, especially within Shillong itself.

The FKJGP was established on 1st of November 1989, by a group of youth and elders from the tribes of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo under the leadership of Sounder Strong Cajee. The decision to float the organisation was taken at a largely attended meeting held at Khasi National Dorbar Hall, Mawkhar. The FKJGP was formed on the basis of the unity of the three main ethnic groups of the state, viz., the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos. The members are

drawn from different age groups and occupations and are usually above the age of eighteen years. The aims and objectives of the FKJGP is to unite the indigenous tribes of the State for the common purpose of socio-economic growth, political rights and around common issues, such as, influx of foreigners, boundary issues, etc. It also aims to act as a powerful voice through democratic means against oppression, corruption and nepotism in the government.

In this context, it may be noted that unlike the student organisations, the FKJGP has no Constitution, although its leadership claims that it functions democratically based on consensus and majority decision. It also claims that its policies, decisions and election of office-bearers are done in the best example of democracy. Usually the organisational structure of any organisation can be understood from the provisions of its Constitution. However, in the case of the FKJGP, since it does not have any Constitution, we have based our findings according to the discussion with the former President of the Federation, A. Basaiamoit. It appears that the FKJGP has a three-tier organisational set-up, namely, the Central Executive Committee (CEC), the General Executive Council (GEC) and the District Executive Committee (DEC) and a number of circles in the different districts of the State. The CEC is the policy making body of the organisation and is presided over by the President. It is at the apex of the Federation. Here, certain questions come to the forefront, viz., why does the FKJGP prefer to function in an informal manner without being bound by a Constitution of its own? Does it imply arbitrariness in its functioning in spite of the claim to function in the best example of democracy?

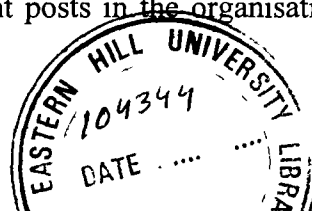
It may be mentioned that most of the major issues taken up by the FKJGP are political in nature, for example, the boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya, creating political awareness among the people, etc. and the issues are also relevant to the social and economic life of the tribal society as a whole. It appears that the first issue taken up by this organisation was the illegal trading by non-tribal businessmen in the state. The organisation took up the issue as an open violation of Trading by Non-Tribal Regulation Act 1954 of the District Council. A point to be noted here is that the above issue taken up by the FKJGP was significant in the sense that by the end of 1980s, there was a growing participation of the local indigenous people in business and trading activities. Other major issues taken up by the FKJGP are Review of the Education Policy, Introduction of Marriage Act, Introduction of Railway Head for goods trains in the State and strengthening of Meghalaya Land Transfer Act

to ensure ownership of land in the State exclusively for indigenous local tribes, viz., the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos.

Interestingly, the Garo Hills District Circle of the FKJGP also have their special issues, such as, enforcement of the Forest Act to prevent destruction of forests, to set up the cell of Meghalaya Public Service Commission in Garo Hills, to establish the University Campus at Tura with agriculture as one of the disciplines, setting up of a Winter Assembly Hall at Tura, upgradation of all the Secondary Schools of Garo Hills to Higher Secondary Level, etc. Therefore, it seems that both the Central body and the units of the FKJGP work together at times and sometimes independently, but the fact remains that the issues taken up reflect the ethnic bias of the organisation.

The study also made an attempt to analyse the differences between the youth and the student organisations, though by and large, they have been studied interchangeably. In this context, it may be noted that although the FKJGP is a youth organisation and not a student's organisation, it has occasionally supported the Student Unions and has raised issues which are academic in nature, such as, review of education policy. There are also certain issues on which the FKJGP shares the same opinion with the Students' Unions, such as, Meghalaya Land Transfer Act, boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya, work permit, influx, etc. However, there are issues, for example, the Railway Project in which we find contradictions between the stands taken by the youth and student bodies. It has been observed that on the issue of Railway head, the FKJGP specifically stated that goods trains are to be introduced. A point to be noted here is that, the organisation mentioned goods train and not passenger train. Thus, it seems that the FKJGP like the Students' Organisation is apprehensive about the problem of influx, and therefore, it is in favour of goods train only.

Therefore, it is seen that both the youth and student organisations at times support each other's demands and at times, contradict each other, but they raise issues which affect their respective ethnic communities. It has also been observed that the FKJGP, in spite of being an umbrella organisation of the three ethnic tribes of Meghalaya seems to be bias towards the Khasis and the Jaintias and this is perhaps one of the reasons why some members of the Garo unit of the FKJGP feel that the central body of the organisation is meting out step-motherly treatment towards them, and, therefore, have recently severed all ties with the main body. The study further observes that till date important posts in the organisation seems to



have been held mostly by the members belonging to the Khasi and Jaintia community, except on a few occasions, such as, in 1991 when Sounder S. Cajee, former President of FKJGP, was detained by the police, (L) Cyprian Sangma, took over as the acting President of the Organisation. This somewhat negates the FKJGP's claim of functioning in the best spirit of democracy.

CHAPTER-IV: STUDENT AND YOUTH ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR INTERACTION WITH POLITICAL PARTIES AND TRIBAL SOCIETIES OF MEGHALAYA

Chapter IV seeks to examine the nature of the relationship that exists between the regional and national political parties of Meghalaya on the one hand and the student and youth organisations on the other. An attempt has also been made to analyse the major demands raised by these organisations and the responses of political parties and a cross-section of the public to the issues raised.

This chapter has been largely structured on the basis of information gathered from discussions with prominent political leaders of regional and national parties of Meghalaya, Presidents and General Secretaries of student and youth organisations as well as with 50 citizens who are not political activists. An attempt was made to ensure representation of different ethnic communities of the State.

Based on the findings of the interviews so conducted, it has been observed that on the question of relationship between political parties of Meghalaya and the student and youth organisations, there is a unanimous response from all political leaders that they do not share any kind of relationship, political or otherwise with any of the student or youth organisations. Here, interestingly, Lambor Malngiang (KHNAM) in his interview stated that though KHNAM was floated by the KSU, yet the relationship between them is like that of any other political party and a student body and as such there is no close relationship between them. However, Pascal Malngiang observes that, leaders of regional parties have asserted that the KSU was acting unknowingly as their student wing and hence the regional parties did not feel the need for having their own student wings. It may be argued, therefore, that the student and youth bodies are being used by the political parties for their own political ends.

The chapter also seeks to analyse the stand of the political parties of Meghalaya on the major issues raised by the student and youth organisations, viz., the KSU, the JSU and the

GSU and the FKJGP. For example, on the issue of Railway Project, the FKJGP was the first organisation to support the said project although it was vehemently opposed by the KSU, citing the reason that it would become a channel for influx, thus escalating the existing influx problem. On the said issue, with the exception of H.S. Lyngdoh (HSPDP) the political leader of Congress, BJP, NCP, KHNAM, UDP, etc. seem to be in favour of the railway head for they feel it is going to benefit the people and enhance the economy of the state. This seems to be in sharp contrast with their views about a decade back when all regional parties were categorically against railway head. Here, a number of questions arise, viz., does the KSU practice what it professes, i.e., protecting and promoting the tribal interests? Or is the KSU misusing the platform of a student body which is largely envisaged by the public as the champion of their interest? This necessitates a critical look at the stands taken by the KSU on various issues.

The chapter has also examined issues like reservation policy, uranium mining, boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya, education policy, Land Transfer Act, Inner Line Permit (ILP), work permit, influx, separate Garo Land, etc.

The study also tried to examine the opinions of the citizens of Meghalaya on the said issues raised by the student and youth organisations. The opinions or view points of the citizens of Meghalaya, namely, the Khasis, the Jaintias, the Garos and the non-tribal are taken into consideration. For example, on the issue of uranium mining, a section of the public does not really share the opinion of the pressure groups on this issue. They asserted that by opposing the mining project, it is depriving the State of an opportunity to enhance its economy and argued that mining of any mineral without precaution and proper technology cause health hazards. For example, mining of coal and digging limestone can pose serious threats to any living being and escalate pollution. To make the argument more authentic, an example of the Lukha River which is situated on the way from Shillong to Silchar within Jaintia Hills, was cited where lots of dead fish are found floating in the water which has turned blue in colour due to coal mining in the area. Interestingly, on the issue of reservation policy, some members of the public argued that reservation in itself is neither healthy nor wise. Moreover, it kills the very spirit of competition and hard work and, therefore, asserted that it is high time to gradually do away with reservation. Others are of the opinion that reservation should be based on the economic criteria, so as to help the economically weaker

sections to be at par with the more prosperous sections of the society. There are others who do not share the same opinion with the KSU and feel that the Khasis are in a much better position than the Jaintias and Garos and, therefore, reservation should be more in favour of the latter.

On the issue of boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya, some members of the public share the same sentiment with the student and youth organisations and are of the opinion that the State Governments of Assam and Meghalaya along with the Centre as well as the Syiems, the Dolois, the Nokmas, the District Councils and all Autonomous and local bodies of both States should co-ordinate and work together to find an amicable solution to this pending problem.

Thus, based on the issues raised by the youth and student organisations and the interviews conducted, it seems that the KSU, the JSU and the GSU are demanding greater favour for their own indigenous communities and this is clearly seen on the issue of reservation where all Student Unions tried to acquire more seats for their own respective communities. Although the membership of the FKJGP comprises the three indigenous tribes of Meghalaya and it claims to represent the interests of the state as a whole, it seems to be bias towards the Khasis and the Jaintias, thereby, creating some resentment among the Garos.

CHAPTER-V: DEMANDS OF STUDENT AND YOUTH ORGANISATIONS AND POLICY DECISIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF MEGHALAYA

This chapter has made an attempt to examine the major policy decisions of the Government of Meghalaya in the light of the demands raised by the student and youth organisations. The actual policy decisions of the government will indicate how effective the youth and student organisations are as pressure groups and how far they have succeeded in pressurising the government to concede to their respective demands.

It may be noted that the KSU was the first Student Union to raise the reservation issue and even put forward its proposal which was rejected both by the JSU and the GSU. However, the differences between the three Student Unions were soon resolved and the Garos were allowed to maintain 40%, the Khasis and Jaintias 50% and 10% for the general based on merit. Samuel Jyrwa, President of KSU asserted that the above proposal had been sent to the Chief Minister for the consideration of the Government. Here a point to be noted is that the Student Union had finally succeeded in persuading the State Government to review the

reservation policy. However, the decision of the Government was not welcomed by all and resentment was expressed by Ministers from Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills, thus hindering the State Government from reviewing the said policy, although the issue had been discussed in several occasions in the Assembly. It may be noted that some efforts were made by the MDA Government to bring about a solution to this long pending issue, but due to divided opinion on the said issue, the State Government in spite of convening a meeting to discuss the said issue, was compelled to postpone it thrice and, therefore, failed to make a break through in this regard. The members cutting across party lines did ultimately have an elaborate discussion on the said issue in the Assembly, but the discussion remained inconclusive with the divergent views expressed by the members present in the Assembly.

Thus, regarding the reservation policy, the response of the government seems to indicate that it is conceding to the demands of the Student Unions, although no definite solution has been reached so far. One reason why the Government of Meghalaya has not come out with any concrete stand on the issue of reservation is that there are conflicting demands on the said issue from the ethnically oriented student groups. Consequently, opinions have got polarised within the government itself. However, it appears that the policy decision of the government on this issue is likely to tilt in favour of that group which is in a position to exercise maximum bargaining capabilities in this regard.

Another major issue on which the policy decision of the government has been examined to see whether it reflects the stand of the student organisations as pressure groups in the State is the issue of uranium mining at Domiasiat in West Khasi Hills. The Uranium Corporation of India Limited (UCIL) in the mid nineties did start the mining project in West Khasi Hills but was soon forced to wind up the open-cast mining following a string of violent protests from the villagers. The KSU is the first Student Union to raise the issue and along with Meghalaya People's Human Rights Council (MPHRC) and the Langrin Youth Welfare Association, expressed their opposition regarding the issue citing the reason that emission of radio-active uranium will pose serious health hazards. The FKJGP's stand on the issue is that its decision will depend on the government's proposal based on the compensation to the people of West Khasi Hills. Interestingly a prominent regional party of the State, viz., Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP), is very much against the said issue, citing health hazard as the reason for its opposition.

The Government of Meghalaya's stand regarding this issue seems to be vacillating between giving in to stiff opposition of pressure groups and permitting UCIL to go ahead with the project. It seems that the Centre is showing keenness to facilitate an early start of the mining project in the state and has, in fact, sent a host of officials to interact with the state officials, Student Unions and NGOs to gain their support for starting this project at the earliest. The Union Government has offered Rs. 800 crore as compensatory package for the people of the mining site and which was rejected by the KSU. Thus, it seems that the KSU is very much adamant on its stand on this issue. A point to be noted here is that the debate generated by the KSU on the issue of uranium mining signifies a shift from issues of ethnic significance to an important ecological problem, generating public awareness through rallies and campaigns as also focussing attention on the technical pros and cons of uranium mining in Domiasiat. Interestingly, a new development has taken place regarding the issue. The land owners of the uranium rich West Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya are demanding the Government to issue a No Objection Certificate (NOC) to the UCIL to start mining in the area. Thus, it seems that on the one hand, the KSU is pressuring the State Government and they themselves are being pressurised by the residents of the mining site on the other.

It has been observed that on issues like work permit, introduction of a three-tier card system with 1971 as the cut-off year for the migrants, boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya and the Land Transfer Act, the State Government seems to be positive in its response towards the demands of the student and youth organisations. Regarding the issue on work permit, the MPA Government after examining the report of the Cabinet Committee on Influx (CCI) has decided to implement the work permit by the end of December 2008. On the issue of identity card system, the State Government is waiting for financial assistance from the Centre to introduce the multi-identity card system. The latest response from the State Government on the issue of boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya is that, the MPA Government in its Cabinet Meeting on 5th March 2009 has taken a decision to form a legal committee to look into this long pending boundary problem.

On the issue of Land Transfer Act, the State Government buckled under pressure from the student and youth organisations. The Government led by F.A. Khonglam had recommended inclusion of other tribes, viz., Hmar, Mikir, Karbi, etc. as indigenous tribes thus giving them rights of ownership of land in the State. This move was opposed by various

sections of the society including the student and youth organisations. The Government was pressurised in referring back the issue of Land Transfer Act Amendment to the Revenue Department for further study before implementing it.

The above response of the Government seems to confirm that the pressure groups in the State have succeeded in forcing the Government of Meghalaya to rethink over the matter before taking a final policy decision on it and on other issues discussed above, the pressure groups were able to exert some influence on the making of the policy decisions of the State Government.

It has been observed that on the issue of restructuring the MBOSE, a bitter conflict has occurred between the Khasis and the Garos. The KSU viewed the MBOSE as apathetic towards students of Khasi and Jaintia Hills whereas the GSU views any move to create a new office in Shillong as bifurcation of the Board to placate the Khasis. Interestingly, the JSU seems to be neither for it, nor against it. On the one hand, it extended its full support to the KSU and at the same time, it refused to be a part of the agitational programme sponsored by the KSU, on the ground that insufficient time was given to the JSU to prepare itself for the proposed agitation. In this context, a number of questions arise, for example, is the KSU asserting its hegemony over the other tribes of the state, i.e., the Jaintias and the Garos? Is the JSU of the opinion that this fight is of the KSU alone for it is going to benefit mostly the Khasi students? Is this an indication of a rift between KSU and JSU?

On the said issue, the State Government is being pressurised both by the KSU and the GSU and the policy decision taken by the government seems to enhance the position of the GSU as the more influential pressure group than the KSU as the State Government has decided to strengthen MBOSE rather than bifurcate it, as demanded by the KSU. In this context, questions that arise are, is the KSU's position as the most influential pressure group in the State declining? Is the GSU emerging as a more influential pressure group in the State superseding the position of the KSU? Will this policy decision of the Government widen the rift between the KSU and the GSU?

It may be noted that the student and youth organisations as pressure groups of the State employ pressure tactics, such as, bandhs, office picketing, road blockade (most common pressure tactics used by them quite effectively especially in Shillong city), hunger

strike, rallies and so on. And, therefore, it seems that they do exert certain amount of influence over the policy decisions of the State Government.

CHAPTER-VI: CONCLUSION

The concluding observations of this thesis are as follows. In chapter I, it is seen that the term 'pressure groups' was first used in 1928 and since then, it has become an interesting subject of study in the field of social sciences. It may be observed that interest groups and pressure groups are, in fact, different terms used for the same group. Some scholars prefer using the former while others use the latter. However, it is to be noted that for those groups which exert pressure, the term, 'pressure group' is generally used. In this context, it is also seen that both 'political parties' and 'pressure groups' are social groups having a great deal of relevance to the functioning of the modern political process. However, the former's goal is to capture political power whereas the latter seeks to influence the policy decisions of the Government to their advantage.

Further, it is seen that from the late 1990s onwards, in Meghalaya, the student and youth organisations at times have been referred to as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in newspapers and journals. The difference between NGOs and the Student Union is that the former works for the development of the people and the society at large without aiming to promote any section of society and without any vested interest, whereas the latter tries to promote the interests of the students and youths. It is also seen that 'Student Union' and 'Trade Union' cannot be clubbed together for the former mobilises the students and the latter the working class. Moreover, the Trade Union seeks to pressurise the business and the government to attain maximum benefit for the industrial workers whereas the Student Union not only raises academic issues but also social, political and economic issues which affect the society at large. However, it is to be noted, that at times, especially election times, both Student Unions and Trade Unions are being made use of by political parties for their own political ends.

It is also seen that pressure groups operate in both developed and developing countries as well as in democratic and dictatorial regimes but are found to be most active in developed countries. In India, pressure groups do not operate with as much vigour as in developed

democratic countries and they lack the kind of maturity and influence that have been acquired by groups in the Western developed societies.

In chapter II, it has been observed that unlike elsewhere in the country, student organisations in Meghalaya have been formed along specific ethnic lines only. This is because of the fact that class polarisation has not taken place in Meghalaya due to absence of large-scale industrialisation. As a consequence, mobilisation has taken place along the lines of clan and ethnicity, rather than along classes. This is one reason why left student movement could not make much of headway in Meghalaya.

The study further reveals that among the three Student Unions operating as pressure groups in the State of Meghalaya, the KSU and the GSU are emerging as the most influential organisations. The JSU on most occasions prefers to give moral support to the others, rather than taking active part in any agitational programmes, for example, on the MBOSE issue, the JSU extended its full support to the KSU but refused to be a part of any of the agitational programmes organised by the KSU, citing that insufficient time was given to them to prepare for the proposed agitation.

In chapter II and chapter III, it has been observed that these organisations do not indicate any clear gender bias. However, women do not figure in any leadership position in the KSU, the JSU, the GSU and the FKJGP. In this context, it may be noted that the 1981 Constitution of the KSU states specifically that women cannot contest for the important posts of President, General Secretary, and Finance Secretary. Thus, a strong patriarchal bias is evident in the Constitution of the KSU.

In the third chapter, it has been observed that unlike the student organisations, the youth organisation, i.e., the FKJGP has no Constitution. In fact, it is not even a registered organisation. Moreover, it is seen that in the case of FKJGP, the contours of ethnic polarisation has become sharper than the Student Unions and it does appear that the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo wings of the FKJGP are sometimes working at cross-purposes with one another, thereby limiting the bargaining capabilities of the organisation vis-à-vis the State Government.

In this chapter, it has also been observed that the Garo Hills District Circle of the FKJGP has its own special issues, such as setting up of a Winter Assembly Hall at Tura, setting up the cell of Meghalaya Public Service Commission in Garo Hills and to establish the

University Campus at Tura with agriculture as one of the disciplines, etc. By taking up such issues, the Garo Unit reflects the ethnic bias of the organisation.

In chapter IV, it has been observed that student and youth organisations are not affiliated to any political party. However, they have close linkages with the political parties, such as, the KSU and the KHNAM, since the former floated the latter. Moreover, political parties tend to make use of the student and youth organisations for its own political ends.

It is also seen that on major issues raised by the student and youth organisations, such as, railway head, education policy, boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya, etc., the political parties of Meghalaya support the stands taken by these organisations, with the exception of HSPDP which is against the railway head and uranium mining citing influx and health hazards respectively as the reasons for its opposition. On the issue of reservation policy, there is a lot of conflicting views among the political parties with their respective members belonging to the different ethnic communities of the State, arguing that the reservation should be more in favour of their respective communities. For example, in the Winter Session of the Legislative Assembly in 2004, in the course of the debate, a member from the Congress Party asserted that the Garos deserve the quotas because compared to the Khasis and the Jaintias, they are still economically and socially backward. Therefore, there is no need to review the reservation policy.

In this context, it has been observed that on issues of reservation policy, uranium mining, etc., the student bodies have tried to mobilise public opinions through rallies, debates, meetings, etc. However, there are differences of opinions among the public, such as, on the reservation policy. Some are of the opinion that it should be on the basis of population rate, others feel it should be on the basis of economic criteria, whereas there are others who asserted that reservation should be done away with gradually, for it kills the very spirit of competition. In fact, on the issue of uranium mining, the people of the mining site are in favour of it and urged the State Government to issue NOC (No Objection Certificate) to the UCIL to facilitate the mining process.

In chapter V, it has been observed that on issues like work permit, introduction of a three-tier card system with 1971 as the cut-off year for the migrants, boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya, education policy and the Land Transfer Act, the State Government seems to be positive in its response towards the demands of the student and youth

organisations. On the issue of reservation policy, the State Government tried to placate both the KSU and the GSU and its policy decision on the said issue seems to be in favour of the GSU. In this context, it is to be noted that if the State Government conceded to the demands of the KSU, then it would aggravate the demand of the GSU for a greater Garoland. Thus, the Government in its policy decision had to take into account that the rift between the Khasis and the Garos does not worsen further.

In this chapter, another observation is that, the pressure groups in the State employ certain pressure tactics to gain maximum mileage, such as, bandhs, office picketing, hunger strike, rallies, road blockade and so on. It is seen that when either a bandh or office-picketing is called by these pressure groups, the public response is immediate and positive. During office-picketing or bandh, the Government usually provides vehicles at different junctions of the city to take the Government employees to their respective offices. However, the public do not seem to make use of the Government transport and it is seen that almost all offices wear a deserted look and office attendance is almost nil. This seems to indicate that the pressure tactics used by these groups is quite effective.

It appears that all student and youth organisations of Meghalaya profess to be champions of the interest of the respective ethnic communities whom they represent. But in reality, each of them harbours its own political ambitions. This is substantiated by the fact that KHNAM was floated by KSU and PDM was floated by FKJGP and ARMS was supported by both the student and youth organisations. The student and youth leaders who subsequently joined politics emerged as prominent leaders either in the Government or in the Opposition. For example, Paul Lyngdoh (former President, KSU) was the Urban Affairs Minister in the MPA Government. Limison Sangma (former Member of FKJGP) who was till March 5th 2009 with the opposition MUA switched allegiance to MPA Government and was appointed Parliamentary Secretary, PWD (Building) and on the 10th March 2009, left the ruling coalition and went back to the opposition MUA. This shows that pressure groups in Meghalaya are using a technique of infiltration into the world of power holders to fulfil their political ends.

An interesting point emerges from an analysis of the issues raised by these pressure groups. It appears that economic issues like regulation of trade by non-tribals, job reservation for local tribals, etc. have a lot of primacy in the agenda of the student and youth organisations. However, general economic issues which affect the interests of the public at

large, e.g., price rise of essential commodities like foodgrains, vegetables or a hike in the fuel prices, school fees, school books, etc. hardly find a place in the agitational programmes of these organisations. This is in sharp contrast to the politics of pressure groups elsewhere in the country where general economic issues affecting the masses do figure in the agenda of student and youth organisations.

To sum up, it may be argued that the student and youth organisations have acquired a measure of success in the State politics of Meghalaya, for most issues raised by them seem to get decided in their favour. The study further shows that the State Government on many occasions has relented under the pressure tactics of the student and youth organisations, with the exception of the issue of uranium mining. Since mining falls within the purview of the Union List, the Union Government may go ahead with the project, irrespective of the views of the pressure groups. It appears, therefore, that the politics of pressure groups has emerged as an important determinant of State politics in Meghalaya in view of the increasing bargaining capabilities of these groups to influence policy decisions of the Government.

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**I wish to dedicate this humble
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Col. Robelson Kharmujai, who
is not with us any more but his
spirit will always be with us**

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I, Sita Nongkhlaw, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of my previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/ Institute.

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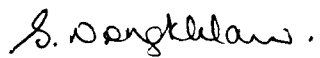
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ABBREVIATIONS

AAGSU	– All Assam Garo Students’ Union
AISF	– All India Students’ Federation
AIYF	– All India Youth Federation
AMSU	– All Meghalaya Students’ Union
APHLC	– All Party Hill Leaders’ Conference
ARMS	– Alliance for the Reconstruction of Meghalaya State
BJP	– Bharatiya Janata Party
CEC	– Central Executive Committee
CEM	– Chief Executive Member
DAE	– Department of Atomic Energy
DEC	– District Executive Committee
EC	– Executive Committee
EPIC	– Elector’s Photo Identity Card
FKJGP	– Federation of Khasi-Jaintia and Garo People
GEC	– General Executive Committee
GHADC	– Garo Hills Autonomous District Council
GSU	– Garo Students’ Union
HPU	– Hill People Union
HSPDP	– Hill State People’s Democratic Party
HSU	– Hill Students’ Union
ILP	– Inner Line Permit
JHADC	– Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council
JSU	– Jaintia Students’ union
KDSU	– Khad-ar-Doloi Students’ Union
KHADC	– Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council
KHNAM	– Khun Hynniewtrep National Awakening Movement
KJSU	– Khasi-Jaintia Students’ Union

KSA	– Khasi Students' Association
KSU	– Khasi Students' Union
MBOSE	– Meghalaya Board of School Education
MDA	– Meghalaya Democratic Alliance
MDF	– Meghalaya Democratic Front
MDP	– Meghalaya Democratic Party
MLA	– Member of Legislative Assembly
MPA	– Meghalaya Progressive Alliance
MPHRC	– Meghalaya People's Human Right Council
MSA	– Meghalaya Students' Association
MSU	– Meghalaya Students' Union
MUA	– <i>Meghalaya United Alliance</i>
NCP	– Nationalist Congress Party
NEHU	– North-Eastern Hill University
NGOs	– Non-Governmental Organisations
NOC	– No Objection Certificate
PDIC	– Public Demands Implementation Convention
PDM	– People's Democratic Movement
PFM	– People's Forum of Meghalaya
RIT	– Right to Information Bill
SSSS	– Synjuk Seng Samla Shnong
SSU	– Shillong Students' Union
UCIL	– Uranium Corporation of India Limited
UDP	– United Democratic Party

CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION: PRESSURE GROUPS – A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

The politics of pressure groups is not a novel political phenomenon. However, it has been a matter of academic enquiry since the 1950s. In the twentieth century, a new concept crept up gradually into political research, viz., the idea that political activity is part of a process and this political process has been viewed principally as the interaction among governmental institutions and social groups. In order to understand this process, it is necessary to examine the role played by groups, including pressure and interest groups.¹ It appears that the study of pressure groups is only a twentieth century development. Its importance was further realised with the academic discovery that in a modern society, there are many different types of groups other than political parties which influence the political process of the State. Thus, it was considered convenient to study such groups by bringing them under the terminology of pressure groups. Tentatively, a pressure group may be regarded as an organised social group whose members share common attitudes, beliefs or interests and try to promote their particularistic interests by influencing public policies.

¹ For discussion, see David Easton: *The Political System*, (reprint) Scientific Book Agency, Calcutta, 1971, pp. 172-173.

In the contemporary world, the pressure groups seem to play an important role in the political process of a state. The study of pressure groups was initiated by the group approach to politics introduced by Arthur F. Bentley in his book, *The Process of Government*, published in 1908 and later by David B. Truman in his book, *The Governmental Process*, published in 1951. Bentley was an early advocate of a descriptive political science based on a group conception of political life. However, his book, *Process of Government* (1908) was ignored by political scientists for some two decades before it achieved any significant recognition.² Therefore, the term 'pressure group' was neither used by Bentley nor by Truman. In 1925, this concept was highlighted by Andre Siegefride who pointed out that pressure groups constituted the core of political influence in America. However, it was perhaps, used for the first time by Peter Odegard in his book, *Pressure Politics: The Story of the Anti-Saloon League*, published in 1928. A comprehensive and full scale study about pressure politics was made in 1954 by David B. Truman in his book, *The Process of Government*. By this effort of David Truman, group interaction in American politics not only became evident to the observers of the political process, but they also recognised that the pressure groups in the United States had assumed the role of a Third House of the Congress. Political scientists all over the world have now recognised the effective role played by pressure groups in different political systems. Their useful role in democratic politics cannot be ignored.³

² For details, see G. David Garson: *Group Theories of Politics*, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, London, 1978, pp. 25-26.

³ Hari Hara Das and B.C. Choudhury: *Introduction to Politics Sociology*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1997, pp. 247-248.

In order to understand the politics of pressure groups with particular reference to student and youth organisations, the first step is to examine the existing literature on this theme. It appears that A.F. Bentley, an American political scientist, was the first to emphasise the role of pressure groups. His book, *The Process of Government*, published in 1908, was the first systematic study of pressure groups. He argued that the governmental process is essentially a process of the interaction of the various groups that operate in politics and therefore, in order to understand the process of government, one must understand the role of groups in politics.⁴ D.B. Truman in his book, *The Governmental Process*, defines pressure groups as, “any group that on the basis of one or more shared attitudes makes certain claims upon other groups in the society for the establishment, maintenance or enhancement of forms of behaviour that are implied in the shared attitudes. The shared attitudes constitute the interests”.⁵

Many scholars, both Western and Indian have carried out several studies on pressure and interest groups, to cite a few are, Peter Odegard, *Pressure Politics: The Story of the Anti Saloon League* (1928), asserted that “pressure groups are formed without regard for party opinion or other matters; they carry on agitations for or against projects termed favourable or prejudicial to their interests”.⁶ V.O. Key Jr. in his book, *Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups* (1964) stressed on the political character of the pressure groups. According to him, prominent place must be given to the activities of private organisations if one is to

⁴ A.F. Bentley, *The Process of Government*, Bloomington, Ind., Principia, 1908.

⁵ D.B. Truman, *The Governmental Process*, Knopf, New York, 1964, pp. 33-34.

⁶ P. Odegard, *The Pressure Politics: The Story of the Anti-Saloon League*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1928.

understand the American political system because these associations constitute links of communication between citizens and the governments. Others who contributed to this literature are Myron Weiner, *The Politics of Scarcity – Public Pressure and Political Response in India* (1962); Abraham Holtzman, *Interest Groups and Lobbying* (1966); Francis G. Castles, *Pressure Groups and Political Cultural* (1967).

From the available literature, it can be seen that a number of articles have been written in S.M. Lipset (ed.), *Student Politics* (1967), on the following themes such as, on the approaches to the study of student political behaviour, the articles are as follows, S.M. Lipset, “University Students and Politics in Underdeveloped Countries”; E. Wight Bakke, “Roots and Soil of Student Activism”; P.G. Altbach, “Students and Politics”. The authors in the above articles studied students from different perspectives such as, University students in underdeveloped countries, student activism and student movements which are even capable of toppling governments. For example, the Kishi Government in Japan in 1960 was forced to resign under student pressure.⁷ However, none of them studied the students as pressure groups. On the theme of comparative perspectives on student and politics, the articles are, George Z.F. Bereday, “Student Unrest on Four Continents: Montreal, Ibadan, Warsaw and Rangoon” and Glaucio A.D. Soares, “The Active Few: Student Ideology and Participation in Developing Countries”. On the theme of students and politics in Western countries and in Latin America, the articles are, S.M. Lipset and P.G. Altbach, “Student Politics and Higher Education in the United States” and K.N. Walker, “A Comparison of the University Reform

⁷ P.G. Altbach, “Student Politics”, in S.M. Lipset (ed.), *Student Politics*, Basic Books, New York, 1967, p. 151.

Movements in Argentina and Columbia” and on Indian students – Attitudes and Activities, the article is by Metta Spencer, “Professional, Scientific and Intellectual Students in India”. Others like P.G. Altbach (ed.), *Turmoil and Transition: Higher Education and Student Politics in India* (1968) and A. Cockburn and R. Blackburn (eds.), *Student Power* (1969), studied student organisations as student movements.

In G.S. Mansukhani (ed.), *Student Power in India*, (1975), some Indian scholars have lent their contribution such as, Sushila Mehta, “Anatomy of Student Revolt”, and “Student Movement in Gujarat”, R.C. Hingorani, “Student Unrest in Bihar (1974)”, K. Gandhi, “Emerging Student Power and Social Response” and G.S. Mansukhani, “Student Services and Welfare”. A point to be noted is that, the authors above mentioned the pressure tactics of the students and the ‘student power’ in their relation to the politics of the State but no mention is made of the students as pressure groups. Then there is Babulal Fadia, *Pressure Groups in Indian Politics* (1980); Indrani Barua, *Pressure Groups in Assam* (1990); L.P. Misquitta, *Pressure Groups and Democracy in India* (1991), where he highlighted selected Western theories of pressure groups and their relevance to Indian conditions and examined the pressure groups in the business sector of the Indian society. Misquitta in his book did not take up the study of student and youth organisations as pressure groups. Meeta Deka in her book, *Student Movements in Assam* (1996) made an analysis of student movements in both developed and the developing nations and a historical study of the student movements in Assam and has been observed that there is no attempt to look at students as pressure groups. Another scholar, H.C. Upreti in his book, *Youth Politics in India* (1987), examined the

students and youth in the context of their participation in political activities, their political background which the author feels has direct bearing on their political behaviour, the reasons for student's unrest, their pressure tactics etc. C.N. Somarajan in his book, *Pressure Groups and Democratic Politics* (1988) studied the important pressure groups prevalent in the State of Kerala, such as, the Sree Narayan Dharma Paripalana Yogam, the Kerala School Manager's Association, the Kerala Karshaka Sangham etc. and their role in the state politics of Kerala. However, the authors mentioned made no attempt to study the students and youth as pressure groups.

In A.C. Sinha (ed.), *Youth Movement in North-East India* (1995), the student and youth organisations have been discussed from different perspective, such as, student organisations, social organisations, welfare organisation, youth problems, etc. but not as pressure groups. In M.N. Karna (ed.), *Social Movements in North-East India* (1998), the youth movements were studied as social movements and not as pressure groups. In A.K. Baruah (ed.), *Student Power in North-East India* (2002), the student and youth organisations have been discussed as student's movement, student activism, student's hegemony, pressure tactics adopted by them but not as pressure groups.

In Meghalaya, some research work had been carried out on the activities of the student organisations. P. Malngiang in his book, *Students and Politics in Meghalaya*,⁸ examined the role of various student organisations prevalent in the State of Meghalaya. In

⁸ Pascal Malngiang, *Student and Politics in Meghalaya*. Seven Huts Enterprise, Shillong, 1994.

this book, the author made an attempt to understand the organisation and working of the various student organisations such as the Khasi Students' Union (KSU), the Meghalaya Post-Graduate Students' Union (MPGSU), the National Students' Union of India (NSUI), the All Khasi- Jaintia Students' Union (AKJSU), etc., and to examine the problems of political participation and political recruitment including that of student leaders. The author also examined the various issues taken up by the student organisations and the pressure tactics used by them. Further, an attempt has also been made to understand the background of student leadership and the process as to how students are drawn to politics. Nikhlesh Kumar and A.K. Nongkynrih in their article, "Khasi Students' Union – A Preliminary Enquiry"⁹ have highlighted the nature of the student organisations with particular reference to the KSU and the functioning of the Union within the political context of the State. In this article, the authors made an attempt to understand the structure, nature, aims and objectives, characteristics and style of functioning of the Khasi Students' Union. It appears that the two authors have tried to analyse the KSU from a sociological point of view. In other words, their focus has been on the KSU as a social movement in Meghalaya and not as a pressure group. However, very little has been written on the youth organisations of Meghalaya including FKJGP. One available literature is Pascal Malngiang's article titled, "The Federation of Khasi-Jaintia and Garo People (FKJGP)".¹⁰ It highlights the role of the FKJGP as a social organisation and as a pressure group in the State politics of Meghalaya. In this article, the author made an attempt at understanding the issues raised by this organisation

⁹ N. Kumar and A.K. Nongkynrih. "Khasi Students' Union: A Preliminary Enquiry". In A.C. Sinha (ed.), *Youth Movement in North-East India*. Har Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 193-207.

¹⁰ Pascal Malngiang. "The Federation of Khasi-Jaintia and Garo People (FKJGP)". In Edited *Proceedings of North-East India Political Science Association (NEIPSA)*. Shillong, 1997, pp. 58-63.

and its role within the political context of the State. Thus, it appears from the article that though the FKJGP is basically a social organisation, the author tried to analyse its role and style of functioning from a political perspective. Another article on the youth is “Jaintia Youth Problems”¹¹ by Emathus Nongtdu where he attempts to highlight the problems faced by the youth of Jaintia Hills. Another article on student and youth movement which has been published recently is, “Students and Youth Organisations in Meghalaya”,¹² written by Pascal Malngiang. In this article, the author made an attempt to examine the historical development of the student and youth organisations in Meghalaya, taking into account their professed objectives, issues raised by them and pressure tactics adopted by them. However, P. Malngiang’s analysis is based mostly on documents made available by the organisation concerned. Despite his attempt at analysis of the pressure tactics, he does not study the student organisations as pressure groups. In this context, it is to be noted that the focus of our work is to study the student and youth organisations in Meghalaya, viz., the KSU, the JSU, the GSU and the FKJGP as pressure groups.

From the review of the existing literature, it appears that since the 1980s, student and youth organisations of Meghalaya have actively participated in the political process of the State. These organisations have sought to generate public debate on several policies of the Government of Meghalaya and have even exercised their hegemony for mass mobilisation by shaping public opinion according to their own perceptions. Apparently, the major student

¹¹ For details see, Emathus Nongtdu, “Jaintia Youth Problems”, in A.C. Sinha (ed.), *Youth Movement in North-East India*, Har-Anand Publishers, New Delhi, 1995.

¹² For details see, Pascal Malngiang, “Student and Youth Organisations in Meghalaya”, in A.K. Baruah (ed.), *Student Power in North-East India*, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 173-196.

organisations, viz., the KSU, the JSU, the GSU and the youth organisation, viz., the FKJGP have more or less similar objectives. It may be noted, however, that the allegiance of these organisations to their respective ethnic communities adds a complicated dimension to the politics of pressure groups in Meghalaya.

In the context of the above, the present work has taken up a study of the process of emergence of student and youth organisations as pressure groups in Meghalaya as well as their influence on policy decisions of the Government of Meghalaya. The study has also focused on the interaction of these organisations with political parties and on the popular perceptions about the issues raised by these organisations.

The present study was carried out with an attempt to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) To analyse whether the issues raised by students and youth organisations are reflected in the policy decisions of the Government of Meghalaya in order to evaluate the effectiveness of pressure group politics in Meghalaya.
- 2) To examine the similarities and differences in the perceptions of the student and youth bodies on various issues.
- 3) To examine the nature of the relationship that exists between the regional and national political parties of Meghalaya on the one hand and the student and youth organisations on the other and to analyse the responses of political parties and a cross-section of the public to the issues raised.

- 4) To examine the major issues raised by student and youth organisations of Meghalaya from time to time in order to highlight the similarities and differences in their stand vis-à-vis the Government of Meghalaya.
- 5) To examine the similarities or otherwise of the content of these programmes with the demands of some major student movements of the world in the 1960s.

The work was based on both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources of the work include the Constitutions of students' organisations, memoranda submitted by the student and youth organisations to the State Government and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Meghalaya. Informal discussions were also held with prominent political leaders of regional and national parties of Meghalaya, one from each political party except the CPI (Communist Party of India), because in the contemporary political scenario of Meghalaya, the CPI has not been able to intervene significantly in the politics of students. Informal discussions were also conducted with the Presidents and General Secretaries of each of these student and youth organisations as well as fifty citizens who are not political activists, to understand the perception of ordinary citizens about the politics of student and youth organisations. An attempt was made to ensure representation of different ethnic communities of the State.

The secondary sources include books, dissertations, theses, articles, journals, newspaper reports and so on. This work aims at presenting a description of the major issues raised and its implications for policies and decisions of the Government. In the process, it

examines the politics of pressure groups in Meghalaya with special reference to student and youth organisations. The present study is on pressure groups with special reference to student and youth organisations of Meghalaya and the period of data collection is from June 2001 to March 2009.

As far as the study of pressure groups and their role in the political process is concerned, it appears that there exists some confusion over terminology and definition. Therefore, various terms are used interchangeably such as, 'pressure group', 'interest group', 'the lobby' and 'political group'. The term 'pressure group' has been criticised as some scholars have used it as a term of abuse and not as a neutral description.¹³ Therefore, it has been suggested that the term 'pressure group' be used as a broad generic title, keeping in mind the dangers of implying sanctions and introducing value judgements and to divide it into two broad categories, namely, interest groups and attitude groups. The former consist of those groups in which the shared attitudes of the members result from common objective characteristics, e.g., all the members of the group may be plumbers, farmers, bank executives and so on. The latter, on the other hand, are those groups in which the members hold certain values in common, e.g., all members of the group may wish to ban the use of nuclear weapons, cruelty to animals, etc.¹⁴ From this distinction, one can conclude that interest groups usually have some other primary purposes than that of influencing government policies whereas attitude groups are often formed with the prime purpose of

¹³ Alan R. Ball: *Modern Politics and Government*, The MacMillan Press Ltd., London, 1971, pp. 103-104.

¹⁴ J.S. Mills: *Representative Government*, Everyman's Library edition, London, 1910, pp. 280-290.

influencing governmental decisions.¹⁵ Moreover, the basic difference between attitude and interest groups lies in the fact that while the former is to be known by its subjective base, the latter has very much an objective base. Further, once an attitude group is successful in having achieved its goal of influencing governmental policies, it is likely to disband or become inactive in relation to the political process. The interest group, on the other hand, is keen on pursuing its interest and is, therefore, likely to remain a permanent group seeking to influence, now and then, the governmental decisions.¹⁶ This is the reason why interest groups receive more academic attention than attitude groups.¹⁷ Further, interest groups can be divided into four categories, namely, (a) anomic interest groups, arising out of high tension and discontentment in the society; (b) non-associational interest groups, e.g., kinship, status and class groups; (c) institutional interest groups, e.g., political parties, bureaucracies etc. and (d) associational interest groups, e.g., trade unions, organisations of businessmen or industrialists, etc.¹⁸

It may therefore, be argued that the interest groups and pressure groups are in fact different terms used for the same group. In any society there exist a number of interests or 'shared attitudes'.¹⁹ Some are organised, others are not. Therefore, an interest group is a "shared-attitude group that makes certain claims upon other groups in the society".²⁰ Some

¹⁵ Alan R. Ball: *op.cit.*, p. 105.

¹⁶ Amal Kumar Mukhopadhyay: *Political Sociology – An Introductory Analysis*, K.P. Bagchi and Co., Calcutta, 1977, p. 157.

¹⁷ Alan R. Ball: *loc.cit.*, p. 105.

¹⁸ Amal Kumar Mukhopadhyay: *op.cit.*, pp. 157-159.

¹⁹ It means uniformity in thought and behaviour of a member of people.

²⁰ David B. Truman: *The Governmental Process – Political Interest and Public Opinion*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1963, p. 36.

scholars prefer using the former while others use the latter. However, it is to be noted that for those groups which exert pressure, the term 'pressure group' is generally used, e.g., trade unions and manufacturer's associations are interest groups when they interact with each other over questions like hours of work and wages. But when they try to influence the content of legislation by acting through or upon the institution of government, i.e., when they assume direct political significance, they become pressure groups.²¹ Therefore, in a way, all interest groups may eventually become pressure groups.

The political party and pressure groups are two significant social groups which have a great deal of relevance to the functioning of the modern political process. It has been observed that the pressure group is as old as the political party. In fact, certain political parties have originated as pressure groups which in course of time, have got converted into political parties, for example, in Britain the formation of Labour Party in 1906 was preceded by the formation in 1900 of the Labour Representation Committee which was technically a pressure group. Similarly, in India, the Indian National Congress, as it was founded in 1885, was more a pressure group which took quite a number of years to assume the form of a full-fledged political party.²² The political party and pressure groups are both organised structures, however, there is a lot of difference between them. In the first place, the political party is a multi-interest group which accommodates heterogeneous interest and tries to reconcile these interests with each other. The pressure group, on the other hand, is a social

²¹ Stephen K. Bailey: *American Politics and Government - Essays in Essentials*, Oxford and IBH Publishing Co., Calcutta (Indian Edition), 1970, p. 144.

²² Amal Kumar Mukhopadhyay: *op cit*, pp. 152-153.

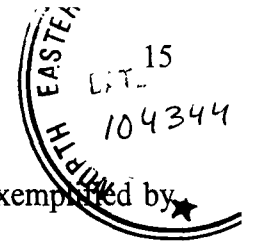
group that represents a far more homogeneous interest and is more interested in an effective articulation of this interest. The political party having a membership base wider than the pressure group have policies on a much wider range of issues, covering almost every field of governmental activity. Whereas, the pressure group have policies only on those issues whose interest it represents. The political party is not merely content with formulating policies. Thus, for the sake of giving effect to these policies, it tries to run the government and therefore, aims to capture political power. A pressure group, on the other hand, always avoid the corridors of political power.²³ In this context, a major distinction between the pressure group and the political party is in the focal points of their attention.²⁴ The political party is mainly concerned with government and seeks to staff the major policy-making positions in government. Pressure groups on the other hand, are spokesmen for sectional interests and are mainly concerned with particular issues of public policy affecting their own interest.²⁵

The differences between the pressure group and the political party are more prominent in developed countries like America compared to others. Thus, in some political systems a political party is found to have successfully accommodated some of the important pressure groups. For example, in Britain, the Labour Party is mainly composed of trade unions whose members have acquired indirect membership in the party. In France, some of the political parties are in actual practice pressure groups. Further, in some countries,

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.

²⁴ Abraham Holtzman: *Interest Groups and Lobbying*, The Macmillan Coy., London, 1966, pp. 10-11.

²⁵ C.N. Somarajan: *Pressure Groups and Democratic Politics*, Deep and Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1988, p. 22.



pressure groups work more as agents of political parties and this is clearly exemplified by the Indian Trade Unions working under the direct control of political parties.²⁶

In this context, it is interesting to examine the Western theories on pressure groups and their applicability to Indian conditions. Diverse explanations are offered as to the origin and growth of pressure groups in a modern polity. The most important of the modern pluralists was Arthur F. Bentley who was of the opinion that no interest could be considered to exist unless manifested itself in group action, he was more concerned of the interest of the group as a whole rather than individual or national interest.²⁷ David Truman's "disturbance theory", envisage people as being stimulated to organise as their relationship with other groups or institutions undergoes disturbance or alteration. He argued that "the increasing complexity of our society and the rapidity with which changes have occurred – create greater intensity as well as frequency of disturbances – have made the association the most characteristic and pervasive sort of political interest group".²⁸ John C. Calhoun's theory of "concurrent majority" envisages men with conflicting and opposite interests' unite together to form a majority group to promote the common good of all.²⁹ Then comes the "exchange theory" propounded by Robert Salisbury which postulates that individuals enter into inter-personal relationships because they derive some benefit from the relationship in exchange,³⁰

²⁶ A.K. Mukhopadhyay: *op.cit.*, pp. 155-156.

²⁷ Arthur F. Bentley: *The Process of Government – A Study of Social Pressure*, The Principia Press Inc., Bloomington, 1949.

²⁸ David B. Truman: *The Governmental Process – Political Interest and Public Opinion*, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York, 1962, p. 106.

²⁹ John C. Calhoun: "A Disquisition on Government and Selections from the Discourse", in C. Cordon Post (ed.), *Introduction*, The Liberal Arts Press, New York, 1953, p. 38.

³⁰ Robert H. Salisbury: *Interest Group Politics in America*, Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., New York, 1970.

so it seems to be a give and take policy and the success of the group depends on the leader who initiated the formation of the group. Mancur Olson Jr. in his book, *The Logic of Collective Action* (1968), propounded the “by-product” and “special interest” theories. His theory of collective action revolves around self-interest and personal economic aggrandisement. Self-interest is a human weakness which stems from the fact that each individual has personal goals to achieve apart from the joint goals of the whole group.³¹ Thus, here men enter into groups not for the benefit of the group as a whole but for their own individual benefits.

Bentley’s group theory has been criticised on the ground that the omission of individual interest and national interest cuts at the very root of the conception of what is considered today ‘the modern society’. Truman’s theory is criticised on the ground that it neglects individual and national interest, however, on the whole, the theory is considered to be practical and will remain valid because the “disturbance” factors takes place more often than visualised, especially, in this age of discoveries, technology, wars, social upheavals, etc. However, Calhoun’s theory based on numerical majority seldom succeeds, for example, government based on numerical majority seldom lasts long, such as, the coalition Government of Meghalaya as observed in the recent years, for example, the Lapang led MUA Government lasted for few days, with effect from 10th March 2008 to 19th March 2008 and then came the MPA Government with effect from 19th March 2008 to 19th March 2009. Salisbury’s theory is criticised on the ground that the leader can abuse the powers vested in

³¹ Mancur Olson Jr.: *The Logic of Collective Action*, Schocken Books, New York, 1968.

him and this can lead to widespread corruption, immorality and subversion. Olson's theory is criticised on the ground that he did not delve into the formation of groups and is not clear on the phenomenon of lobbying. However, his theory is very much applicable to the modern times, especially to smaller groups.³²

Thus, it has been observed that Olson's special interest theory is more suited to Indian conditions as it moves with the times. Besides, pressure groups are compatible with the inborn instincts of man, his instinct for self-preservation, self-aggrandisement and greed. Thus, Olson's theory is very much applicable to Indian conditions because of the permit and quota systems prevailing in the country since independence.³³ Some Western thinkers such as, James Madison, Theodore Lowi, Robert Paul Wolff and E.E. Schattschneider criticise the pressure groups proliferation as bad for the democratic process or good government. They weaken democratic institutions by opposing formal procedure with informal bargaining.³⁴ However, all said and done pressure groups is a reality in this modern world of today and its importance as one of the social groups operating in the political process cannot be underestimated.

Pressure groups had been defined in various ways by different scholars. A.F. Bentley, an American political scientist, was the first to emphasise the role of pressure groups. He argued that, the governmental process is essentially a process of the interaction

³² For details, see L.P. Misquitta: *Pressure Groups and Democracy in India*, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1991, pp. 3-11.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

³⁴ For details, see *loc. cit.*

of the various groups that operate in politics and, therefore, in order to understand the process of government, one must understand the role of groups in politics.³⁵

D.B. Truman, in his book, *The Governmental Process*, defines pressure groups as:

Any group that on the basis of one or more shared attitudes makes certain claims upon other groups in the society for the establishment of forms of behaviour that are implied in the shared attitudes. The shared attitudes constitute the interest.³⁶

According to V.O. Key Jr., “such groups while they may call themselves non-political are engaged in politics, theirs is a politics of policy in the main”. He stressed on the political character of the pressure group.³⁷ Another scholar H. Zeigler defines it as, “an organised aggregate which seeks to influence the context of governmental decisions without attempting to place its members in formal governmental capacities”.³⁸ F.F. Castle defines it as:

Any group attempting to bring about political change whether through government activity or not and which is not a political party in the sense of being represented at that particular time, in the legislative body.³⁹

³⁵ A.F. Bentley: *The Process of Government*, Principia Press Inc., Bloomington, 1908.

³⁶ D.B. Truman: *The Governmental Process*, Knopf, New York, 1964, pp. 33-34.

³⁷ V.O. Key Jr.: *Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups*, Cromwell Co., New York, 1964.

³⁸ H. Zeigler: *Interest Groups in American Society*, Englewood Cliff, New Jersey, 1964, p. 30.

³⁹ F.F. Castles: *Pressure Groups and Political Culture – A Comparative Study*, London, 1967, p. 1.

Summing up the definitions given by a number of Western scholars, Amal Kumar Mukhopadhyay, an Indian scholar, observes that

A pressure group is a group that has a clearly identifiable formal structure where the members are linked to each other in terms of their common attitude or interest and it seeks to influence the process of public decision-making.⁴⁰

According to C.N. Somarajan, another Indian scholar, pressure group is, “a group organised for promoting the interests of its members by influencing the government without being part of it”.⁴¹

Another Indian scholar, Babulal Fadia, is of the opinion that, “pressure groups are interest groups as well as influence groups, they are private associations formed to influence public policy”.⁴²

From the various definitions given by the different scholars, we can refer to the term pressure group as any interest group whose members share common interests and attitudes and collectively work together to realise their particularistic interest, by pressurising the Government to make policies favourable to their interests. It appears, therefore, that pressure group signifies the existence of a group life and the people who form this group have shared

⁴⁰ A.K. Mukhopadhyay: *op.cit.*, p. 154.

⁴¹ C.N. Somarajan: *Pressure Groups and Democratic Politics*, Deep and Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1988.

⁴² Babulal Fadia: *Pressure Groups in Indian Politics*, Radiant Publishers, New Delhi, 1980.

attitudes. It also seems that pressure groups function within a formal organisation and they attempt to influence the legislature to pass laws in their favour. Last but not the least, the pressure groups make use of pressure tactics to press the Government for conceding to their demands. However, the effectiveness of a pressure group can be judged by the extent of governmental response to its demands.

The nature and characteristic of pressure groups in a society depends mainly upon the governmental structure, its activities and the socio-economic milieu within which a political system has to work. The number of groups and the intensity with which they are able to pursue their objectives depend upon the social legitimisation of group activity and the prospects of fulfilling group demands in a given political system. Ultimately, however, effectiveness of pressure groups depends upon their physical resources such as wealth, membership, etc.⁴³

Studies of pressure groups were conducted shortly after the end of World War II, in most of the developed parts of the globe, especially in countries whose systems permit relatively free political enquiry and at least tolerate the formation of extra-governmental associations. In the United States, it was after the publication of the book by Truman, that pressure groups were recognised for purposes of research, teaching and analysis of American politics. The organisation and operation of pressure groups are much wider in the United States than in other countries because of the system of Government with its

⁴³ H. Eckstein: *Pressure Group Politics*, London, 1960.

federalism, separation of powers and checks and balances,⁴⁴ prevalent there. Therefore such groups are considered very vital in the political sphere of the country. In Britain, pressure groups do exist but are not so influential as their counterparts in the United States of America. In Britain pressure groups are considered as useful, necessary and inevitable and regarded as a natural reaction against the growing power of the State.⁴⁵ Political role of pressure groups in dictatorial regimes is almost non-existent. However, the possibility of their existence cannot be rejected altogether. For example, in today's Pakistan, Islamic fundamentalist groups are actively engaged in influencing the policies of the military regime. In an authoritarian system, pressure groups are merely instruments of the State for securing ends which are state-determined or they may become part of the façade of government for legitimising decisions.⁴⁶ Thus, the role of pressure group seems to differ in different political systems.

A.K. Mukhopadhyay rightly argues that pressure groups are more of a necessary feature of highly developed societies that have undergone industrial, technological and scientific revolutions resulting in a speedy process of urbanisation and education, an extensive development of communications and inter-dependent and well co-ordinated social and economic life. The needs and interests of such societies are too many to be handled adequately by primary groups or political parties alone, and this is what explains the emergence of pressure groups that look after the host of interests which continue to expand

⁴⁴ O.P. Goyal: *Indian Government and Politics* (second edition), Light and Life Publishers, New Delhi, 1979, p. 160.

⁴⁵ N.H. Brasher: *Studies in Britain Government* (second edition), Mac Millan Press, New York, 1965, p. 79.

⁴⁶ Abraham Holtzman: *Interest Groups and Lobbying*, Mac Millan, London, 1966, p. 1.

their volumes with the further expansion of these societies. Thus, pressure groups are to be found mostly in the Western developed societies. In all the under-developed societies of Asia and Africa, barring a few exceptions like Singapore and Malaysia, few pressure groups are found to be active.⁴⁷

Although the study of pressure groups started during the early 20th century, in India, it is still very much only a modest beginning, for here it does not operate with as much vigour as in advanced and more mature societies. In fact, in India, pressure groups came to acquire prominence in the post independence period only.

At present, a large number of pressure groups exist in the country and play a definite role in politics. However, pressure groups in India have not achieved the same position as they have acquired in Western democratic countries. Moreover, caste, religion, region and language seem to exercise a dominant influence on their functioning. Thus, the pressure groups in India combine in themselves, elements of traditionalism as well as of modernity. The pressure groups in India do not always confine their activities to peaceful lobbying but often take resort to violent means for achieving their objectives. Therefore, it is alleged by the Indian State that some pressure groups have assumed the form of anti-national and destabilising forces in the political life of the country. It is interesting to note that in India, group pressure has been directed towards influencing the administration and implementation of policy rather than towards its formulation. These groups seem to have succeeded in

⁴⁷ A.K. Mukhopadhyay: *op.cit.*, pp. 169-170.

forestalling certain government actions and in modifying policy rather than in initiating it. For example, in the State of Meghalaya, the State Government in October 1998 raised the age of superannuation of State Government Employees from 58 to 60 years which came into force from 25th September 1998.⁴⁸ However, this order was opposed by the pressure groups, especially, the student and youth organisations which pressurised the Government to revoke it. Ultimately, in December 1999, the State Government had to concede to this pressure and passed an order to reduce the age of superannuation of State Government Employees from 60 to 58 years and this came into force from 31st March 2000.⁴⁹ This trend is also noticed in Kerala politics where the powerful interest groups try to influence the execution of policy rather than its formation. In fact, the pressure groups in Kerala are viewed as a determinant factor in the socio-economic life of the State.⁵⁰ In Rajasthan the trend of influencing the Government policy is also seen. For example, it was under the pressures of Rajasthan University and College Teachers Association (RUCTA) that the State Government agreed to give UGC pay scales to the College and University Teachers in 1977. Again, the State Government agreed to implement the pay-scales as recommended by Beri Commission for its employees under the pressure of the Employees Association in 1982. In Rajasthan, pressure groups, such as, Kshatriya Mahasabha and Kisan Sabha are considered as important pressure groups in the politics of Rajasthan. Other important associational pressure groups in State politics are trade unions, business organisations, peasant organisations, student organisations, Government Employees Associations, etc.⁵¹ In this context, Myron Weiner

⁴⁸ *Meghalaya State Government Order* dated 17th October 1998.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* dated 1st December 1999, Letter No. PER/26/98/Pt. I/72.

⁵⁰ Babulal Fadia: *State Politics in India*, Radiant Publishers, New Delhi, 1984, p. 118.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

points out that the organised groups in influencing the administration rather than the formulation of policy can create dissonance between policy making and policy implementation. This prevents progress and the speed with which goals of a Government can be fulfilled.⁵²

In Orissa, an interest group viz., the Kendu leaf traders seems to play an important role in influencing the politics of the State.⁵³ Pressure groups in West Bengal are a form of linkage and means of communication between the masses and the elite.⁵⁴ The student and youth organisations in West Bengal seem to play an important role in State politics.

In India, though most pressure groups lack the kind of maturity and influence that have been acquired by groups in the Western developed societies, it appears that student and youth organisations have the potential to play an important role in the politics of the country as a whole. Student organisations can be described as the brilliant instances of anomic groups. The history of such organisations dates back to the pre-independence period. In the 1920's, a student organisation was formed in Punjab under the leadership of Lala Lajpat Rai. This organisation played its part in the Non-violent, Non-Cooperation Movement and Civil Disobedience Movements of Mahatma Gandhi. In the same year, an All Bengal Students' Association was presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru. The Communist Party established their All India Students' Federation in 1936 and this Federation supported the war efforts of the

⁵² For details see, A.S. Narang: *Indian Government and Politics*, Gitanjali Publishing House, New Delhi, 1985.

⁵³ Fadia, *op.cit.*, p. 145.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 289-291.

British Government. The Congress, on the other hand, established another organisation in 1945 known as the All India Students' Union. This Union took part in the Quit India Movement and made very heavy sacrifices. However, in 1950, it was decided by the Congress leadership to depoliticise the students and, therefore, dissolved the organisation. Thereafter, the National Union of Students came into being. Even this was later disbanded and another body called Youth Congress came into being and this organisation exists even today. At present, the National Students' Union of India (NSUI) is a student organisation affiliated to the Congress and is operating as one of the pressure groups in the country.

Student organisations are only one among a multiplicity of pressure groups operating in India. The students do not form a distinct class in an economic or professional sense but are mostly mere adjunct of various political parties which use them to further their political or factional interests. For example, in West Bengal, all political parties have student wings at Calcutta University, such as, Chhatra Parishad, Students Federation of India (SFI), etc. In recent years, some student groups in India have succeeded in gaining considerable political mileage by not only emerging as receptive and hegemonic sections of the intelligentsia, but have even transcended their role as pressure groups by taking the shape of full fledged political parties. For example, the agitation led by the All Assam Students' Union in collaboration with the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad ultimately culminated in the formation of Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) which captured political power in the state under the leadership of some prominent student leaders. This seems to be a unique phenomenon in the political life of the country. Thus, it appears that in developing societies, student

activism has at times, brought down the government and succeeded in forcing the government to adopt policies perceived by the students to be conducive to their interests, such as, establishment of an agricultural university, transfer of a principal (of a government college), concessions in fees, better hostel facilities, etc.⁵⁵

It may be observed further that students take up both campus oriented issues as well as societal ones. What starts as a pressure on academic authorities slowly tends to build up as a confrontation with the government to meet their grievances and demands and this led the students to act as pressure groups. For example, in Gujarat in 1973-74, the students of C.D. Engineering College of Gujarat University started an agitation initially against the mess bills in the college hostels and later it developed into a widespread agitation against price rise and corruption and ultimately led to toppling of the Government. Thus, it appears that student organisations play a major role as agents of social change and political development. Moreover, it is seen that scholarly interest in the role of students in politics has grown immensely since the sixties, thus, reflecting the political importance of students in many countries.

The role of students in politics is becoming so increasingly important that as Lipset stated, it would be an error to ignore students in any effort to analyse the future of politics, whether domestic or international scene.⁵⁶ Myron Weiner, in his *Politics of Scarcity*, also

⁵⁵ V M Sirsikar *A Survey of Research in Political Science*, Vol I, Political System A Project sponsored by Indian Council of Social Science Research, Allied Publishers Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1979, p 94

⁵⁶ S M Lipset "The Possible Effects of Student Activism on International Politics", in S M Lipset and P G Altbach (eds), *Students in Revolt*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1969, p 521

treats the students as pressure groups.⁵⁷ V.M. Sirsikar, an Indian scholar, is of the opinion that the students do exert considerable pressure on the policy makers by their protests. Sometimes, these become violent and destructive of public property. However, in most cases, the students have succeeded in forcing the government to a desired policy,⁵⁸ for example, in January 1965, students in Madras led an anti-Hindi language agitation against the Government's policy to introduce Hindi language as the national language and ultimately succeeded in influencing the policy of the Government.

In this context, it has been observed that the Student Union since the 1990s are referred to as NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) in newspapers and journals in Meghalaya. A point to be noted here is that NGOs are totally different from a student union. It is a non-profit, voluntary citizen's group which is organised on a local, national or international level. NGOs do not promote a particular section of the society but are organised around specific issues, such as, human rights, health, environment, etc. which affects the whole of humanity, whereas, the student union on the other hand, tries to promote the students just as the trade union tries to promote the working class, to provide them with the best possible working conditions and wages. A point to be noted is that, both student union and trade union becomes pressure groups when they try to influence the policy decision of the Government for their own respective advantage.

⁵⁷ Myron Weiner: *The Politics of Scarcity*, Chicago, 1962.

⁵⁸ V.M. Sirsikar: *loc.cit.*, p. 94.

Apart from student organisations, there are youth organisations which also constitute an important category of pressure groups operating in the country today. The members are mostly young people drawn from all sections of society including students. The youth seem to play a significant role in the politics of the State and this can be traced back in history. In fact, all through modern history and particularly since the 19th century, participation of young people in mass movements has been very common. For example, in the 19th century, when most of the states had seen formal education and the introduction of a political system requiring the abilities of reading and writing, the newly educated young people found themselves more equipped to participate in politics than their illiterate elders. This newly emerging educated elite found their eager supporters among the high school and college students. History of the Assamese Students' Literary Club, Asom Chatra Sanmilan and the Jorhat Sarbojanik Sabha is illustrative of this trend.⁵⁹ Youth plays a significant role in the social and economic development of a society. It may be observed that with the passage of time and development and modernisation in science and technology, a gap has occurred between the older and the younger generation and this has created a situation in which the youth feel that they can no longer tolerate the faults of their elders and thus confront them on various societal issues.⁶⁰ An example may be cited from the history of militant nationalist movement in India, when a new and younger generation was coming up, a generation that had no faith in the moderate policies followed by the Congress so far and agitated for more dynamic techniques of political struggle. This led in formation of youth organisations which

⁵⁹ A.K. Baruah: "Approaches to the Study of Student Movements in North-East India", in A.K. Baruah (ed.), *Student Power in North-East*, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 2002, p. 3.

⁶⁰ Emathus Nongtdu: "Jaintia Youth Problems", in A.C. Sinha (ed.), *Youth Movement in North-East India*, Har-Anand Publishers, New Delhi, 1995, p. 149.

act as pressure groups pressurising the Government on various issues concerning the development of the society as a whole. Moreover, the youth constitute a receptive section of the intelligentsia in every society and they tend to exercise a hegemonic influence on the rest of the society by trying to thrust their own ideas on other sections of the society. They seem to be shaping the consciousness of a whole society.⁶¹ It is also seen that youth movement was prevalent in Central Europe as early as in the early part of the 19th century and this indicated the dissatisfaction and restlessness of the youth and it is in such movements that the social dynamics of modern youth find its fullest expression.⁶² In view of these developments, it may be argued that the youth are likely to play an important role in the politics of the State. In India, youth organisations, such as, Yuva Congress, Bharatiya Yuva Morcha, etc. are playing a significant role in Indian politics. There are a number of youth organisations operating in the State of Meghalaya today, for example, the Federation of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo People (FKJGP), Synjuk Seng Samla Shnong (SSSS), etc. According to Pascal Malngiang, 'youth' is a generic term and comprises both of students and non-students. It has been observed that in matters connected with student movements in the Khasi Hills of Meghalaya, the non-student youths have played an active role and have rendered support to the activities of the various student groups. In fact, the success of the various agitations led by the students is due to the support extended by such youth groups of various localities.⁶³ This indicates the important role played by the youth organisations in alliance with student organisation in modern society.

⁶¹ A.K. Baruah: *op.cit.*, p. 15.

⁶² Bibhash Dhar: "Youth Movement – A Symbol of Modernisation in Arunachal Pradesh", in M.N. Karna (ed.), *Social Movements in North-East India*, Indus Publishing Co., New Delhi, 1998, p. 113.

⁶³ Pascal Malngiang: *Students and Politics in Meghalaya*, Seven Huts Enterprise, Shillong, 1994, p. 57.

By and large, student and youth organisations have been studied interchangeably. However, there is a difference between them, students constitute a minority of the group called youth, they constitute those youths studying in colleges and universities whereas the youth constitute all members of the society on the basis of age criteria. Beyond this age criteria, there is nothing in common amongst them. They may be illiterate or literate, employed or unemployed, married or unmarried. They may also have a closer affinity with other groups in the society having different labels. Another point of difference is that the youth as a group is more amorphous and poorly organised as compared to student groups who are designated and accepted as a group in the context of their college and university. The youth are available as a human resource for other groups such as political parties, trade unions, etc. For example, the Youth Congress is the youth body of the Congress Party. However, what is significant is that the students as well as the youth constitute a heterogeneous group in terms of their socio-economic and occupational backgrounds.⁶⁴ It is to be noted that in India, as yet, pressure group politics has not attained the same level as its counterpart in the United States. Of course, this does not mean that pressures are not exerted on public policy by groups and individuals. Pressures, especially by student and youth organisations are definitely exerted on public policy as seen in the examples cited above.

In the light of the above discussion on a conceptual understanding of pressure groups, we propose to take up a study of student organisations as pressure groups in Meghalaya in the next chapter.

⁶⁴ Nikhlesh Kumar: "A Study of Youth Movements as Social Movements", in M.N. Karna (ed.), *Social Movements in North-East India*, Indus Publishing Co., New Delhi, 1998, pp.37-38.

CHAPTER – II

STUDENT ORGANISATIONS AS PRESSURE GROUPS IN MEGHALAYA

After a conceptual analysis of pressure groups in chapter one, we propose to take up a brief background of the formation and organisational structure of Khasi Students' Union (KSU), Jaintia Students' Union (JSU) and Garo Students' Union (GSU). This chapter also proposes to analyse the issues raised by these student organisations and to examine the similarities and differences in their perceptions on various issues. The latter part of this chapter will try to analyse the similarities or otherwise of the content of these programmes with the demands of some major student movements of the world in the late 1960s.

In Meghalaya, the politics of pressure groups is a recent development. However, there exist a number of interest groups in the State today which seem to have the potential to emerge as pressure groups in the political life of the State. The most prominent among them are the Khasi Students' Union (KSU), the Jaintia Students' Union (JSU) and the Garo Students' Union (GSU) which are basically student organisations. It appears that these organisations have more or less similar objectives and in recent years, they seem to be using some pressure tactics like bandh, picketing, road blockade, rallies, etc. to influence the policies of the Government of Meghalaya. It may, therefore, be argued that these three

student organisations are trying to exert group pressure in the present political scenario of the State of Meghalaya.

It may be noted that student organisations existed even before the formation of the State of Meghalaya. It appears that the visit of Subhas Chandra Bose and Maulana A.K. Azad to Shillong inspired the youths of this area to form a new representative organisation and thus was born the Shillong Students' Federation in 1938.¹ Interestingly the growth of the Students' Federation in Meghalaya has been closely linked with that of the Communist Party itself. The Students' Federation is not very strong in Meghalaya. However, in some areas of Garo Hills, notably in Mahendraganj, where Bengalis constitute a compact ethnic group, it has a good nucleus. However, the ethnic crisis and communal tension that followed it, led to substantial erosion in the strength of the Federation.² Another student organisation called Khasi Students' Association (KSA) was formed on 30th July 1955 and this organisation existed till 1970. The objectives of the KSA were to bring about an all round development of the student community and cultural development of the society. It is interesting to note that after the KSA was formed it abstained totally from taking part in the political struggle for Hill State.³ The reason for this was that the Association pledged to be non-political and upheld the commitment for secularism.⁴ During its two decades of existence, the activities of KSA were in holding annual competitions like sports, essay writing, extempore speech and

¹ Bijoy Chandra Sarma: *Asomar Jubak Aru Chatra Andolan*, Gauhati, 1960, p. 37.

² For details see, S. Sengupta: "Communist Party of India in Meghalaya, A Study of Radical Politics (1972-83)", Unpublished *M.Phil. Dissertation*, NEHU, Shillong, 1988.

³ A.K. Nongkynrih: "Youth Movement in Meghalaya - A Trend Analysis", in M.N. Karna (ed.), *Social Movements in North-East India*, Indus Publishing Co., New Delhi, 1998, p. 120.

⁴ Address of the Khasi Students' Association, Bestomanick Singh Syiem, in the *KSA Magazine*, 1966, p. 3.

social meets. The KSA also published an annual magazine which provided scope for the students to contribute their creative thinking.⁵ Another point of interest about this student organisation was that it was totally engulfed with its own activities and did not go beyond its cultural and academic walls. Moreover, it did not take up a single issue and avoided confrontation with any authorities.⁶ Thus, it was not a pressure group in the political sense at all.

In the 1960s another organisation called Hill Students' Union (HSU) was formed and the main agenda of this Union was the demand for a separate Law College and University. However, this Union lasted only for a short period. During this decade, the Khasi-Jaintia Students' Union (KJSU) was formed in 1968.⁷ The issue which this Union took up was against the policy of the Government of Assam to impose Assamese language in the Hills. Like the HSU, it, too, demanded a Hill University for the hill areas of Assam.⁸ Unlike the KSA, the KJSU took active part in the Hill State Movement along with the Hill State Leaders.⁹ Therefore, it seems that the KJSU had the potential to emerge as active pressure group in the politics of Meghalaya.

In 1970, an Autonomous State called Meghalaya was formed and two months after its formation, on May 23, 1970, a student organisation called Meghalaya Students' Association (MSA) was formed. However, this association failed to take up or identify any

⁵ A.K. Nongkynrih: *op.cit.*, p. 120.

⁶ Pascal Malngiang: *Students and Politics in Meghalaya*, Seven Huts Enterprise, Shillong, 1994, pp.9 & 42.

⁷ *U Nongsaiñ Hima*, dated 12.10.1968 and 16.10.1968.

⁸ Pascal Malngiang: *op.cit.*, p. 174.

⁹ A.K. Nongkynrih: *op.cit.*, p. 121.

issue and before winding up, the MSA was renamed as North-Eastern Hill Students Association on July 1970.¹⁰ A point to be noted here is that this association was more broad-based as it incorporated the whole State including the three ethnic communities of the State. In the early 1970s, another student organisation emerged called the Shillong Students Union (SSU) and the main aim of this Union was to provide assistance to those students who faced educational problems at the local or national level.¹¹ The SSU in its short tenure took up two main issues. One was to protest against the draft bill on the Indira Gandhi University meant for these Hills and due to its pressure the Government had to postpone the bill.¹² The ability of the SSU to pressurise the Government to concede to its demand indicates that it really acted as an important and effective pressure group in the State. The second issue which it took was against the proposal made by the Government of Meghalaya to shift the Meghalaya Board of School Education (MBOSE) to Tura from Shillong.¹³ However, it was not able to persuade the Government on the issue because the MBOSE was ultimately shifted. The issue of shifting MBOSE from Shillong to Tura seems to have antagonised a section of the society, especially, the Khasis and this is evident from the demand made by the Khasi youth from time to time to shift back MBOSE from Tura to Shillong.

In 1975, another student organisation was formed called the Meghalaya Students' Union (MSU) and the aim of the Union was to solve the problems faced by the students. In the late 1970s, this Union spearheaded a mass movement against influx of foreigners and

¹⁰ *The Implanter*, Shillong, dated 13.6.1970.

¹¹ A.K. Nongkynrih: *op.cit.*, p. 122.

¹² P. Malngiang: *op.cit.*, p. 175.

¹³ *Loc.cit.*, p. 175.

along with the KSU which was formed on 30th March 1978, seemed to have created an impact in the State of Meghalaya with this public issue.¹⁴ However, by early 1980s, the MSU could not sustain the movement and it finally fizzled out.¹⁵ In the MSU, one of the main constituents was the KSU. Students who formed this organisation were mainly drawn from North-Eastern Hill University and the twelve colleges from Shillong.¹⁶ In a sense this marked the beginning of an era of ethnicity - oriented student movement. It may be interesting to note that recently, on June 2001, the KSU Girls' Wing was also formed and within a month of its formation, this wing took an active part along with the main body in the agitational programmes against the State Government.

Meanwhile, in the Garo Hills, the All Assam Garo Students' Union (AAGSU) was formed during the Hill State Movement. The main aim and objective of this student organisation was to help the political leadership to attain a separate State from Assam. The AAGSU during its life time acted as a pressure group and made use of various pressure tactics to highlight its demands. However, this organisation was active till 1977, today it is defunct.¹⁷ In June-July 1987, in the wake of the anti-foreigners agitation sponsored by the KSU in Shillong, the Garo Students' Union (GSU) was formed in Garo Hills. The move for the formation of this Student Union came from the Shillong Achik Students' Union (SASU).¹⁸

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁵ A.K. Nongkynrih: *op.cit.*, p. 123.

¹⁶ P. Malngiang: *op.cit.*, p. 12.

¹⁷ Pascal Malngiang. "Student and Youth Organisations in Meghalaya", in A.K. Baruah (ed.), *Student Power in North-East India*, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 2003, p. 184.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

The third student organisation which this work proposes to study is the Jaintia Students' Union (JSU) formed in 1970. Students who formed this Union were drawn mainly from Jaintia Hills and its main objective is to uplift the welfare of the Jaintia students. Prior to this Union, in 1968, the first student organisation to emerge in the Jaintia Hills was the Khad-ar-Doloi Students' Union (KDSU). The main aim and objective of this Union was to take part in activities that are constructive for the community and to preserve their cultural heritage. However, this Union lasted till 1971.¹⁹ Later as stated above, the JSU was formed and till date it is one of the most important and active student organisations operating in Jaintia Hills. Thus, it is seen that with the creation of the State of Meghalaya, in course of time, these three student organisations emerged representing their respective ethnic communities, each trying to protect and promote their respective communities.

In contrast with student politics in the rest of India, politics of Student Unions in Meghalaya is mainly marked by ethnicity. The reason for this lies in the fact that in Meghalaya, class polarisation has not taken place because of lack of industrialisation.²⁰ This means that clan based politics takes precedence over class based politics in Meghalaya. In this context, it is interesting to note that student organisations among other communities of North-East India, such as, All Assam Students' Union or All Bodo Students' Union and others seem to raise issues which concern their respective ethnic communities. It is also seen that they seem to acquire longer duration compared to the intense short-lived student agitations of the West and they also seem to be playing a major role in shaping the

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

²⁰ S. Sengupta: *Regionalism in Meghalaya*, South Asian Publishers, New Delhi, 2005.

consciousness of a whole society.²¹ Perhaps this is the reason why a party like the Communist Party of India could not get much foothold through its All India Students' Federation (AISF) and All India Youth Federation (AIYF). It also could not put up a challenge against the student and youth organisations based on ethnic lines in the State of Meghalaya.

A look at the Constitutions of the three student organisations will give us a much better understanding of their respective organisational structures. The KSU adopted a Constitution on the 18th December 1981 which was later renewed in 1993, the JSU adopted it in 2001 and the GSU on 27th March 1999. A point to be noted here is that, on this day, the GSU brought all the units situated in Garo Hills, Khasi Hills and parts of Assam under the control of the Central Body which is situated in Tura and this day is being celebrated as the Unification Day of the GSU.

Based on the findings in the Constitutions²² of the three Student Unions the aims and objectives of the KSU, the JSU and the GSU are as follows:

Article 2 of the Constitution of the KSU (1993) states that

²¹ Apurba K. Baruah: "Approaches to the Study of Student Movements in North-East India", in A.K. Baruah (ed.), *Student Power in North-East India*, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 2002, p. 15.

²² *Ka Kot Aiñ (Constitution) Iong Ka Seiñ Jaiñtia Students' Union*, 2001; *Ka Riti Trei Kam Jong Ka Khasi Students' Union*, 1993. Typed copy of the Constitution of the GSU as obtained from former President of the Union, Purno K. Sangma on 21st August 2003.

1. To improve the education of all students through various ways and means.
2. To demand from the Government to set up infrastructural facilities which would develop the society.
3. To fight against unemployment of the educated youths and to encourage them to take up business and trade activities.
4. To demand from the Government to protect and promote the indigenous tribes by enacting rules and regulations that business, trade, members of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly and land owners are concentrated only among the local indigenous tribes.
5. To instil in the indigenous tribes the importance of their language and culture and to preserve the traditions of the Khasi tribes.
6. To instil among the indigenous tribes a sense of unity and peace and harmony, hard work and love for their homeland.
7. To promote a feeling of brotherhood among the indigenous tribes irrespective of their different communities and religion.
8. To eradicate all evils like, drugs addiction, alcoholism, mixed marriages and benami, etc.
9. To fight against infiltration of foreigners and influx.
10. To try to achieve for the Khasi State the special status accorded to Jammu and Kashmir.

Article 2 of the Constitution of the JSU (2001) states that

1. To promote the youths and students and the society at large. To refrain from joining politics, religion or any other NGOs which could affect peace and harmony in the society.
2. To demand from the Government to promote the education and provide employment to the youths of the society.
3. To instil among the tribes a sense of unity and equality.
4. To protect the rights of each and every citizen without being bias towards any one.
5. To eradicate all social evils which occur within the society lawfully with the help of the Government.
6. To instil among the indigenous tribes the importance of cleanliness, discipline and also to provide help to the poor and needy.
7. To promote the youths in the fields of sports and games, music and other recreations.
8. To appeal to the Government to promote the education of the Jainita youths.
9. To render help to the students and the youths in all aspects.

Article 7 of the Constitution of the GSU (1999) states that

1. To establish closer contact with Garo students, Garo youths as well as with Garo community residing in and outside India.
2. To promote the Garo community in every aspects of their life.

3. To protect and adjust the conditions of the Garo community in the fields of political, social, cultural, economic, education, religion, etc according to circumstances.
4. To promote and encourage the Garo language and literature of the Garo community.
5. To protect and safeguard the Garo people from all sorts of exploitation and injustice and to preserve the natural belongings of the Garos.
6. To demand for the posts and services from the Government for the Garo community.
7. To work for all round development of the Garo people in general.
8. To fight against any sorts of injustice done to the Garos.
9. To root out any sorts of anti-social elements from the Garo community.

It appears from the provisions in the respective Constitutions of the three student organisations that the main objective of the three Unions is to protect, preserve and uplift their respective communities. With regards to membership criteria, there is no need for a formal application in case of the KSU, whereas in the case of the JSU and GSU, individuals belonging to their respective communities willing to be a member need to apply for membership. In this context, we would like to point out that unlike the JSU which offers membership to all the tribals of Meghalaya, the Constitution of KSU (1993) provides that only those individuals belonging to the Khasi community such as, the Khyriam, Pnar, Bhoi,

War, and Lyngngam can be members of the Union.²³ Thus, the ethnic bias is very strongly reinforced in the KSU Constitution.

As stated earlier, the Constitutions of the three Student Unions provide us with their organisational structure. With regards to the KSU, we based our findings according to their Constitution of 1993. It is to be noted that the present elected office-bearers of the KSU could not locate the Constitution framed in 1981 because during 1989-90, the Union seems to have been disorganised. Therefore, in the 1990s when Paul Lyngdoh took up the post of President, he and his office-bearers framed a new Constitution on 4th April 1993.²⁴ Thus based on their respective Constitutions,²⁵ the Central Body of the three Student Unions seems to be the highest Legislative and Executive body of the respective Unions. The Central Executive Council (CEC) of the KSU is at the apex and enjoys more power than the General Executive Council (GEC) which is the second in the hierarchical structure and then comes the units. The CEC unites all the units together and can dissolve any unit which goes against its decisions. However, in exercising its powers, the CEC cannot ignore the importance of the GEC in getting its approval in certain matters relating to membership and public agitation. The GEC on its part binds the units together and strengthens the relation between the CEC and the different units of the Union.

²³ *Ka Riti Trei Kam Jong Ka Khasi Students' Union*, Constitution of the KSU, 1993.

²⁴ Discussion with Samuel Jyrwa, present President of KSU in Shillong on 7th and 21st August 2003 at his residence Mawprem.

²⁵ *Ka Kot Aiñ (Constitution) Iong Ka Seiñ Jaiñtia Students' Union*, 2001; *Ka Riti Trei Kam Jong Ka Khasi Students' Union*, 1993. Typed copy of the Constitution of the GSU as obtained from former President of the Union, Purno K. Sangma on 21st August 2003.

Likewise, in the JSU the Central Body lies at the apex of the Union. The Central body is the one which convenes the General Meeting, Central Executive Committee, Public Meeting and Emergency Meeting in case of an emergent situation. Then comes the circle which is the highest body of the units which falls under its jurisdiction. Then comes the units which look after the welfare and all-round development of the Jaintia people within their respective areas. Last but not the least, comes the non-active members who are neither members of the circle or units but occasionally attend the meetings and air their opinions and offer suggestions with regards to issues raised by the Union. This shows that the JSU has a democratic spirit because even non-members can participate in its meetings.

In case of the GSU as seen in Article 31 of the Constitution, the Central Executive Body lies at the apex of the Union and is the supreme and final authority in the interpretation of the Constitution of the Union and its decision shall be final and not liable to be questioned by any person in a court of law.²⁶ In this context, it is interesting to note that unlike the two former Unions which are similar in their organisational structure, the GSU consists of a Central Organisation, Central Executive Body, Zonal Organisation, Zonal Executive Body, Regional Units and the State Organisation. Thus, it seems that the three student organisations are formally organised in a systematic manner. Here it may be noted that the units and circles of the KSU and JSU can operate independently within the area of their respective jurisdiction, but they cannot go against the decisions and orders of their

²⁶ Constitution of the GSU, *Ibid.*

respective Central body. In the same manner, the zonal and regional units of the GSU operate under the supervision of the Central body of the Union.

An important point to be noted here is that none of the Constitutions of the three Student Unions made a mention of female members or of their eligibility to hold important posts in the respective Unions. Thus, it seems that all the three Student Unions are male-oriented. However, it may be pointed out that there is a mention of female members in the Constitution of KSU 1981, which is untraceable at present. It states that no female can contest for the important posts of President, General Secretary, Finance Secretary and the like except for posts such as, that of Vice-President and Assistant Secretaries to all the important posts from General Secretary to Publicity Secretary.²⁷ Thus, it seems that in 1981 Constitution of the KSU, there was a provision for female members but it appears that there is no such provision in 1993 Constitution of the Union. However, it seems that the present members of the KSU have realised the importance of having female members in their Union for in June 2001, the KSU Girls' Wing was formed. Within a month of its formation, this wing took an active part in the agitational programmes along with the main body against the State Government.

In the discussion held with the leaders of the three Unions, it emerged that even though there is no such provision in their respective Constitution the female members are welcome to join the organisations at any time. The question which arises in this context is, if

²⁷ N. Kumar and A.K. Nongkynrih, "Khasi Students' Union: A Preliminary Enquiry", in A.C. Sinha (ed.), *Youth Movement in North-East India*, Har Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1995, p. 196.

women members are welcome, what prevented the provision of women's membership in the Constitutions of these Unions? Moreover, in the Constitution of the KSU 1981, there is evidence of a strong patriarchal bias. There seems to be no bar for the symbolic enrolment of women in the organisation. But preventing women from holding important posts is tantamount to preventing them from decision-making roles. It may be argued that exclusion of women from the power structure within the KSU is to be understood only within the overall framework of their marginalisation from politics in general. In this context, the KSU asserted that in the 1981 Constitution of the Union, women were exempted from holding higher post because the prevailing situation at that point of time, that is, during the 1979-1980 was not conducive for female members to hold high posts, for it might endanger their lives as the situation was volatile due to the agitation for deportation of foreigners from Meghalaya. Moreover, the Union asserted that the President and Vice-President of the Girls' Wing of the KSU are ex-officio members of the CEC. Therefore, the allegation that it seems to be male dominated is wrong. In fact, the Union argued that it seems the women folk of their community feel that their male counterparts are doing a good job therefore the need to fill the vacuum does not arise. Thus, they do not come forward to join the organisation and take up the important post in the Union.²⁸

As stated earlier, let us examine the similarities and differences among the three student organisations in their perceptions on some important issues raised by them. An analysis of the memoranda submitted by the three Student Unions, viz., the KSU, the JSU

²⁸ Discussion with KSU present President Samuel Jyrwa on 14th March 2009 at his residence in Mawprem, Shillong.

and the GSU, to the Government of Meghalaya,²⁹ that most of the issues raised by them are related to the upliftment and development of their respective ethnic communities. By observing the various issues raised by the three Student Unions, it seems that in certain cases, they have raised common issues, such as, influx of foreigners, inner line permit (ILP), work permit and boundary dispute and tried to pressurise the government to implement ILP and work permit and take measures against influx. Further, it is also seen that in realising their objective they supported each other's agitational programmes. In fact, the GSU in its statement in one of the local newspaper expressed its appreciation on the efforts made by the KSU in raising what they term 'common issues'.³⁰

Apart from the common issues they share, it seems that there are differences among them in their opinions regarding certain issues such as, the Election Photo Identity card (EPIC), Reservation Policy and the agitational programmes. With regards to the EPIC, the KSU stated that it is not against the EPIC, but against the non-implementation of the proposed cut-off year for identifying the genuine citizens of India and is of the opinion that such non-implementation may allow the outsiders an opportunity to exercise the right to vote which only belongs to the bonafide citizens. The KSU by its aggressive attitude compelled the Government to stop the operation of EPIC scheme in the State in September 2001 for the time being. What is interesting here is that the postponement by the Government in this regard was only done in the Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills whereas in

²⁹ Memoranda submitted by the KSU, the JSU and the GSU to the State Government: REF No. KSU/CEC-2000-01 dated 19th December 2001; REF No. KSU/REP-22/02-03 dated 26th March 2003; Memo No. JSU/CB/2002/03/01 dated Jowai, 1st March 2002 and Memo No. GSU/CEC/Misc-2001-2002 dated 18th October 2001.

³⁰ "GSU reiterates stand", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 8th Sept., 2001, p.1.

Garo Hills it functioned smoothly.³¹ Thus, this clearly indicates that the GSU is not of the same opinion with the KSU and the JSU in this regard.

On the reservation issue, initially, the KSU was on the one hand and the JSU and the GSU on the other and later, the KSU and the JSU were pitted against the GSU. It seems that when the KSU raised the said issue and demanded review of the present job reservation policy, the JSU as well as the GSU conveyed their displeasure and disagreement on the proposal put forward by the KSU. The JSU opted for a 30 percent reservation for each of the indigenous tribe whereas the GSU demanded maintaining status quo on the issue, i.e., 40 percent for the Garos.³² However, on 27th September 2001, the differences between the KSU and the JSU were resolved in a five hour joint meeting and both agreed to a 90 percent reservation quota on merit basis for all the three indigenous communities leaving only 10 percent for others.³³ Another interesting outcome of the meeting was that both the Student Unions agreed to form a co-ordination committee with the KSU President as its Chairman and JSU President as its Secretary. Further, the KSU expressed its wish to involve the JSU in the future rounds of discussion with the Government since both had decided to adopt a common stand on the issue.³⁴

³¹ "Yn mudui pyrshah ka KSU sha High Courts ban pynsangeh shondur EPIC", in *Mawphor* (Khasi Daily), dated 2nd July 2002, pp. 1 & 5.

³² "KSU, JSU to discuss reservation policy" in *The Shillong Times*, dated 25th Sept. 2001, p. 1.

³³ "KSU, JSU agree on reservation, form coordination committee", *The Shillong Times*, dated 28th Sept. 2001, p. 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Regarding the GSU stand on reservation policy, the KSU is of the opinion that the present reservation policy should be reviewed so as to allow the Garo brethren to imbibe the spirit of competition and hard work which the present policy had killed. It was pointed out by a Garo politician that the GSU could fill up only 15 percent out of the 40 percent and, therefore, the KSU should not agitate on the said issue. However, the KSU challenged the argument by pointing out that it is precisely due to the above fact that the reservation policy need to be revised so as not to allow wastage of 25 percent which could be filled up by the Khasis and Jaintias.³⁵ The GSU till date is against the new reservation policy proposed by the KSU. It may be argued in this connection that the KSU's emphasis on merit, competition and hard work in the context of State level reservation policy is appreciable. But the point is – does the KSU subscribe to a similar view as far as reservation at the national level is concerned and where social justice to backward sections has been the principal objective behind reservation irrespective of merit?

On the issue of trading licence to non-tribal traders, the three student organisations share the same opinion and support each other on the said issue. On the issue of Right to Information (RTI), the three Student Unions share the same sentiment and stated the RTI is an important Act and will provide transparency and accountability to the public. On the issue of affiliation of Sikkim colleges under NEHU, the three Student Unions held a meeting amongst themselves and they are against the issue. On the issue of Railway head, the KSU is against it whereas the GSU is in favour of it citing the reason that the State will benefit

³⁵ “KSU reiterates review of reservation policy”, in *The Shillong Times*, dated 10th June 2001, p. 1.

economically as well as the public. On the said issue, the JSU initially was neither for it nor against it, however, the present President of JSU Elnathan Pale, asserted that the Union is in favour of the Railway head, for without proper transportation how will the State develop. In fact, he argues that the State Government should bring the Railway head not only to Byrnihat but to the capital itself, i.e., Shillong. On the issue of uranium mining, divergent views is expressed by the three Unions, the KSU is very much against it citing health hazards the reason for its opposition. The GSU is of the opinion that it is not in favour of mining at the moment, needs to educate the public on the said issue. On this issue, the JSU initially supports the KSU but at present the stand of the JSU has changed. The Union is in favour of uranium mining.³⁶

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that apart from the above difference, the GSU also expressed its differences of opinion regarding agitational programmes called by the KSU. According to the GSU President, if such agitations continue, it is going to affect the future of the students.³⁷ The GSU President also expressed displeasure over the method of agitation by the KSU affecting schools and colleges and the aspiring medical students. He further stated that the GSU will not agitate the KSU way.³⁸ In stating the above, the GSU seems to be indicating that it does not share the same perspective with the KSU on the above issue. The KSU by floating its own political party is being criticised by the JSU that being a student body it should have not joined politics. The GSU on the other hand, is of the opinion

³⁶ See Appendix I, II, III.

³⁷ "Diaw U President ka GSU ba iakhin ka KSU", *U Nongsaiñ Hima*, dated 3rd Sept. 2001, pp. 1 & 4.

³⁸ "GSU reiterates stand", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 8th Sept. 2001, p. 1.

that the Opposition in the State is not effective, therefore, the KSU feels that as a Student Union cannot influence the Government but as a political party could influence the policy decisions of the Government. The GSU is the only student body who has asserted that it has preference for the Garos compared to the Khasis and the Jaintias. Thus the ethnicity is very much reinforced in the GSU.³⁹

Here, the compulsions and the contradictions of ethnicity based politics come to the fore, particularly on the reservation issue. It may be noted that since each of these Student Unions has an ethnic constituency to cater to, their arguments and counter arguments on the reservation issue are conditioned mainly by the interest of the said constituencies. The limitations of the ethnic politics have thus come out in the open. These differences on the reservation policy among the three student organisations, viz., the KSU and the JSU on one hand and the GSU on the other have unleashed social forces under whose leadership the demand for a separate Garoland is gaining momentum. In this context, it is interesting to note that the KSU support the Garoland demand raised by the GSU, since the KSU itself supports the formation of a Hynniewtrep State.⁴⁰ This is again a manifestation of ethnic polarisation in the State.

In the late 1960s, there was an upsurge of student and youth movements throughout the world. In this context, as stated earlier, we will try to discuss the similarities and

³⁹ See Appendix II and III.

⁴⁰ Discussion with Samuel Jyrwa, present President of KSU in Shillong on 7th Aug 2003 at his residence Mawprem.

differences between the issues raised by the student organisations of the late 1960s and early 1970s and the student organisations of Meghalaya at present. Since its inception, it is seen that the student organisations of Meghalaya seem to have the tendency to raise many issues which are mainly political and social in nature, such as, boundary issue, creation of vacancies in different departments of Government, reduction of the size of the ministry and officials, Chairman and Vice-Chairman of various Boards and Corporations, adoption of Article 371 of the Constitution of India in order to empower and protect the local chiefs according to the cultures and traditions of the Khasi etc.⁴¹ In this context, it may be observed that in America, in the 1960s, student activism was based almost entirely on broad political issues, such as, the links between the Universities and the Vietnam war in the 1960s, and also on social questions and not so much on academic or university matters. In fact, the magnitude and scope of student activism depended on political currents in society.⁴² However, this does not mean that they did not raise issues which were academic in nature, they did, in few instances, such as, in case of American student movements in the 1960s and the campus fee speech issues of the 1950s.⁴³ Similarly the student organisations of Meghalaya at times do raise issues which are academic in nature, such as, demand for 90 percent reservation for admission of local indigenous students in the various colleges in the State⁴⁴ and asking the authorities of North-Eastern Hill University to revert back to the old system of education and to include two of its members in the Academic Council.⁴⁵

⁴¹ "Mynta ka Sngi ka rally KSU ha Mawkhar", in *U Nongsaiñ Hima*, dated 25th Sept. 2000, p. 1.

⁴² P.G. Altbach: *Student Politics in America - A Historical Analysis*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1974, p. 211.

⁴³ *Loc. cit.*, p. 211.

⁴⁴ "Da ka bhah kam 60% dawa ka KSU", in *U Nongsaiñ Hima*, dated 26th June 2000, pp. 1 & 4.

⁴⁵ "Iakynduh ka KSU ia COE ka NEHU", in *U Nongsaiñ Hima*, dated 6th June 2000, pp. 1 & 4.

It is interesting to note that there are quite a few similarities in the issues raised by the student movements of the 1960s and the present Student Unions of Meghalaya, such as, in America, the Black students demanded recruitment of more African students and faculty and a curriculum that predominantly featured Afro-American history and experience.⁴⁶ Similarly, the Khasi and Jaintia students are demanding for more reservation for them in colleges and employment. Another point to be noted here is that students in Britain demanded adequate student participation in the decision-making process and enough contact with faculty.⁴⁷ In the same way, the Indian students also have demanded for more student power in universities.⁴⁸ In this context the similarity is that the KSU had also placed a demand before the authorities of North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU) for inclusion of its members in the Academic Council.⁴⁹ Likewise, the Portuguese students also had demanded for academic freedom and university reform.⁵⁰ In the same manner one of the complaints of the Japanese students was inadequate student participation in the decision-making process.⁵¹

The Soviet students, the Chinese students, the Hungarian students, the Polish students and students of Czechoslovakia have similar objectives, in the sense that they were against the regimes in their respective countries and rose against them. Here, the difference lies between the students in socialist countries and the students of Meghalaya, for the latter is not against the Government or the ruling regime as such, but against Government policies

⁴⁶ S.M. Lipset: "Student Activists – A Profile", *The American Review*, July 1969, Vol. XIII, No. 4, p. 23.

⁴⁷ Subas Chandra Hazary: *Student Politics in India*, Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, 1987, p. 34.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴⁹ "U Nongsain Hima", *op.cit.*, dated 6th June 2000, pp. 1 & 4.

⁵⁰ S.C. Hazary: *op.cit.*, p. 37.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

which, in the opinion of these student organisations were not in favour of their respective communities. Another interesting point to be noted is that, students in Communist countries could seldom hope to fill the elite or leadership position in their society,⁵² whereas students of Meghalaya not only hope but have actually filled the leadership position, for example, the leader of KSU, former President Paul Lyngdoh, under the banner of political party Khun Hynniewtrep National Awakening Movement (KHNAM) contested the election in 2003 and the party won two seats in the Assembly and one of its elected members became a Minister in the Congress-led coalition Government. However, it is interesting to note that in certain Communist countries like Cuba and Vietnam the students provided for initial leadership which culminated in the formation of political parties, for example, the Communist Party of Cuba was founded after a massive student demonstration in the University of Havana.⁵³ The Vietnam Communist Movement was also, to a large extent, the off shoot of student movement in that country.⁵⁴

In comparison with the students of the developing nations such as, Latin America, Africa and Asia, it seems that there is a similarity between the demands of the students of Latin America with the demands of the students of Meghalaya. Just as the KSU demanded the inclusion of its members in the Academic Council, the students of Cordoba in Argentina demanded introduction of student participation in academic affairs through Cogobierno

⁵² *Ibid*, p 47

⁵³ S M Lipset "University Students and Politics in Underdeveloped Countries", in S M Lipset (ed), *Students Politics*, Basic Books, New York, 1967, p 12

⁵⁴ S C Hazary *op cit*, p 47

(student membership in all university committees and governing bodies).⁵⁵ Another similarity between the students of Asian countries and students of Meghalaya is that as in a large number of Asian countries, university students provided leadership to nationalist movements and a generation of political leaders were trained in these student movements.⁵⁶ Likewise, students in Meghalaya have also provided from their ranks political leaders in the State, e.g., former President of KSU, Paul Lyngdoh has emerged as a prominent political leader of the State. However, unlike the students of Meghalaya, the students of Africa, e.g., students in Tunisia and Algeria are in greater touch with the regime in power and hence student activism is much less anti-government⁵⁷ than the student organisations of Meghalaya who are always critical of the policies of the Government of Meghalaya.

In comparison with other student movements in India it may be noted that the Student Unions of Meghalaya have raised common issues with other student organisations of North-East India, such as, All Assam Student Union, the Bodo Student Union, All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union (AAPSU), etc., in that, they all raise issues which concern their respective ethnic communities such as, infiltration of foreigners, boundary issues, etc. Thus, it may be observed that whether the student movement takes place in a developed or a developing country, the fact remains that student's problems are more or less similar all over the world and thus there are certain similarities with a few exceptions of

⁵⁵ Fred Halliday: "Students of the World Unite", in A. Cockburn and R. Blackburn (eds.), *Student Power*, Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1969, p. 289; Kenneth N. Walker: "A Comparison of the University Reform Movements in Argentina", in S.M. Lipset (ed.), *Student Politics*, Basic Books, 1967, pp. 293-303.

⁵⁶ S.C. Hazary: *op.cit.*, p. 53.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

differences among them. In this context, as stated earlier, it is interesting to note A.K. Baruah's statement,

“that student movements of the North-East India not only seem to have acquired longer duration compared to the intense short-lived agitations of the West but they also seem to be shaping the consciousness of a whole society”.⁵⁸

Thus, we can conclude that student organisations of Meghalaya have an important role to play as pressure groups in the present and future political scenario of the State.

In the next chapter, we propose to discuss about the youth organisation, viz., the Federation of Khasi-Jaintia and Garo People (FKJGP) which like the Student Unions, is making its presence felt in the socio-political scenario of the State of Meghalaya.

⁵⁸ A.K. Baruah: *op.cit.*, p. 15.

CHAPTER – III

YOUTH ORGANISATION AS PRESSURE GROUP IN MEGHALAYA

In chapter II, we discussed about the student organisations of Meghalaya namely, the KSU, the JSU and the GSU and in this chapter, we propose to discuss about the youth organisation, viz., the Federation of Khasi Jaintia and Garo People (FKJGP) which like the Student Unions, is trying to make its presence felt in the socio-political milieu of Meghalaya. Let us examine the circumstances that led to the formation of FKJGP as a youth organisation trying to influence the politics of Meghalaya. This would be followed by an analysis of the issues and demands raised by the Federation. We will also make an attempt to examine the contradictions and complementarities between the stands taken by the three student organisations formed along ethnic lines on one hand and the perception of the FKJGP, as an umbrella organisation of the youth representing the three ethnic communities, on the other.

Prior to the formation of the FKJGP, attempts were made by student organisations to set up some kind of an umbrella organisation to embrace the students belonging to the various ethnic groups and districts. In this regard, the Meghalaya Students' Association (MSA) was formed two months after the formation of the Autonomous State of Meghalaya

in 1970, the Meghalaya Students' Union (MSU) in 1975 and the All Meghalaya Students' Union (AMSU) in the 1980s. However, all these student bodies were short-lived and their activities and membership were confined to the Khasi Hills and to Shillong in particular, though the name of the organisation envisaged that their jurisdiction cover the entire State.¹ Therefore, it seems that the FKJGP is the only social organisation which has a State-wide membership in Meghalaya.

The FKJGP was established on November 1, 1989 by a group of youths and elders from the tribes of Khasi-Jaintia and Garo under the leadership of Sounder Strong Cajee. The decision to float the organisation was taken at a largely attended meeting held at Khasi National Durbar Hall, Mawkhar.² The FKJGP was formed on the basis of the unity of the three main ethnic groups of the State, viz., the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos. The members of FKJGP are drawn from different age groups, from all educational backgrounds and occupations and the members are usually above the age of eighteen years. The aims and objectives of the FKJGP is to unite the indigenous tribes of the State for the common purpose of socio-economic growth, political rights and around common issues, such as, influx of foreigners, boundary issues, etc. It also aims to fight against threat to the local people from influx, protection of their social, economic and political rights and to act as a powerful voice through democratic means against oppression, corruption and nepotism in the Government.³ It is to be noted that unlike the student organisations, the FKJGP has no

¹ Pascal Malngiang, "Student and Youth Organisations in Meghalaya", in A.K. Baruah (ed.), *Student Power in North-East India*, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 2002, p. 186.

² Discussion held with former President of FKJGP, A. Basaiawmoit on 15th June 2003 in Shillong.

³ *Ibid.*

Constitution,⁴ although its leadership claims that it functions democratically based on consensus and majority decision. It also claims that its policies, decisions and election of office-bearers are done in the best example of democracy.⁵ Here, certain questions come to the forefront, viz., why does the FKJGP prefer to function in an informal manner without being bound by a Constitution of its own? Does it imply arbitrariness in its functioning in spite of the claim to function in the best example of democracy? In this context, it has been observed that the Federation was set up in 1989 and till date is functioning smoothly without a Constitution. Moreover, its leadership claims that they have By-Laws which are amended at regular intervals depending on the need of the hour.⁶

Usually, the organisational structure of any organisation can be understood from the provisions of its Constitution. However, in the case of the FKJGP, since it does not have any Constitution, we have based our findings according to the discussion with the former President of the Federation, A. Basaiawmoit.⁷ It appears that the FKJGP has a three-tier organisational set up, namely, the Central Executive Committee (CEC), the General Executive Council (GEC) and the District Executive Committee (DEC) and a number of circles in the different districts of the State.

⁴ Meanwhile it may be noted that the FKJGP is not even a registered organisation, therefore, the organisation does not feel the need to have a Constitution, information received from E. Lyttan, present President, FKJGP on 12th March 2009.

⁵ A. Basaiawmoit: *op.cit.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

The CEC is the policy making body of the organisation and is presided over by the President. It comprises of all elected office-bearers and meets as and when required. It has full authority over the functioning of the organisation in all matters and its decision is always final except on those matters which require the general approval of the GEC. The GEC is another powerful body which comprises of all the office-bearers of all the circles and units of the organisation. Issues of general importance including those on which the CEC alone cannot decide as also matters related to election of the President and CEC members are usually taken up in the GEC meeting. Another important body is the DEC which comprises of office-bearers of the organisation in a particular district of the State and functions independently except on issues that need guidance and authorisation of the CEC. Last but not the least, come the circles. The FKJGP has thirty-nine circles in the West Khasi Hills, twenty circles in the East Khasi Hills, five in Ri-Bhoi district, more than thirty circles in Garo Hills while in Jaintia Hills, the process of constituting of circles is still going on. In this context, it is important to note that the number of circles in the State is based on the present records available. However, expansion programmes are still going on.⁸

With regard to the issues it appears that most of the major issues raised by the FKJGP are political in nature, for example, the boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya, reservation policy, creating political awareness among the people etc. and also issues relevant to the social and economic life of the tribal society as a whole. In recent years, the FKJGP has resorted to a number of agitations and other pressure tactics to make

⁸ *Ibid.*

its presence felt in the State politics of Meghalaya. From the discussion we had with the former President of FKJGP, A. Basaiawmoit, it appears that after its inception in 1989, the first issue taken up by the organisation was illegal trading by non-tribal businessmen in the State. The organisation took up the issue as an open violation of trading by Non-Tribal Regulation Act 1954 of the District Council. According to the FKJGP, most of the non-tribal traders have been found violating the Act and carry out their business in the State without possessing valid Trading Licence issued by the District Councils.⁹ In this context, it is interesting to note that the said issue was first taken up by the KSU in 1987, however, it had no impact. Later the same issue was taken up by the FKJGP in 1990 and it led to social tension in various parts of the State.¹⁰ A point to be noted here is that the movement led and the issue taken up by the FKJGP was significant in the sense that by the end of the 1980's, there was a growing participation of the local indigenous people in business and trading activities.¹¹ This indicates that the said issue taken up by the FKJGP had created awareness among the local indigenous people to enhance their potential.

Recently, the FKJGP has threatened to revive its agitation against the illegal non-tribal traders in the State. It stated that the District Council had failed to enforce strictly the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC) (Trading by Non-tribal) Fifth Amendment Regulation 1989 and submitted a memorandum to the CEM of the KHADC in

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ P. Malngiang: *op.cit.*, p. 189.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 188. Also see Susmita Sengupta: "Entrepreneurship in Meghalaya in the Post 1972 Period – An Analysis", in David R. Syiemlieh and Manorama Sharma (eds.), *Society and Economy in North-East India*, Vol. 3, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 2008, pp. 87-91.

this respect.¹² Furthermore, the FKJGP stated that there are many non-tribals who are not genuine citizens of the State who have been issued trading licence by the Council to do business without proper verification and this had affected the indigenous citizens of the State. Therefore, the Federation had decided to pursue this issue with the CEMs of both the KHADC and Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council (JHADC) respectively, to ensure that only permanent non-tribal residents can set up business with valid trading licence from the respective District Councils.¹³ In this context, it is interesting to note that the FKJGP Garo Hills unit, in a memorandum to the Executive Committee (EC) of the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC), demanded immediate stoppage of issuing fresh pattas to non-tribals and to cancel pattas issued by the District Council since 1954 which according to them was illegal and against the law of the land.¹⁴ It further demanded immediate implementation of the provisions of the Garo Hills District Council (Trading by Non-tribals) Regulation, 1957 and issuance of trading licence there of to non-tribals to control their trade within Garo Hills District.¹⁵ From the above, it seems that the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo units of the FKJGP are working hand in glove regarding the trading licence issue and in doing so, are seeking to protect the welfare of the traders of their respective communities. Therefore, it appears that any issue taken up by the FKJGP are ethnic based.

Other major issues taken up by the FKJGP are Review of the Education Policy, Introduction of Marriage Act, Introduction of Railway Head for goods trains in the State and

¹² "FKJGP threatens stir against illegal non-tribal traders", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 15th May 2004, pp. 1 & 3.

¹³ "FKJGP to move District Council over trading licence", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 24th May 2004, p. 1.

¹⁴ "FKJGP asks GHADC to stop issuing pattas", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 13th June 2001, pp. 1 & 3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

strengthening of Meghalaya Land Transfer Act to ensure ownership of land in the State exclusively for indigenous local tribes, viz., the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos.¹⁶ The issues stated above raised by the FKJGP, if implemented by the concerned Government is very much likely to enhance the overall welfare and development of the indigenous tribes. Here again its ethnicity comes to the forefront.

Regarding education, the Federation under the leadership of its former President A. Basaiawmoit demanded revamping the educational policy of the State. It suggested that the syllabi and curricula should be revised and professional and trade courses introduced at the Matriculation level, to provide better infrastructures to schools, to enhance the standard of teaching and improve the basic infrastructures of the schools, like library, games and sports facilities and to provide free and compulsory education to children up to the age of fourteen.¹⁷ In this context, the Federation took up the issue regarding the malfunctioning of the Meghalaya Board of Secondary Education (MBOSE) with the concerned authorities. Interestingly, S.D. Basaiawmoit, Assistant Secretary of MBOSE, seems to share the same sentiments with the FKJGP regarding the said issue. For in a local newspaper (Khasi Daily) he stated that such short comings in the functioning of MBOSE will always happen as the Head Office is situated at Tura, far from the capital.¹⁸ Therefore, the Federation suggested that the Head Office of MBOSE should be shifted from Tura to Shillong.¹⁹ In fact, just recently, the FKJGP demanded an inquiry into the working of MBOSE regarding the

¹⁶ A. Basaiawmoit: *op. cit.*

¹⁷ P. Malngiang: *op. cit.*, p. 190.

¹⁸ "Kulmar treikam ka MBOSE, yn iakynduh ka FKJGP ia u Bah Rangad", in *U Nongsaiñ Hima*, dated 28th June 2001, pp. 1 & 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

leakage of question papers and stated that the incident has taken place for the second time in the State, the first one being in 2002 and condemned such shameful incident.²⁰ Therefore, it appears that the FKJGP by raising the above issue shows that though it is youth and not a student body, it not only raises issues pertaining to students, but is also capable of politicising such issues.

Another educational issue which the Federation took up was that it demanded from the authorities of NEHU to remove the condition to re-evaluate only those subjects where the students obtain more than 40 percent and above. It further demanded that even those students who failed and obtained less than 40 percent should also be permitted to seek re-evaluation of their scripts.²¹ Another issue taken up by the Federation was that first preference should be given to local indigenous students of the State based on merit, in terms of college admission and on this issue, the Federation had met all the Principals in Shillong and got assurance from them that priority will be given to local indigenous students.²² Another educational issue taken up by the Federation was regarding the present functioning of the Shillong Polytechnic. In fact, in relation to this issue, the Federation sought the intervention of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to solve the problems faced by Shillong Polytechnic. It stated that the students do not receive proper and regular teaching guidance due to lack of supervision. It was also pointed out that the concerned authorities have failed till date to appoint the Head of Department for Electronics

²⁰ “FKJGP seeks probe into Question Paper Goof up”, in *The Shillong Times*, dated 25th March 2004, p. 1.

²¹ “Bynniaw ka FKJGP bym kitkhia ka NEHU” in *U Nongsaiñ Hima*, dated 3rd July 2001, pp. 1 & 4.

²² “FKJGP for priority to tribal; students”, in *The Shillong Times*, dated 20th June 2003, p. 1.

Engineering for about ten years since its inception. Furthermore, the posts of Heads of Departments for both Computer Science Engineering and Information Technology have not been created in spite of tall claims to upgrade the Polytechnic with World Bank Funding.²³ Last but not the least, recently, the FKJGP raised another important educational issue. The Federation objected to the proposal of affiliation of Sikkim colleges under NEHU, for this would severely affect the admission prospect of the local indigenous students. The Union urged the Vice-Chancellor not to take any steps that could ruin the academic interests of the local students and requested him to persuade the Union Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DONER) and Union Ministry of Human Resource to refrain from any hasty decisions.²⁴ An interesting point to be noted here is that though the FKJGP is a youth and not a student body, it has taken up many issues affecting the interests of the students of the State as a whole. This also indicates that as an umbrella organisation of the youth comprising the three ethnic groups of the State, the FKJGP is expected to promote the welfare of all the local indigenous students of the State as a whole. The question that arises here is, whether the FKJGP has succeeded in doing so or have there been any contradictions in its stand towards the three ethnic communities. In other words, has it taken a preferential posture towards any community to the detriment of others? In this context, it is to be noted that its stand on the reservation issue is neutral, it is neither with the KSU nor the GSU. According to E. Lyttan, present President of FKJGP, the organisation is happy with the reservation policy as it is at present.

²³ “FKJGP seeks AICTE intervention on Shillong Polytechnic Affairs”, in *The Shillong Times*, dated 19th June 2003, p. 3.

²⁴ “FKJGP objects to affiliation of Sikkim colleges under NEHU”, in *The Shillong Times*, dated 30th September 2004, p. 3.

Regarding the issue of Marriage Act, the FKJGP stated that the form of marriage in the State is steadily deteriorating and, therefore, called for separations to be done in a legal manner so that the off-springs can get protection and maintenance.²⁵ With regard to the issue of Railway head, it is interesting to note that the FKJGP was the first organisation to demand for a Railway link in order to ensure speedy and regular supply of goods to the State besides bringing down prices of essential commodities and also provide direct and indirect employment to local unemployed youth.²⁶ Thus, the said issue raised by the FKJGP will not only benefit the local indigenous people but also try to solve the problem of price rise and unemployment to a certain extent. In the context of employment, one of the demands made by the FKJGP was scrapping of extension of age of retirement. The FKJGP had urged the authorities of NEHU to do away with the present system of extending services of NEHU teachers after retirement. It alleged that teachers in NEHU retire at the age of 62, while those in colleges retire at the age of 58 as per State Policy and this was considered unfair by the FKJGP as it deprived employment to the young and talented teachers who are qualified to pursue their career in the University.²⁷ Here, the FKJGP is obviously airing its concern about the potentially talented teachers among the local tribals only, in consonance with its ethno-centric policy.

Yet another important issue taken up by the Federation was regarding the mismanagement and corruption in the Meghalaya Transport Corporation (MTC). It stated that

²⁵ P. Manlgiang: *op.cit.*, p. 190.

²⁶ "FKJGP for early completion of Railway Head Project", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 8th April 2003, pp. 1 & 6.

²⁷ "FKJGP demands scrapping of extension of retirement period", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 16th June 2003, p. 3.

such irregularities have led to hardships and loss to the coffer of the State.²⁸ Another important political issue taken up by the FKJGP was to oppose the proposed tagging of seven Assembly Constituencies of West Khasi Hills to Tura Parliamentary Constituency which is proposed to come into effect from 2008. The Federation stated that regarding this issue, it would take up the matter with both the Delimitation Commission and Election Commission.²⁹ It is interesting to note that regarding this issue the members of the Garo community feels that it is wrong because it is going to hurt the sentiments of the people residing in those particular areas, but otherwise welcome such a move by the Government.

Yet another political issue taken up by the Federation is implementation of Meghalaya Right to Information Bill, for this would ensure transparency in all Government actions.³⁰ Recently, the FKJGP demanded rescinding of all the Power Deals made by the Government and quashing of the amendment made to the State Power Policy by the previous MDA Government on December 10, 2007.³¹ Thus, the FKJGP seems to be raising issues concerning all spheres of life, viz., academic, social, political, etc. A point to be noted here is that whatever may be the nature of issue, it relates to the interests of the three ethnic communities of the State. However, the FKJGP in the process of protecting the local indigenous tribes of the State has at times earned for itself the image of being an anti-non-tribal people organisation.³² Certain issues, which they raised seem to confirm this image,

²⁸ "Letter to the Chief Minister of Meghalaya" vide ref No. FKJGP/Cen/Memo/01/99 dated 16th February 1999.

²⁹ "FKJGP opposes move to tag Constituencies", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 13th December 2002, pp. 1 & 5.

³⁰ "FKJGP for Legislation of Information Bill", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 4th June 2004, p. 3.

³¹ "FKJGP calls off stir after talks offer", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 31st July 2008, p. 1.

³² P. Malngiang: *op. cit.*, p. 191.

for example, the FKJGP, Eastern Shillong Circle, raised the issue of issuing No Objection Certificate (NOC) by Rangbah Shnong to outsiders and Trading Licence by District Council to non-tribal businessmen, and appeal to all Rangbah Shnongs not to issue NOC to non-tribal businessmen.³³ However, this allegation was denied by the FKJGP, stating that it was neither anti-non-tribal nor anti-Indian but its sole aim was to work for the betterment of its people.

Other main issues taken up by the FKJGP were³⁴

- (a) finding a solution to the boundary problem between Assam and Meghalaya, particularly, in connection with the Block I and II, now in Karbi Anglong District of Assam;
- (b) ending the joint cadre system of IAS and IPS between Assam and Meghalaya;
- (c) to check price rise;
- (d) checking of influx into the State;
- (e) to generate employment facilities for the youth of the State;
- (f) to ensure the timely supply of bone meal, fertilisers and subsidised tools and machines to the farmers;
- (g) to change the name of the State to a more appropriate one based on the common cultural and topographical features of the State and finally
- (h) to set up the Third Meghalaya Police Battalion and remove the CRPF.

³³ "Pyrshah ai laisen ka FKJGP", in *U Nongsaiñ Hima*, dated 11th July 2001, pp. 1 & 4.

³⁴ *Mawphor*, Vol. (XII) 11, No. 250, dated 31st October 2000.

With regard to the issues of price rise and generating employment facilities for the youths, the Federation, as stated earlier, had demanded for a railway link so as to bring a solution to the above two issues. Regarding influx, the Federation had recently demanded exemption of Meghalaya from the purview of the Indo-Nepal Friendship Treaty 1950, in order to curb influx of foreigners into the State and re-opening of the infiltration check gate at Burnihat and early introduction of comprehensive three-tier identity card system in the State.³⁵

Interestingly, the Garo Hills District Circle of the FKJGP has raised special issues like the enforcement of the Forest Act to prevent destruction of forests, to set up the cell of Meghalaya Public Service Commission in Garo Hills and to establish the University Campus at Tura with Agriculture as one of the discipline.³⁶ Apart from the above, FKJGP Garo Hills Zone has demanded for regular power supply for the entire Garo Hills.³⁷ Regarding the power supply in Garo Hills, it seems to be in a bad state, for recently, during the opening ceremony of the Olympics 2008, the people of Garo Hills were deprived of the opportunity to watch the live telecast of the said programme due to power cut for hours.³⁸ Other issues taken up by this unit are setting up of a Winter Assembly Hall at Tura, upgradation of all the secondary schools of Garo Hills to higher secondary level and ITI complex of Tura to a full-fledged Polytechnic, availing of computer facilities with internet connection to all the cardinal educational institutions of the region and upgradation of the

³⁵ "FKJGP demands Meghalaya's exemption", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 8th September 2004, p. 1.

³⁶ A. Basaiawmoit: *op.cit.*

³⁷ "FKJGP seeks regular Power Supply for Garo Hills", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 24th December 2002, p. .

³⁸ "Power Cut: Garo Hills people miss opening ceremony", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 9th August 2008, p. 1.

ad hoc secondary schools to deficit ones. Another educational issue taken up by the unit was the opening up of Forestry, Public Administration, History and Archaeology and Mass Communication Departments in the Tura Campus of NEHU.³⁹ Therefore, it seems that both the Central body and the units of the FKJGP work together at times and sometimes independently, but the fact remains that the issues taken up reflect the ethnic bias of the organisation.

Let us now try to examine the complementarities and contradictions between the stands taken by the Student Unions formed along ethnic lines on the one hand and the perception of the FKJGP, as an umbrella organisation of the youth representing the three ethnic communities on the other. A point to be noted here is that although the FKJGP is not a student body, it has raised many issues related to academic interest of the students, for example, review of education policy etc. Interestingly, there are certain issues on which the FKJGP share the same opinion with the Student Unions, such as, the Meghalaya Land Transfer Act. The State Cabinet's decision to amend the Meghalaya Land Transfer Act, 1971 to include, the Hmar, Biate, Mikir, Karbi, Koch, Boro, Rava and Hajong as indigenous tribes besides the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos have met with opposition not only from the youth and student organisations but also from the opposition⁴⁰. From among the three student organisations, the KSU was the most vocal in its opinion against the decision of the Government. However, this does not mean that the other two student organisations do not

³⁹ "FKJGP wants Assembly winter session in Tura", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 13th June 2001, p. 1.

⁴⁰ "Government decision to amend Land Transfer Act draws flak", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 14th November 2002, p. 1.

share the same opinion with the KSU they do, since the main aim of the three Student Unions is to protect their respective communities. However, perhaps because of their distance from the capital, they cannot be active like the KSU which is based in the capital itself. The FKJGP, like the KSU, has expressed its opinion and made it known both to the Government and to the public at large of its displeasure with the decision of the Government on the said issue. In fact, in this connection, the former FKJGP president, A. Basaiawmoit, urged the various NGOs and the people to stand unitedly and openly oppose the decision to amend the Land Transfer Act.⁴¹ He further stated that the inclusion of other tribes will create a lot of problems for the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos as it would affect the reservation policy and also divide the benefits that can be derived from the Central Government.⁴² In this regard, it seems that the FKJGP has adopted a chauvinistic stand which will have far-reaching impact on the inter-tribal relations within the State.

Another issue which the FKJGP not only supported but share the same opinion with the Student Union, the KSU, was against the proposed move to shift the present Headquarters of the Custom and Central Excise from Shillong to Guwahati. Regarding the said issue, the KSU had submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister of PFM Government, F.A. Khonglam, expressing resentment over the reported order, while the FKJGP had threatened not to take rest till the cancellation of the proposal.⁴³ It is observed that the youth and student organisations were able to influence the policy-decision of the

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ "Move to shift Custom and Central Excise Headquarter opposed", in *The Shillong Times*, Dated 13th November 2002, p. 1.

Government. Though the details about the Government response will be discussed in chapter V, it may be argued here that the student and youth organisations are powerful pressure groups in Meghalaya whose influential tactics cannot be easily ignored by the government and the society at large.

Another common issue which the FKJGP and the KSU raised was regarding the Meghalaya House deal. Both were against the E.K. Mawlong led MPF Government and demanded scrapping of the agreement reached between the Government and the Asian Housing Construction Limited (AHCL)⁴⁴. Recently, the education cells of the KSU and the FKJGP respectively, took up the issue of the problem of college admission faced by the local indigenous students. The FKJGP stated that it will meet all the college authorities and will demand that local tribals should be given first preference in terms of admission.⁴⁵

Another issue on which the FKJGP share the same opinion with the student organisation, the GSU was the demand for cancellation of patta issued by the Garo Hill Autonomous District Council (GHADC) illegally to outsiders and the dual voters policy in which voter's names have been enrolled in the electoral list of both Assam and Meghalaya.⁴⁶ Another issue on which the GSU and FKJGP units of Phulbari worked together was their joint demand for action against those involved in leaking the question papers of the test

⁴⁴ "KSU, FKJGP demand State Government scalp", in *The Shillong Times*, Dated 17th October 2001, p. 1.

⁴⁵ "KSU to take up college admission problem", in *The Shillong Times*, Dated 20th June 2004, p. 2.

⁴⁶ "NGOs move to protect Garo Hills from encroachers", in *The Shillong Times*, Dated 11th June 2004, p. 3.

examinations of SSLC 2004, which had affected the examination process all over Garo Hills.⁴⁷

It seems that although the youth and student organisations do not necessarily work together regarding an issue, at a given time, their actions seem to indicate that they share the same opinion. For example, the issue regarding the proposed uranium mining at Domiasiat in West Khasi Hills was spearheaded by KSU and other NGOs. However, when the UCIL convened a one day seminar on the said issue, the FKJGP and KSU by their absence in the seminar⁴⁸ indicated that both share the same opinion. In this context, interestingly, a question arises – do they really share the same opinion? For according to a local newspaper, the KSU South-West Khasi Hills Unit urged the FKJGP President of Langrin circle and Chairman of Joint Action Committee, Lanphrang Kharbani, not to mislead the public without having enough knowledge about the ill hazards of uranium.⁴⁹ There are, however, occasions when student and youth organisations may not always share the same opinion, for example, regarding the Railway Head project. Interestingly, the FKJGP was the first organisation to support the said project. The KSU on the other hand, does not share the same sentiments on the said project. The KSU is very much against it and stated that it will remain firm in its decision to oppose the said project, for, in their opinion, this would become a channel for influx to the Hill State.⁵⁰ It is interesting to note here that regarding the issue, it may be recalled that the Centre had long back cleared the State's proposal to have Railhead

⁴⁷ "SSLC test Exam Question Paper leaked", in *The Shillong Times*, Dated 29th October 2004, p. 1.

⁴⁸ "KSU, FKJGP skip mining seminar", in *The Shillong Times*, Dated 27th August 2003, pp. 1 & 5.

⁴⁹ "KSU concerned over locals – UCIL relations", in *The Shillong Times*, Dated 6th May 2004, p. 1.

⁵⁰ "KSU reiterates stand on Railhead", in *The Shillong Times*, Dated 16th June 2004, p. 1.

at Burnihat in Ri-Bhoi district but could not materialised due to protests by certain NGOs including the KSU.⁵¹ It has been observed that on the issue of Railway head, the FKJGP specifically stated that goods trains are to be introduced. A point to be noted here is that, the organisation mentioned goods train and not passenger's train. Thus, it seems that the FKJGP like the students' organisation is apprehensive about the problem of influx, and therefore, it is in favour of goods train only. With regards to the reservation policy, which is one of the main issues raised by the KSU and which is eventually going to affect the three important indigenous tribes of Meghalaya, i.e., the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos is gaining momentum day by day with the members of different political parties taking a keen interest in its development. Regarding this issue, the GSU is very much against it and recently there was an all-party meeting convened by NCP MLA Edmund K. Sangma at Tura to oppose the State Government's proposal to review the reservation policy.⁵² Therefore, on the said issue the GSU is supported by the political parties of the State. On the said issue, the FKJGP seems to take a neutral stand, neither siding with the KSU nor opposing the stand of the GSU. Thus, the differences in their opinion on certain issues seems to indicate that in spite of their professed aim towards upliftment and betterment of their respective communities, the youth and student organisations view the outcome of certain issues from different angles. This is perhaps one of the reasons why the student organisations, viz., the KSU, the JSU and the GSU on one hand and the FKJGP on the other, are working independently of each other.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵² "ALL-party meet opposes reservation review", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 4th November 2004, p. 1.

Therefore, it is seen that both the youth and student organisations at times support each others demands and at times, contradict each other, but they raise issues which affect their respective ethnic communities. It has also been observed that the FKJGP, in spite of being an umbrella organisation of the three ethnic tribes of Meghalaya seems to be bias towards the Khasis and the Jaintias and this perhaps is one of the reasons why some members of the Garo unit of the FKJGP feel that the Central body of the organisation is meting out step-motherly treatment towards them, and therefore, have recently severed all ties with the main body. It has also been observed that till date important posts in the organisation seems to have been held mostly by the members belonging to the Khasi and Jaintia community, except on a few occasions, such as, in 1991 when Sounder S. Cajee, former President of FKJGP, was detained by the police, late Cyprian Sangma, took over as the acting President of the organisation. This somewhat negates the FKJGP's claim of functioning in the best spirit of democracy.

After the discussion on the youth organisation, i.e., the FKJGP as one of the pressure groups operating in the political scenario of the State of Meghalaya. In the next chapter, we propose to focus on the interaction of these organisations with political parties and on the popular perceptions about the major issues raised by these student and youth organisations.

CHAPTER – IV

STUDENT AND YOUTH ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR INTERACTION WITH POLITICAL PARTIES AND TRIBAL SOCIETIES OF MEGHALAYA

In the last chapter, we discussed in details about the FKJGP and attempts were made to analyse the contradictions and complementarities between the stands taken by the KSU, the JSU and the GSU on one hand and the FKJGP on the other.

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to examine the nature of the relationship that exists between the regional and national parties of Meghalaya on the one hand and the student and youth organisations on the other. An attempt has also been made to analyse the major demands raised by these organisations and the response of political parties and a cross-section of the public to the issues raised.

This chapter has been largely structured on the basis of information gathered from discussions held with prominent political leaders of regional and national parties of Meghalaya, one from each political party except the CPI (Communist Party of India), because in the contemporary political scenario of Meghalaya, the CPI has not been able to intervene significantly in the politics of students. Discussions were also conducted with the Presidents and General Secretaries of each of these student and youth organisations as well

as with 50 citizens who are not political activists, to understand the perception of ordinary citizens about the politics of student and youth organisations. An attempt was made to ensure representation of different ethnic communities of the State.

Let us first examine the regional parties which are prevalent in the State of Meghalaya. The first regional party which was formed in 1960 was the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference (APHLC) and this regional party was an outcome of the fear felt by the tribal leaders against the Assam Government for introducing Assamese as the official language of the State. It is of interest to note that it is under the leadership of APHLC that the movement for separate Hill State gained momentum and eventually the State of Meghalaya came into being in 1970. The Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP) was formed by a break-away faction of the APHLC which stood for full statehood and till date, is one of the oldest regional political parties. Another regional party formed in 1977 was the Public Demands Implementation Convention (PDIC), whose main aim was to redress the problems of the farmers and to render assistance to them through the Government machinery. The Hill People Union (HPU) was formed by a group of erstwhile APHLC and HSPDP members in an attempt at unification of the regional movement in Meghalaya.¹ The United Democratic Party (UDP) was formed in 1990s. In recent years, the People's Democratic Movement (PDM) and Khun Hynniewtrep National Awakening Movement (KHNAM) entered in the political scene of Meghalaya. However, the PDM which was widely believed to be a political party floated by the FKJGP, the youth

¹ For details see, S. Sengupta: *Regionalism in Meghalaya*, South Asian Publishers, New Delhi, 2005.

organisation, seems to have outlived its utility and recently the party has been dissolved. The KHNAM is another regional political party floated by the KSU, the most prominent student organisation of Meghalaya. It may be noted that the KSU has infiltrated the electoral politics of Meghalaya in spite of its claim that it is merely a student body and refrains from being an actor in power politics.

In order to get a better understanding of the exact relationship between the political parties and the student and youth organisations, discussions were held with the prominent political leaders of the State.² It has been observed that on the question of relationship between political parties of Meghalaya and the student and youth organisations, there is a unanimous response from all political leaders that they do not share any kind of relationship, political or otherwise with any of the student or youth organisations. Here interestingly, Lambor Malngiang (KHNAM) stated that though KHNAM was floated by the KSU, yet the relationship between them is like that of any other political party and a student body and as such there is no close relationship between them. According to him, political parties should not mix up with student organisations.³ However, Pascal Malngiang observes that, leaders of regional parties have asserted that the KSU was acting unknowingly as their student wing and hence the regional parties did not feel the need for having their own student wings.⁴ It may be argued, therefore, that the student and youth bodies are knowingly or unknowingly

² Discussions held with prominent political leaders, viz., (i) A.L. Hek (BJP) on 11th July 2006; (ii) P.T. Sawkmie (MDP) on 19th July 2006; (iii) H.S. Lyngdoh (HSPDP) on 19th July 2006; (iv) O.L. Nongtdo (Congress) on 3rd August 2006; (v) Lambor Malngiang (KHNAM) on 18th August 2006; (vi) S.D. Khongwir (UDP) on 29th August 2006; Jemino Mawthoh (NCP) on 25th August 2008.

³ Discussion with Lambor Malngiang (KHNAM) on 18th August 2006 at Secretariat in Shillong.

⁴ For details see, P. Malngiang: *Students and Politics in Meghalaya*, Seven Huts Enterprise, Shillong, 1994, p.64.

made use of by the political parties for their own political ends. Furthermore, this implies that regional parties either overtly or covertly, endorse the demands of the KSU which includes sensitive issues like implementation of the Inner Line Regulation Act, reservation of all sixty seats in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly for the local tribals, immediate removal of the names of the foreigners and non-tribals from outside the State from fresh electoral roll and so on.⁵ Interestingly, it is to be noted that the leadership of FKJGP asserted that the Federation is a political organisation and as such has no relationship with any regional or national parties in the State. However, the organisation had been taking up with all political parties in the State issues related to the interest and development of the State besides opposing any political issues which are detrimental to the interest of the State.⁶

We may now examine the stand of the political parties of Meghalaya on the major issues raised by the student and youth organisations, viz., the KSU, the JSU, the GSU and the FKJGP. For example, on the issue of Railway head, the FKJGP was the first organisation to support the said project although it was vehemently opposed by the KSU, citing the reason that it would become a channel for influx, thus escalating the existing influx problem. On the said issue, with the exception of H.S. Lyngdoh (HSPDP) the political leaders of Congress, BJP, NCP, KHNAM, MDP, UDP, etc. seems to be in favour of the railway head for they feel it is going to benefit the people and enhance the economy of the State.⁷ This seems to be in sharp contrast with their views about a decade back when all

⁵ Discussion between Government of Meghalaya and the KSU, Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Meghalaya, Shillong, 1987, p. 2.

⁶ Discussion held with FKJGP former President A. Basaiawmoit on 15th June 2003.

⁷ For details see, Appendix V.

regional parties were categorically against Railway head.⁸ The stand of the KSU on the said issue is being viewed from a different perspective which argues that the KSU opposed the railway project at the behest of the truck owner's lobby who wanted no competition to their business.⁹ In this context, it is to be noted that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader A.L. Hek in the course of discussion stated categorically that his party is in favour of the railway head because it is going to benefit the common man and boost the economy of the State and not because his party is with the FKJGP or is against the KSU. Thus, asserting his party's stand that they share no relationship whatsoever with either the student or youth organisations of Meghalaya.¹⁰ Another political leader of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) is of the opinion that the mindset of the people is changing and the proposal for railway head is being accepted by most sections of the society for it will benefit the public at large.¹¹ However, the KSU by opposing the said project gives rise to a number of questions, viz., does the KSU practice what it professes, i.e., protecting and promoting the tribal interests? Or, is the KSU misusing the platform of a student body which is largely envisaged by the public as the champion of their interest? This necessitates a critical look at the stands taken by the KSU on various issues. On the said issue, KSU President S. Jyrwa, asserted that the Union is against the railway head since 1988-89 and will continue to oppose the said issue, until the Government provides a proper and effective mechanism to check influx. Here an example of Dimapur is cited where the locals have become a minority due to influx. The KSU President categorically refuted the allegations that the Union is promoting the

⁸ For discussion see, S. Sengupta: *Regionalism in Meghalaya*, South Asian Publishers, New Delhi, 2005.

⁹ For details see, "Politics of Representation", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 22nd August 2008, p. 4.

¹⁰ For details see, Appendix V.

¹¹ For details see, Appendix V.

vested interests of the truck owners, and argued that the Union does not work for any organisation. The final decision of the Union on any issue is taken by the Union itself and not by any other organisation.¹²

The next important issue is the Reservation Policy which is a very sensitive issue considering the fact that it is affecting the ethnicity of the three indigenous tribes of Meghalaya, viz., the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos. It is the KSU which is spearheading this issue and pressurising the Government to review the said policy. The BJP is of the opinion that the said policy should be reviewed but within the context of employment and not on education and that too, it should be based on merit, 10 percent or 15 percent on merit to general, that is, to the minority of the State and the rest to the local indigenous tribes. Here, reservation should be for the minority and not the majority, for the tribals are the majority in the State. The NCP stated that regarding the said issue, proper survey should be conducted and only then, quotas should be allotted to the three indigenous tribes, viz., the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos, on the basis of the data collected by the survey and review should be done at regular intervals. The said issue should be tackled very sensitively, for here, the Garos are asking for equation, the Jaintias are feeling deprived and it is affecting the sensitivity of the three tribal communities. Moreover, the party is with the Student Union on the said issue for it is felt that a review of the policy is very much needed. Interestingly, the political leaders of KHNAM, UDP, MDP and Congress share the same

¹² Discussion with Samuel Jyrwa, present President of KSU on 14th March 2009 at his residence in Mawprem.

view with the NCP.¹³ They all are in favour of the proposal put forward by the KSU to review the reservation policy with the exception of H.S. Lyngdoh (HSPDP) who on one hand, stressed that there should be unity among the three tribes and on the other hand, asserted that reservation should be based on population and should be proportionate¹⁴ and the best solution to the problem is to have a separate Khasi and Garo land respectively, thus, putting an end to the problem of reservation quotas between the Khasis and the Garos.¹⁵

Then comes the most controversial issue, the Uranium Mining Project at West Khasi Hills, which has brought all sections of society from all walks of life to take part in an open debate about it. In fact, since the issue came up there has been a lot of debates, discussions, seminars and feedbacks on the said issue. The student bodies, especially, the KSU has openly asserted its opposition against the project citing health hazards as one of its main reason to oppose it. It is to be noted that the KSU is trying to protect the indigenous tribes from ill-effects of the said project by attempting to stop the project from happening in the State but it seems futile. It has been observed that the project is getting a positive response from the Government and the locals of the mining site who are very much in favour of the said project.¹⁶

Interestingly, H.S. Lyngdoh (HSPDP) and L. Malnginag (KHNAM) are very much with the KSU in its stand against the said project citing that uranium mining is detrimental

¹³ For details see, Appendix V.

¹⁴ For details see, Appendix V.

¹⁵ Proceedings of Legislative Assembly Sessions – 17/12/2004 L/M F/1 pg. 2 – 17/12/2004/SED H/2 as obtained from Legislative Assembly notes.

¹⁶ www.morning-express.com/, www.nerinews.com/ and www.newkerela.com/

to public life. Moreover, Malnging asserted that the State Government will not benefit from the said project because the UCIL will pay only Rs. 50 lakhs per annum to the State Government, whereas the cost of the yellow cake is Rs. 50 lakhs per Kg. Therefore, it is unfair that the UCIL is taking advantage of the State Government.¹⁷ Other political parties have their own view points on the said issue as A.L. Hek (BJP) stated that if there is gold in the State one should not sit on it but should exploit it, however, not at the cost of public interest or health. O.L. Nongtdu (Congress) is more forthright in his response for he asserted that whether public are in favour or not, basically all minerals belong to the Central Government and therefore, no one can stop the Central Government to mine it, especially uranium ore, which is one of the main raw materials in developing nuclear power. And regarding the question on health hazards, it is not for the people to decide but for the scientists to decide whether it is a serious threat or not. P.T. Sawkmie (MDP) is more diplomatic in his opinion that it is for the State Government to decide. Nevertheless, he cited reasons for opposing the said issue, viz., health hazards, secondly, the revenue promised by the Company UCIL to the State Government is only Rupees fifty lakhs per year whereas the proposed project of the UCIL for uranium mining is about one thousand crores. Therefore, revenue offered to the State Government is very much less. Thirdly, no employment will be created because the Company will bring their own people to do the work. Lastly, infrastructural facilities offered by the UCIL, such as, construction of roads, hospitals, schools, football grounds etc. will not be provided until the mining is completed. Thus, after completion of the mining, there is no certainty of the UCIL fulfilling the conditions. Jemino

¹⁷ For details see, Appendix V.

Mawthoh (NCP) feels that uranium mining is going to benefit the people and therefore, the UCIL should be allowed to carry on the project. However, on condition that the Company fulfilled the promises, such as, development of infrastructure, employment, etc. before mining the ore. Furthermore, a Committee should be set up to monitor that the mining is done according to the conditions agreed by the State Government and the UCIL.¹⁸

Another major issue which has been pending since the inception of the State of Meghalaya is the boundary dispute between the State of Meghalaya and Assam. The student and youth organisations have raised this pending issue at regular intervals but till date, no concrete action has been taken by the Government of Meghalaya. As stated in the earlier chapters, attempts have been made by certain Governments, such as, the MPF Government led by late E.K. Mawlong and the veteran Congress leader P.R. Kyndiah, present M.P. has made an attempt to bring about a solution to the vexed problem, but unfortunately, it is still a pending problem. In fact, the leaders of all political parties of Meghalaya are of the opinion that this problem needs a solution at the earliest for it is causing a lot of unpleasantness and violence in the disputed area, such as, the incident which occurred at the latter half of 2003, where there was a communal outburst in Karbi Anglong District of Assam, leading to an exodus of Pnars from that area. And this was followed by an immediate reaction in Meghalaya against the Karbi community who were served with a 'Quit Notice' by some local pressure groups. A series of violent incidents were also reported from Shillong, the capital city of Meghalaya. The situation was subsequently brought under control through the

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

intervention of Governments of Assam and Meghalaya and the return of Pnar refugees from relief camps to Block II was facilitated. However, there appears to prevail an unnatural calmness which threatens to escalate into another ethnic conflict unless a solution to the boundary dispute is arrived at by the Governments of Meghalaya and Assam. As far as the role of regional parties in the settlement of the boundary dispute is concerned, it may be noted that some initiative was taken by the UDP dominated coalition Government (a regional party combine) of 1998 led by late E.K. Mawlong to open a dialogue with the Government of Assam in this regard. But the negotiations remained inconclusive.¹⁹ Therefore, the leaders of all political parties of Meghalaya feel that the State Government should come out with a concrete solution to this vexed problem so as to bring peace to the region.²⁰

Other major issues raised by the student and youth organisations are Inner Line Permit (ILP), Work Permit, Influx, Education Policy, Land Transfer Act, Greater Garoland, etc. Regarding the ILP issue, the NCP, UDP and the KHNAM are in favour of implementation of it in the absence of other forms of mechanism to check infiltration of foreigners. However, the MDP and the BJP are against its implementation in the State, citing reasons that India is a democracy and therefore, there should not be any restriction in travelling from one State to another. Moreover, it is going to affect tourism and this will definitely affect the economy of the State. However, on the issue of introducing work

¹⁹ For details on this conflict, see, "KSU Rejects Karbi Students Bolly Appeal to Reconsider its Decision", in *The Shillong Times*, 17th November 2003. Also see, "KSU Members held for Involvement in Karbi student's Assault", in *The Shillong Times*, 21st November 2003 and "KSU Rules Out Immediate Withdrawal of Quit Notice", in *The Shillong Times*, 22nd November 2003.

²⁰ For details see, Appendix V.

permit, all the political parties are supporting the student and youth organisations, adding at the same time that work permit should be issued only to the outsiders and not to the local indigenous tribes. On the issue of Land Transfer Act, all the political parties (both regional and national) of Meghalaya share the same sentiment that the existing Land Transfer Act should continue in its present form as it protects the local indigenous tribes. So far as education policy is concerned, the political parties are on the same wave length with the youth and student bodies, agreeing on the demand made by the student and youth organisations for revamping the whole policy of education and making it more vocational, technical and job-oriented. Regarding the problem of Influx, the political parties share the same opinion with the student and youth bodies that the government should set up a mechanism to check influx and to implement the three-tier card system at the earliest.²¹

On the issue raised by the GSU and other NGOs from Garo Hills, which is gaining momentum day by day is the demand for a separate Garoland and the said issue is met with a mixed reaction from the political parties of the State. A.L. Hek (BJP) is of the opinion that the Garos fought together with the Khasis for the Hill State therefore, should be united together. However, if the Garos are adamant in their stand for a separate State, they should not politicise the issue and create differences among the tribals. P.T. Sawkmie (MDP) asserted that it is for the Centre to decide whether to give Statehood to the Garos or not. O.L. Nongtdu (Congress) and J. Mawthoh (NCP) expressed their displeasure over formation of smaller States and the NCP is of the opinion that the Garos should stay together with the

²¹ *Ibid.*

Khasis and the Jaintias. Interestingly, L. Malngiang (KHNAM) stated that demand for a separate Garoland at present is not feasible for the Garos will become a minority in their own State with the increasing population of Muslims in Garo Hills at present. However, H.S. Lyngdoh (HSPDP) is the only regional party which is very much in favour of the said issue and supports the GSU on their demand.²²

Thus, it is seen that though the political parties of Meghalaya asserted that they do not share any kind of relationship with the student and youth organisations of the State, in reality their support on certain issues raised by these organisations, thus, indicating that they are not indifferent to these pressure groups operating in the State of Meghalaya. In fact, at times, lends them moral support to the extent that it enhances the position of these student and youth bodies as effective pressure groups of the State. It is to be noted that the KSU, by floating its own political party KHNAM is being criticised on the ground that being a student body it should not have entered the political scene of the State. In this context the Congress opines that students should leave politics to senior citizens and concentrate on problems of the students. NCP is of the opinion that students should not have any links with political parties and should not work together. MDP's representative asserted that India is a democracy, therefore, any student or youth organisations have the right to float their own political parties. BJP shares the same opinion with MDP, however, stressed that student body should not mix their agenda with political issues. KHNAM is of the opinion that KSU did the right thing for as a student body could not pressurise the Government but as a

²² *Ibid.*

political party could exert influence over the policy decisions of the Government from within by being a part of it.²³ However, as a student body KSU should refrain from mixing their agenda with politics, for in the long run it could affect the relationship between the student body and the political party. For example, in the last election in the State of Meghalaya, the KSU being a strong and popular student body in the society, KHNAM could have won more seats if the relationship between them is strong which seems to be otherwise.

Meanwhile, issuing of trading licence to the non-tribals by the respective District Councils of the three indigenous tribes, that is, the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos have been criticized by the student and youth organisations on the ground that the District Council issue the trading licence without proper verification of those non-tribals applying for it. In fact, in Garo Hills, the GSU raised the issue that there is a lot of malfunctioning in the workings of the GHADC for trading licences are issued even to those who have just recently settled in Garo Hills. On the said issue, the political parties are of the opinion that trading licence should be issued to those non-tribals who have been verified that they are genuine citizens of the State.²⁴ Thus, it seems that the political parties are with the student and youth organisations in their attempt to raise issues which affect the tribal society as a whole.

On the justification on the demands of these student and youth organisations, all the political parties share the same opinion that in certain cases the issues raised are justified, for

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

example, education policy, boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya, etc. However, certain issues, such as, railway head are not justified, for by opposing the said issue they are hindering the progress of the local indigenous tribe and the society at large.²⁵ It has been observed that the political parties have differences in their opinion on whether the student and youth organisations are acting as effective pressure groups in the State. UDP and NCP opined that compared to other parts of India, the pressure groups in Meghalaya are strong and effective. BJP is of the opinion that they act as pressure groups only on those issues which they could pressurise the Government, HSPDP also opines that they act as pressure groups to a certain extent. Interestingly, MDP's representative is of the opinion that these organisations are not acting as effective pressure groups and KHNAM shares the same opinion. However, L. Makngiang (KHNAM) asserted that these organisations raise issues which compel the Government to act on it and the Government respond because certain political parties are supporting the issues raised by the student and youth organisations.²⁶ In this context, therefore, it seems that the student and youth organisations on its own cannot pressurise the Government but with the help of the political parties could influence the policy decision of the Government.

In order to understand the perception of ordinary citizens about the major issues raised by the student and youth organisations, the opinions or view points of the citizens of Meghalaya,²⁷ namely, the Khasis, the Jaintias, the Garos and the non-tribals are taken into

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Response elicited through discussions with a cross sections of the public.

consideration. On the issue of reservation policy, it was felt by some members of society that it was very much needed at the inception of the State of Meghalaya in order to bring the tribals to the mainstream. However, some members of the public argued that reservation in itself is neither healthy nor wise. Moreover, it kills the very spirit of competition and hard work and therefore, asserted that it is high time to gradually do away with reservation. Others are of the opinion that reservation should be based on the economic criteria, so as to help the economically weaker sections to be at par with the more prosperous sections of the society. There are others who do not share the same opinion with the KSU and feel that the Khasis are in a much better position than the Jaintias and Garos, therefore, reservation should be more in favour of the latter. Others are of the opinion that the KSU is demanding a greater share for the Khasis and Jaintias due to lack of qualified Garo candidates. Thus, the non-tribals could put forward the argument that due to lack of qualified Khasi and Jaintia candidates, quota should be thrown open to the non-tribals also. Whereas, some are of the opinion that reservation should be based on population irrespective of their community. Thus, it has been observed that on the said issue there is a lot of contradiction amongst the public themselves.

On the issue of uranium mining, a section of the public does not really share the opinion of the pressure groups on this issue. They asserted that by opposing the mining project, it is depriving the State of an opportunity to enhance its economy and argued that mining of any mineral without precaution and proper technology cause health hazards. For example, mining of coal and digging of limestone can pose serious threats to any living

being and escalate pollution. To make the argument more authentic, an example of the Lukha River which is situated on the way from Shillong to Silchar within Jaintia Hills, was cited where a lot of dead fish was found floating in the water which had turn blue in colour due to the ill-effects of coal mining in the area, while there are others who share the same sentiment with the KSU and other NGOs on the said issue.²⁸

Interestingly, on the issue of boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya, the public shares the same sentiment with the student and youth organisations and are of the opinion that the State Government of Assam and Meghalaya along with the Centre as well as the Syiems, the Dolois, the Nokmas, the District Councils and all Autonomous and local bodies of both States should co-ordinate and work together to find an amicable solution to this pending problem. On the issue of Education Policy most of the citizens of Meghalaya are in favour of revamping the existing education policy. Some members of the society are of the opinion that the grass-root level, i.e., the basic education structure should be the same but from the higher secondary level onwards, education should be more vocational, technical, job-oriented and special attention should be given to the agricultural sector. Others are of the opinion that quality of education is very low in the State, therefore, measures should be adopted to improve the quality of education. In fact, it has been asserted by some citizens that development of the agricultural sector will indirectly decrease the influx from rural to urban areas. Thus, it seems that the problem of influx is from within the State as well as from outside the State. However, influx from outside could be curtailed to a

²⁸ *Ibid.*

large extent not only by the efforts of the Government but by the local indigenous tribals themselves. It has been observed that the locals, viz., the contractors by encouraging labourers from outside the State to work within the State are in a way escalating the influx problem. Therefore, the Government along with the locals should co-ordinate together to tackle the said issue. In this context, there are others who are of the opinion that introduction of the three-tier card system will ultimately solve the problems of ILP, Work Permit and most of all, the influx problem which is causing a lot of apprehension among the student and youth organisations.²⁹

On the issue of MBOSE which has created a lot of distrust, especially, among the Khasis and the Garos. Some sections of the public asserted that since Meghalaya is a State of the three indigenous tribes, viz., the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos, therefore, Headquarters of any Institution be it educational or otherwise should be situated in other Districts of the State and not just concentrate in the Capital city itself. Others are of the opinion that more manpower should be added to MBOSE and the functioning of the said Department should be monitored strictly to avoid lapses. While there are others who support the demand of the KSU and is of the opinion that the Union is doing the right thing. Interestingly, on the issue of Land Transfer Act most of the citizens are with the pressure groups of the State that the Land Transfer Act should remain in its present form. However, there are few citizens who feel that those tribals living in the border areas of Assam and Meghalaya should be included in the Land Transfer Act, for they feel that they have been in

²⁹ *Ibid.*

the State since its inception. On the issue of illegal trading by non-tribal businessmen in the State, certain citizens of the State opined that it is the fault of the Rangbah Shnong (Headman) who issued No Objection Certificate (NOC) to non-tribals who are not genuine citizens of the State. Whereas, others feel that the District Councils of the respective districts, viz., the KHADC, the JHADC and the GHADC are misusing their authority in issuing trading licence to non-genuine citizens.³⁰

On the question of the KSU floating its own political party KHNAM, some citizens are of the opinion that the younger generation should be encouraged to join politics for they are the future generation whereas others opined that student bodies should remain as students and not get involved in politics. On issues raised by these student and youth organisations, some sections of public are enraged with the student body, for example, on issue on railway head, they feel that by opposing it, the common man is being deprived of so many facilities which they could avail if the railway head materialised. Therefore, certain demands of the student body are considered unjustified. However, on issues like education policy, work permit, boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya, etc., the citizens are of the opinion that such issues are justified. On the student and youth organisations acting as pressure groups in the State politics, most of the citizens of the State seems to share the same sentiment, that is, these organisations are acting as effective pressure groups to a certain extent. In fact, it has been asserted by some citizens that the presence of these organisations promotes and safeguards the interest of the local indigenous tribes. Moreover,

³⁰ *Ibid.*

it is felt by most of the citizens that student and youth bodies by raising the above issues enhance the political consciousness of the people. However, there are others who feel that the political awareness among the rural people is negligible. Therefore, the youth should try to spread awareness among the masses. On the issue of Garoland, there is a mixed response from the public, some citizens are of the opinion that it is the solution to the problem of reservation policy while there are others who feel it is wrong and the three tribes should stay united. In fact, some citizens are of the opinion that the three tribes fought for the Hill State together, therefore, should find an amicable solution to the problem and stay united together.³¹ Thus, it has been observed that these student and youth organisations at times play constructive roles but at times negative, especially, when they employ pressure tactics like bandh, road blockade, etc. affecting the public at large.

Thus, based on the issues raised by the student and youth organisations and the discussions held with prominent political leaders and cross-sections of society, it seems that the KSU, the JSU and the GSU are demanding greater favour for their own indigenous communities and this is clearly seen on the issue of reservation where all Student Unions tried to acquire more seats for their own respective communities. Although, the membership of the FKJGP comprises the three indigenous tribes of Meghalaya and it claims to represent the interests of the State as a whole, it seems to be bias towards the Khasis and the Jaintias,

³¹ *Ibid.*

thereby, creating some resentment among the Garos which led the Garo unit of FKJGP to obliterate from the main body of FKJGP.³²

In the next chapter, we propose to take up a study of the major policy decisions of the Government of Meghalaya in the light of the demands raised by the student and youth organisations and how effective these organisations are in pressurising the Government to concede to their respective demands.

³² Discussion held with former President GSU (Khasi Hills Zone) Aldo Sangma on 12th July 2007 and present President of GSU (Khasi Hills Zone) Sanjeeb M. Sangma on 18th September 2008.

CHAPTER – V

DEMANDS OF STUDENT AND YOUTH ORGANISATIONS AND POLICY DECISIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF MEGHALAYA

In the last chapter, we examined the nature of the relationship that exists between the political parties of Meghalaya and the student and youth organisations and the responses of the political parties and a cross-section of the public to the major issues raised by these organisations. Now, in this chapter, we will examine the major policy decisions of the Government of Meghalaya in the light of the demands raised by the student and youth organisations. The actual policy decisions of the Government will indicate how effective the student and youth organisation are as pressure groups and how far they have succeeded in pressurising the Government to concede to their respective demands.

Let us begin by trying to focus on the major issues raised by the student organisations, namely, the KSU the JSU and the GSU and the youth organisations, i.e., the FKJGP. Let us first take up the issue of reservation policy which is causing a lot of apprehension among the three indigenous tribes of Meghalaya i.e., the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos. As stated in the earlier chapters, the KSU is the first student organisation to raise the said issue. According to the Union, the Government should review the present Job Reservation Policy and it even put forward its proposal which was rejected both by the JSU

and the GSU. However, the differences between JSU and KSU were resolved and both agreed to a 90 percent reservation quota on merit basis for all the three indigenous communities leaving only 10 percent for others based on merit. Interestingly, events took a new turn in this regard with the JSU backing off and again sticking to their demand of 30 percent reservation for the Jaintias.¹ The JSU is of the opinion that if the Garos can get 40 percent reservation and enjoy separate quota, why not the Jaintias.² The GSU, on the other hand, from the initial stage when the said issue was raised, have stuck to their stand,³ i.e., to maintain status quo on the said issue, i.e., they should get 40 percent. Thus, it seems from the above that the JSU and the GSU are adamant on their respective stands which will eventually promote their respective communities. Here their objective to promote and protect the well-being of their respective ethnic tribes comes to the forefront. However, the differences between the three Student Unions were soon resolved and the Garos were allowed to maintain 40 percent the Khasis and the Jaintias 50 percent and 10 percent for the general based on merit. Samuel Jyrwa, President of KSU asserted that the above proposal had been sent to the Chief Minister for the consideration of the Government. Here a point to be noted is that the Student Union had finally succeeded in persuading the State Government to review the reservation policy. However, the decision of the Government was not welcomed by all and resentment was expressed by Ministers from Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills, for example, Simon Siangshai (Labour and Industries Minister in the MPF

¹ "State Reservation Policy takes a new turn", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 6th December 2004, pp. 1 & 5.

² Information received from the discussion had with the former President of JSU Colin Laloo and the General Secretary Bitiko Nongtdu on the 1st February 2005.

³ Information received from the discussion had with the former President of the GSU Purno K. Sangma, Aldo Sangma, (former President Khasi Hills Zone) on 1st February 2005 and 12th July 2007 respectively.

Government) from Jaintia Hills openly expressed his opposition⁴ on the said issue. R.G. Lyngdoh (Home Minister in Congress led MDA Government) asserted that reservation policy would not create jobs in the State and that it was only through investment that job opportunities could be increased, thus seeming to indicate his stand on the said issue.⁵ The JSU and the GSU with their conflicting stands on the issue expressed their opposition of any move by the Government to review the policy.⁶ Thus, hindering the State Government from reviewing the said policy although it had been discussed on several occasions in the Assembly.⁷

In this context, Paul Lyngdoh (Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs in the Lapang led MDA Government) has tried to revive again this pending issue by initiating a signature campaign for debate on the said issue, with the support of ten MLAs.⁸ Yet another political leader who expressed his view on this issue was the former Chief Minister, S.C. Marak who suggested that a Committee be formed to look into the said issue and to seek the opinion of all the MLA's, NGOs and student organisations. It was suggested that there should also be an open debate on the issue and whatever formula is decided, it should be acceptable to all, i.e., the Khasis, the Jaintias the Garos and other small tribes.⁹

⁴ "Voice of dissent from within the Government", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 13th September 2001, p. 1.

⁵ "Reservation Policy not to create jobs", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 22nd September 2003, p. 1.

⁶ "Move to review Reservation Policy opens Pandora's Box", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 14th September 2001, p. 1 and Discussions with former Presidents of the JSU and the GSU, *Ibid*.

⁷ Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly Sessions (17/12/2004 L/M F/1 – 17/12/2004/HDBJ/3) as obtained from Legislative Assembly Notes.

⁸ "Signature Campaign", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 11th October 2004, p. 1.

⁹ "Salseng moots Constitution of Reservation Committee", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 8th November 2004, pp. 1 & 5.

It may be noted that some efforts were made by the MDA Government to bring about a solution to this long pending issue, but due to divided opinion on the said issue, the State Government in spite of convening a meeting to discuss the said issue was compelled to postpone it thrice and therefore, failed to make a break through in this regard. The members cutting across party lines did ultimately have an elaborate discussion on the said issue in the Assembly¹⁰ but unfortunately, the discussion remained inconclusive with the divergent views expressed by the members present in the Assembly.

Thus, regarding the Reservation Policy, the response of the Government seems to indicate that it is conceding to the demands of the Student Unions, although no definite solution has been reached so far. One reason why the Government of Meghalaya has not come out with any concrete stand on the issue of reservation is that there are conflicting demands on the said issue from the ethnically oriented student groups. Consequently, opinions have got polarised within the Government itself. However, it appears that the policy decision of the Government on this issue is likely to tilt in favour of that group which is in a position to exercise maximum bargaining capabilities in this regard.

Another issue which was raised by the student and youth organisations and in which the Government seems to be conceding to their demands is the demand for work permit. This said issue like many other issues has been pending for a long time and eventually the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Public Grievances after having held a meeting with the three

¹⁰ Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, *Ibid.*

student bodies, the KSU, the JSU and the GSU, had directed the Labour Department to prepare a draft report on the work permit system and to submit it to the Committee.¹¹ Interestingly, after nearly one and a half year, the Government having held a meeting with the youth body, the FKJGP and student bodies, namely, KSU and GSU have come to a decision to implement work permit system for migrant labourers and this system will be applicable only for migrant workers coming from outside the State and not for the indigenous population.¹² The introduction of this work permit system in the State is expected not only to enhance employment opportunities for the indigenous population, but also check large scale illegal influx of people from neighbouring states.

In this context, it is to be noted that the Government had taken steps to check the problem of illegal migration. D.D. Lapang as the Chief Minister in the MDA Government had constituted a Cabinet Sub-Committee to look into the issue.¹³ This Committee has made far-reaching recommendations to effectively handle the problem. It has proposed the introduction of a three-tier card system with 1971 as the cut-off year for the migrants. This scheme stipulates issuing identity cards to three categories, i.e., permanent residents, semi-permanent residents and temporary residents. Further more, in view of the huge financial involvement in preparing the identity cards the Committee has suggested that the State Government should approach the Centre for help. The positive attitude of the Government is seen in the fact that the Chief Minister had submitted a memorandum to the Central

¹¹ "Panel nod to work permit, three-tier I-D Card Systems", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 28th October 2003, p.1.

¹² "State soon to have Work Permit System", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 8th March 2005, pp. 1 & 5.

¹³ "Meghalaya Plan for Illegal Migrants", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 12th June 2004, p. 4.

Government to issue multi-purpose identity cards in order to prevent illegal migration. Interestingly, this report of the Committee was an outcome of at least six sittings with various student bodies such as, the KSU, the JSU and the GSU. Thus, it may be argued that on the issue of influx, the student bodies are acting as effective pressure groups in the State going by the positive attitude of the Government. On the issue of work permit the State Government had invited the KSU, GSU and FKJGP to discuss the proposed introduction of Work Permit (WP) in the State and the Government stated that it was serious about the issue, for if this work permit system became a reality, it would generate employment opportunities for the youth.¹⁴ According to the news item which appeared in *The Shillong Times*, dated 8th March 2005, the Government will soon implement the work permit system for migrant labourers to check the illegal influx into the State. The MPA Government taking the cue from the pervious MDA Government is examining the report of the Cabinet Committee on Influx (CCI), for a final decision on the matter.¹⁵ The latest development regarding the issue is that the present Government has decided to implement the work permit by end of December 2008. According to this new work permit the labourers from outside the State will be registered for 179 days and if they need to continue their work, they need to renew their registration after 179 days.¹⁶

¹⁴ "Government invites KSU, GSU, FKJGP to discuss WP", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 2nd March 2005, p. 1.

¹⁵ "Government examining Report on Influx", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 12th August 2008, p. 1.

¹⁶ "Work Permit System by December", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 14th October 2008, pp. 1 & 5.

The response of the Government of Meghalaya on this issue indicates that the student and youth organisations seem to have successfully pressurised the Government to concede to their demands.

Another major issue on which the policy decision of the Government has been examined to see whether it reflects the stand of the student organisations as pressure groups in the State is the issue of uranium mining at Domiasiat in West Khasi Hills. The Uranium Corporation of India Limited (UCIL) in the mid nineties did start the mining project in West Khasi Hills but was soon forced to wind up the open-cast mining following a string of violent protests from the villagers.¹⁷ The KSU is the first Student Union to raise the issue and along with Meghalaya People's Human Rights Council (MPHRC) and the Langrin Youth Welfare Association, expressed their opposition regarding the issue citing the reason that emission of radio-active uranium will pose serious health hazards. The FKJGP's stand on the issue is that its decision will depend on the Government's proposal based on the compensation to the people of West Khasi Hills.¹⁸ Interestingly a prominent regional party of the state viz., Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP), is very much against the said issue, citing health hazard as the reason for its opposition.¹⁹

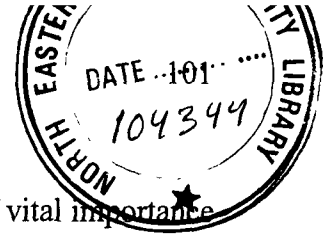
Interestingly, on this issue at a public meeting held on 7th April 2005 a Congress member expressed her opposition regarding the said issue.²⁰ This shows that this particular

¹⁷ www.news-balaji.com/, www.hindustantimes.com/ and www.thaindia.com/.

¹⁸ Discussion with Emlang Lyttan, President of FKJGP on 12th March 2009.

¹⁹ Discussion with H.S. Lyngdoh, President of HSPDP on 19th July 2006.

²⁰ "Congress MLA flays CM on Uranium Mining Issue", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 7th April 2005, p. 1.



issue has generated the support of at least some political parties which is of vital importance for the pressure groups in their hostile attitude towards uranium mining. It also shows that the Government is under pressure even from within its own party to concede to the demands of the student organisations.

It is interesting to note that the KSU and Meghalaya People's Human Right Council (MPHRC) in strengthening their anti-uranium movement had convene a meeting with all the Khasi and Jaintia legislators, both from the MDA coalition and opposition including the former Chief Minister D.D. Lapang to discuss the issue and to try and find an amicable solution in the interest of the people and to ensure that the chapter of uranium mining project was closed once and for all.²¹ It may be noted that the outcome of the above meeting led two MDA Ministers and four State Legislators to come out in support of the anti-uranium mining movement and they, in turn, suggested that the KSU and the MPHRC should convene another meeting with all the State Legislators to discuss the said sensitive issue and they further assured the KSU-MPHRC combine to take up the matter with the Chief Minister and make a request to the State Government not to grant permission to the UCIL to set-up the uranium mining project at Domiasiat.²²

The Government of Meghalaya's stand regarding this issue seems to be vacillating between giving in to stiff opposition of pressure groups and permitting UCIL to go ahead

²¹ "MLA's invited to attend meet on Domiasiat Project", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 15th April 2005, pp. 1 & 5.

²² "Second Anti-Uranium Mining meet on anvil", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 18th April 2005, pp. 1 & 5.

with the project. The MPA Government on its part is consulting the experts to determine the extent of effects caused by radiation and assured the public that it would not take a hasty decision but would reckon the opinion of the people and the various NGOs.²³ It seems that the Centre is showing keenness to facilitate an early start of the mining project in the State and has, in fact, sent a host of officials viz., K.M. Chandrashekhar Union Cabinet Secretary; Anil Kakodkar, Atomic Energy Commission Chairman; V.P. Raja, Principal Adviser of Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), to interact with the State officials, Student Unions and NGOs to gain their support for starting this project at the earliest. The Union Government has offered Rs. 800 crores as compensatory package for the people of the mining site and which was rejected by the KSU.²⁴ Thus, it seems that the KSU is very much adamant on its stand on this issue. A point to be noted here is that the debate generated by the KSU on the issue of uranium mining signifies a shift from issues of ethnic significance to an important ecological problem, generating public awareness through rallies and campaigns as also focussing attention on the technical pros and cons of uranium mining in Domiasiat. Interestingly, a new development has taken place regarding the issue. The land owners of the uranium rich West Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya are demanding the Government to issue a No Objection Certificate (NOC) to the UCIL to start mining in the area.²⁵ Thus, it seems that on the one hand, the KSU is pressuring the State Government and they themselves are being pressurised by the residents of the mining site on the other.

²³ "Government turns to experts on Uranium Mining", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 19th July 2008, p. 1.

²⁴ www.newkerala.com/, www.morung.com/ and www.thaindia.com/.

²⁵ www.morung.express.com/, www.nerineews.com/ and www.newkerala.com/.

On the issue of restructuring the MBOSE, a bitter conflict has occurred between the Khasis and the Garos. The KSU viewed the MBOSE as apathetic towards students of Khasi and Jaintia Hills whereas the GSU views any move to create a new office in Shillong as bifurcation of the Board to placate the Khasis. The KSU is in favour of creating a separate Board or Council for Higher Secondary Education with its Headquarters in Shillong²⁶, in order to ease the burden on the existing Board located at Tura and to enable the Board to function smoothly without any lapses. The KSU demanded that the Government should appoint full time Chairman and two Secretaries - one at Tura office and another in Shillong as part of the process of revamping and strengthening of the MBOSE. In this context, the KSU and the GSU respectively have adopted pressure tactics such as, picketing, road blockade, rallies etc. to pressurise the Government to concede to their demands and the Government seems to be relenting under such pressures.

It is to be noted that the three prominent student bodies of the State of Meghalaya, i.e., the KSU, the JSU and the GSU seems to be having different opinions on the said issue with the KSU taking a belligerent stand and pressurising the Government to concede to their demands. The GSU on the other hand, is very much against it. In fact, it has threatened to launch a mass agitational programme if the Government fails to spell out its stand on the issue by May 25th 2005.²⁷ It also urged the Government not to concede to the demands of the KSU. Interestingly, the JSU seems to be neither for it, nor against it. On the one hand, it

²⁶ Discussion with the present President of KSU Samuel Jyrwa on 31st January 2005 and “KSU deadline ends today, Government still silent on MBOSE bifurcation”, in *The Shillong Times*, dated 29th April 2005, p. 1.

²⁷ “Clear stand on MBOSE issue by May 25th, GSU tells Government”, in *The Shillong Times*, dated 14th May 2005, p. 1.

extended its full support to the KSU and at the same time, it refused to be a part of the agitational programmes sponsored by the KSU, on the ground that insufficient time was given to the JSU to prepare itself for the proposed agitation.²⁸ In this context, a number of questions arise, for example, is the KSU asserting its hegemony over the other tribes of the state i.e., the Jaintias and Garos? Is the JSU of the opinion that this fight is of the KSU alone for it is going to benefit mostly the Khasi students? Is this an indication of a rift between KSU and JSU?

On the said issue, the Government is pressurised both by the KSU and the GSU and the policy decision taken by the Government seems to enhance the position of the GSU as the more influential pressure group than the KSU as the State Government has decided to strengthen MBOSE rather than bifurcate it²⁹ as demanded by the KSU. This decision of the Government has enraged the student body (KSU), and accused the Government of betraying the Khasi-Jaintia people.³⁰ In this context, questions that arise are, is the KSU's position as the most influential pressure group in the State declining? Is the GSU emerging as a more influential pressure group in the State superseding the position of the KSU? Will this policy decision of the Government widen the rift between the KSU and the GSU? In this context, the KSU President Samuel Jyrwa asserted that the Union agreed to GSU's demand for 40 percent because if the KSU remain adamant on its previous stand, i.e., 60 percent for Khasis and Jaintias. Then the Government will get the excuse not to review the policy, for

²⁸ "JSU not to participate in today's picketing", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 2nd May 2005, pp. 1 & 5.

²⁹ "No Bifurcation of MBOSE - Government", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 7th June 2005, pp. 1 & 5.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

ultimately it is for the State Government to decide about the Reservation Policy. He further argues that without disturbing the ratio, the Khasis and the Jaintias deserves more quotas based on population.³¹

The next issue which the KSU had been taking up for many years and for which the Government is yet to take a final decision is none other than the introduction of three-tier card system in the State fixing 1971 as cut-off year. Initially the student body demanded 1951 as cut-off year but this demand was rejected by the PFM Government headed by F.A. Khonglam.³² On the said issue the MPA Urban Affairs Minister, Paul Lyngdoh who is also the Chairman of the Sub-Committee on influx, stated that a proposal was made to accept 1971 as the cut-off year. It is to be noted that on the issue of identity card system, the Government is waiting for financial assistance from the Centre to introduce multi-identity card system.³³

From the Government response regarding the above issue, it seems that the KSU as a pressure group has been able to assert some influence on the making of the policy decisions of the Government of Meghalaya.

However, it is seen that when the Government was preparing to implement the Elector's Photo Identity Card (EPIC) in the year 2002, the KSU demanded that EPIC should

³¹ Discussion with S. Jyrwa, present President of KSU on 14th March 2009 at his residence, Mawprem.

³² *Ibid.*, 31st January 2005.

³³ "Government agrees to examine KSU demands", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 10th May 2005, pp. 1 & 5.

be implemented taking 1951 as cut-off year. However, as stated earlier the PFM Government headed by F.A. Khonglam, totally rejected the demand of the KSU and went ahead with the implementation of EPIC in the State.³⁴ The response of the Government in this case seems to indicate that student organisations are not always successful in pressurising the Government to concede to their demands.

While it seems that the student body cannot always pressurise the Government, it may be noted in the next issue we intend to take up, that the same Government buckled under pressure from the student and youth organisations. Here we are referring to the controversial Land Transfer Act, in which the Khonglam led PFM Government had recommended inclusion of Hmar, Biate, Mikir, Karbi, Koch, Boro, Rava and Hajong as indigenous tribes,³⁵ thereby giving them rights over ownership of land in the State. However, this decision of the PFM Cabinet was opposed by various sections of the society including the student and youth organisations. The Government was pressurised in referring back the issue of Land Transfer Act Amendment to the Revenue Department for further study before implementing it.³⁶

The above response of the Government seems to confirm that the pressure groups in the State have succeeded in forcing the Government of Meghalaya to rethink over the matter before taking a final policy decision on it.

³⁴ Samuel Jyrwa, *Ibid.* "EPIC gains momentum in State", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 5th July 2002, p. 1.

³⁵ "Land Transfer Act Issue referred to Revenue Department", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 27th November 2002, p. 1

³⁶ *Loc op* and *Proceedings of Legislative Assembly Sessions*, 0-05-2008 BJU/3 – 08/05/2008 HDBW/1 3.7-2006/CMD 0/1 as obtained from Legislative Assembly Notes.

Another important issue taken up by the student and youth organisations is the boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya. At the time of inception of the State of Meghalaya, the boundary between Assam and Meghalaya was not properly demarcated and this led to a lot of problems and at times, violent incidents takes place in the boundary disputed areas. Many NGOs have expressed concern over this issue and the student and youth organisations have been most vocal in expressing their displeasure over the Government's failure to solve this vexed problem.

The Government on its part under pressure from Student Unions, such as, the KSU, the GSU and the JSU and the youth body, FKJGP and other NGOs, is finally responding in a positive manner by taking the initiative to meet its Assam counterpart to discuss this issue and try to find a solution to it. The Union Tribal Affairs Minister P.R. Kyndiah, also held discussions with senior officials of Assam Government on the said issue. In fact, a meeting initiated by the Union DONER and Tribal Affairs Minister, P.R. Kyndiah was attended by officials of Meghalaya and Assam and representatives of Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council (JHADC) and Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council (KADC). The meeting was also attended by the Lok Sabha Members from Diphu (Karbi Anglong, Assam) Biren Singh Ingti and at this meeting it was decided to revive the Fact-finding Committee formed in 2003.³⁷ A point to be noted here is that the first meeting of the Fact-finding Committee of Assam and Meghalaya to find a solution to the boundary problem failed to make any

³⁷ "Steps afoot to solve Assam, Meghalaya border problem", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 16th November 2004, pp. 1 & 5.

headway, with both sides remaining rigid on their stand and the Government of Meghalaya is yet to take any initiative to solve this problem.³⁸

The latest development regarding the said issue is that a high level meeting between the Chief Ministers of Assam and Meghalaya took place. Both sides have come to a decision to maintain status quo in the disputed Langpih area and that an amicable solution to the other disputed areas would be taken by the Co-ordination Committee formed for this purpose, in a phased manner. Moreover, they agreed that both sides would give prior information to the other about any development taking place in and around the disputed areas.³⁹

Interestingly, recently the State Government has decided to constitute a legal committee to study the boundary dispute with Assam, particularly, the inter-state dispute over Langpih and decided to consider referring the matter to the Supreme Court. The decision to form the legal committee was taken at the MPA Cabinet meeting on 5th March 2009.⁴⁰ Although we find a solution has been reached on the boundary issue, the initiative taken by the Government of Meghalaya⁴¹ in solving this pending problem seems to indicate the effectiveness of the pressure groups, i.e., the KSU, the JSU and the FKJGP, in

³⁸ “Fact-finding Panel met fails to make headway”, in *The Shillong Times*, dated 30th November 2004, pp. 1 & 5.

³⁹ “Status quo is to be maintained at Langpih”, in *The Shillong Times*, dated 1st August 2008, pp. 1 & 5.

⁴⁰ “State Government may move SC. Legal Panel to study border dispute with Assam”, in *The Shillong Times*, dated 6th March 2009, p. 1.

⁴¹ Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly Sessions – 24/4/2008 ALN/1-08/06/2008/NDK G/1 – 08/05 /2008/NDK/G/2 – 8/05/2008 BJJ/1 as obtained from Legislative Assembly Notes.

pressurising the Government to finally concede to their demand for a solution to the boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya.

Other major issue taken up by the student and youth organisations is the introduction of Right to Information Bill (RTI). Initially the MDA Government appears to resort to delaying tactics by stating that, since the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, 2004 had been introduced, the Government of Meghalaya would seek clarification from the Centre before considering the demand of the pressure groups.⁴² However, it seems that the Government conceded to the demands of the student and youth organisations, for the RTI Bill has been introduced in the State. Thus, it seems to indicate the effectiveness of the pressure groups operating in the State today in influencing the policy decision of the Government of Meghalaya.

Another issue which the student body, viz., the JSU took up recently and in which it was successful in pressurising the Government to concede to its demand, was the demand for removal of controversial Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Jowai Division, M.B.K. Reddy.⁴³ The above issue raised by the JSU was supported by other social organisations of Jaintia Hills. Interestingly, the youth body, the FKJGP, also supported the said issue. In fact, the FKJGP threatened to resort to 'alternative means of action', if the Government fails to

⁴² "Bill on Right to Information, Lapang seeks more time", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 4th December 2004, pp. 1 & 5.

⁴³ "JSU for acting against DFO over staff's removal", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 28th January 2005, pp. 1 & 5.

remove the DFO, M.B.K. Reddy from his present posting in Jaintia Hills immediately.⁴⁴ In this context, the JSU and other organisations of Jaintia Hills had resorted to many pressure tactics, such as, bandh, hunger strike, etc. to put pressure on the Government to concede to their demands. And it seems that their pressure tactics was effective, for the Government conceded to their demand and transferred the said person, M.B.K. Reddy from his previous posting at Jowai.⁴⁵

Another issue taken up by the student and youth organisations, viz., the KSU and the FKJGP and in which the Government conceded to their demands was the Power Deal, viz., the Kynshi Stage-I Project and the Kynshi Stage-II Project and Umngot Project, made by the State Government and the two private firms, viz., the Jai Prakash Power Ventures and the Ahena Power Projects Limited. The FKJGP also demanded the scrapping of the MOU on Leshka II power project.⁴⁶ The scrapping of the deal of the above Power Projects seems to strengthen the stand of the student and youth bodies as effective pressure groups operating within the State of Meghalaya.

Last but not the least, the issue which is gaining momentum day by day is the demand of the GSU and other NGOs of Garo Hills for a separate Garoland. The other student unions, viz., the KSU, and the JSU and the youth organisation, i.e., the FKJGP in their discussion extend their moral support to the GSU on the said issue. On the demand

⁴⁴ “FKJGP too joins ‘Out – Reddy’ stir”, in *The Shillong Times*, dated 23rd February 2005, pp. 1 & 5.

⁴⁵ “NGOs express gratitude”, in *The Shillong Times*, dated 24th March 2005, p. 3.

⁴⁶ “Government yet to communicate decision to affected Companies”, in *The Shillong Times*, dated 18th September 2008, p. 1.

made by the GSU the Lapang led MDA Government stated that the State has no power to decide on Statehood, it is an issue which only the Central Government can take a decision.⁴⁷ Therefore, it seems that the GSU is not able to pressurise the Government to concede to their demand.

In the light of the above discussion, it may be observed that the student and youth organisations as pressure groups of the State employ pressure tactics, such as, bandhs, office picketing, road blockade (most common pressure tactics used by them quite effectively especially in Shillong City), hunger strike, rallies and so on. And, therefore, it seems that they do exert certain amount of influence over the policy decisions of the State Government. In the last chapter, i.e., Chapter VI, our concluding observations of the previous chapters will be discussed.

⁴⁷ "State has no power to decide on Statehood", in *The Shillong Times*, dated 25th April 2006, p. 1.

CHAPTER – VI

CONCLUSION

The concluding observations of this thesis are as follows. In chapter I, it is seen that the term 'pressure groups' was first used in 1928 and since then, it has become an interesting subject of study in the field of social sciences. It may be observed that interest groups and pressure groups are, in fact, different terms used for the same group. Some scholars prefer using the former while others use the latter. However, it is to be noted that for those groups which exert pressure, the term, 'pressure group' is generally used. In this context, it is also seen that both 'political parties' and 'pressure groups' are social groups having a great deal of relevance to the functioning of the modern political process. However, the formers goal is to capture political power whereas the latter seeks to influence the policy decisions of the Government to their advantage.

Further, it is seen that from the late 1990s onwards, in Meghalaya, the student and youth organisations at times have been referred to as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in newspapers and journals. A point to be noted here is that NGOs and student and youth organisations have something in common, i.e., their members share common interest and both are voluntary organisations but apart from that they are totally different

organisations, the former works for the development of the people and the society at large without aiming to promote any section of society and without any vested interest, whereas the latter tries to promote the interests of the students and youths. In Meghalaya, the student organisations also promote the interests of their respective tribal communities. The main difference between the Student Union and the NGOs is that the former make use of pressure tactics such as, bandhs, processions, road blockade, etc to realise their interests and pressurise the Government to concede to their demands whereas the NGOs do not make use of pressure tactics for theirs is a social service and the concerned Government renders help to them voluntarily. Furthermore, it is seen that 'Student Union' and 'Trade Union' cannot be clubbed together for the former mobilises the students and the latter the working class. Moreover, the Trade Union seeks to pressurise the business and the Government to attain maximum benefit for the industrial workers whereas the Student Union not only raises academic issues but also social, political and economic issues which affect the society at large. However, it is to be noted, that at times, especially election times, both Student Unions and Trade Unions are being made use of by political parties for their own political ends.

It is also seen that pressure groups operate in both developed and developing countries as well as in democratic and dictatorial regimes but are found to be most active in developed countries. In India, pressure groups do not operate with as much vigour as in developed democratic countries and they lack the kind of maturity and influence that have been acquired by groups in the Western developed societies. In India, some student and

youth organisations have emerged as pressure groups and at times have paved the way to the formation of political parties while retaining their independent identity as student or youth organisations, such as, the KSU and KHNAM. The KSU floated the KHNAM and is still going strong as a student body. The same can be said about the FKJGP which floated the PDM and still maintains its independent identity. The role of student and youth organisations in Meghalaya cannot be under estimated, they are emerging as one of the social forces to be reckoned with in the politics of the State, especially, in Meghalaya where ethnicity is a major concern of all student and youth organisations.

In chapter II, it has been observed that unlike elsewhere in the country, student organisations in Meghalaya have been formed along specific ethnic lines only. This is because of the fact that class polarisation has not taken place in Meghalaya due to absence of large-scale industrialisation. As a consequence, mobilisation has taken place along the lines of clan and ethnicity, rather than along classes. This is one reason why left student movement could not make much of headway in Meghalaya. However, ethno-centric politics of the student and youth organisations seems to have accelerated the process of ethnic polarisation in Meghalaya, pitting the indigenous tribals against one another. Certain contradictions have emerged out of this phenomenon, for example, on the issue of reservation all the student groups, viz., the KSU, the JSU and the GSU are demanding a greater share for their respective ethnic communities resulting in bitterness and distrust among the three tribal groups of Meghalaya, viz., the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos.

It has been observed that on membership criteria unlike the JSU which offers membership to all tribals of Meghalaya, the Constitution of the KSU (1993) provides that only those individuals belonging to the Khasi community such as, Khyriam, Pnar, Bhoi, War and Lyngngam can be members of the Union, seems to reinforce the ethnicity bias of the KSU. Moreover, it is seen that in the JSU, it not only offers membership to all but even allow non-active members who are neither members of the circle or units to not only attend their meetings but could also offer suggestions to issues raised by the Union. Thus, the spirit of democracy is very much evident in the JSU compared to the KSU and the GSU.

The study further reveals that among the three Student Unions operating as pressure groups in the State of Meghalaya, the KSU and the GSU are emerging as the most influential organisations. The JSU on most occasions prefers to give moral support to the others, rather than taking active part in any agitational programmes, for example, on the MBOSE issue, the JSU extended its full support to the KSU but refused to be a part of any of the agitational programmes organised by the KSU, citing that insufficient time was given to them to prepare for the proposed agitation. Thus, it has been observed that the JSU seems to take a back seat compared to the KSU and the GSU. How effective a Student Union is as a pressure group seems to depend on their leadership, therefore, based on that it seems that the leadership in JSU is not so strong and effective compared to the Khasi and the Garo brethren.

Furthermore, it has been observed that leadership of the Student Union has a lot of influence on the stand of the Union regarding any issue. For example, on the issue of Railway head and uranium mining, the JSU was not in favour of it initially but at present is very much in favour. Thus, indicating the differences in the perspective of the former leaders and the present leader of the Union.

In chapter II and chapter III, it has been observed that these organisations do not indicate any clear gender bias. However, women do not figure in any leadership position in the KSU, the JSU, the GSU and the FKJGP. In this context, it may be noted that the 1981 Constitution of the KSU states specifically that women cannot contest for the important posts of President, General Secretary, and Finance Secretary. Thus, a strong patriarchal bias is evident in the Constitution of the KSU.

In the third chapter, it has been observed that unlike the student organisations, the youth organisation, i.e., the FKJGP has no Constitution. In fact, it is not even a registered organisation. Moreover, it is seen that in the case of FKJGP, the contours of ethnic polarisation has become sharper than the Student Unions and it does appear that the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo wings of the FKJGP are sometimes working at cross-purposes with one another, thereby limiting the bargaining capabilities of the organisation vis-à-vis the State Government.

It has been observed that the FKJGP being a non-student body took up many issues relevant to the student community whereas the student bodies took up issues which are

political and social and not at all relevance to student community. For example, boundary dispute, demand for Greater Garoland, etc.

It is also seen that the FKJGP always tend to take a neutral stand on most of the issues raised by the Student Unions. It is being diplomatic in its response, for example, on the issue of uranium mining, the FKJGP refused to make any comment on whether it is for the project or against it, but stated that it is waiting for the Government's response before commenting on the said issue. On the issue of Railway head, the FKJGP is in favour of it but by asserting that it is in favour of goods train and not passenger's train, it gives the impression that like the student body, it is also apprehensive about the problem of influx and therefore is in favour of goods train only. On the reservation issue, the FKJGP could not take a definite stand because it affects the three tribes of Meghalaya, and since it represents the three major tribes, therefore, it has to cater to the welfare of the three tribes of the State.

In this chapter, it has also been observed that the Garo Hills District Circle of the FKJGP has its own special issues, such as setting up of a Winter Assembly Hall at Tura, setting up the cell of Meghalaya Public Service Commission in Garo Hills and to establish the University Campus at Tura with agriculture as one of the disciplines, etc. By taking up such issues, the Garo Unit reflects the ethnic bias of the organisation. Interestingly, the Jaintia unit of FKJGP is low key like the JSU. However, the leadership in JSU is very much there and acting on certain issues whereas the Jaintia unit of FKJGP has no leadership at present (information obtained from E. Lyttan on 12th March 2009).

In chapter IV, it has been observed that student and youth organisations are not affiliated to any political party. However, they have close linkages with the political parties, such as, the KSU and the KHNAM, since the former floated the latter. Moreover, political parties tend to make use of the student and youth organisations for its own political ends. In this context, the FKJGP categorically stated that it shares no relationship with any regional or national parties of Meghalaya because the Federation itself is a political organisation.

It is also seen that on major issues raised by the student and youth organisations, such as, railway head, education policy, boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya, etc., the political parties of Meghalaya support the stands taken by these organisations, with the exception of HSPDP which is against the railway head and uranium mining citing influx and health hazards respectively as the reasons for its opposition. On the issue of reservation policy, there is a lot of conflicting views among the political parties with their respective members belonging to the different ethnic communities of the State, arguing that the reservation should be more in favour of their respective communities. For example, in the Winter Session of the Legislative Assembly in 2004, in the course of the debate, a member from the Congress Party asserted that the Garos deserve the quotas because compared to the Khasis and the Jaintias, they are still economically and socially backward. Therefore, there is no need to review the reservation policy.

It is interesting to note that on the issue of uranium mining, certain political leaders cite reasons for opposing the issue such as revenue offered by UCIL to State Government is

less. Here, is it the question of revenue which is making the political parties opposes uranium mining or concerned of the ill-effects of the said mining.

In this context, it has been observed that on issues of reservation policy, uranium mining, etc., the student bodies have tried to mobilise public opinions through rallies, debates, meetings, etc. However, there are differences of opinions among the public, such as, on the reservation policy. Some are of the opinion that it should be on the basis of population rate, others feel it should be on the basis of economic criteria, whereas there are others who asserted that reservation should be done away with gradually, for it kills the very spirit of competition. In fact, on the issue of uranium mining, the people of the mining site are in favour of it and urged the State Government to issue NOC (No Objection Certificate) to the UCIL to facilitate the mining process.

In this context, it has been seen that the KSU at times tend to be under the patronage of strong local tribal leaders to achieve its objectives, for example, on the issue of uranium mining, John F. Kharshiing, Chairman of the Federation of Khasi States, a powerful Tribal Assemblage, is with the KSU on the said issue, supporting the Union by asserting that no degree of prosperity could justify mining and accumulation of large amount of highly toxic substances which poses great danger to the locals. Seemingly it is observed that the tribal leader is making use of the Student Union to politicise the issue for political benefits.

It has been observed that on any issues raised by the student and youth organisations, the political parties of the State tend to politicise the issues for their own political gains, for example, on reservation issue, the politicians belonging to the different ethnic communities politicise the issue to gain the public support for their own benefits. Therefore, instead of trying to find a solution to the problem which is affecting the peace and harmony in the State they aggravate the matter by politicising it. It is also seen that on the MBOSE issue, the issue here is shifting of MBOSE which the Government could handle it competently if it is serious. However, this issue again is politicised by some politicians by demanding for a Greater Garoland, thereby linking MBOSE issue to demand for a separate State which has no relevance at all.

In chapter V, it has been observed that on issues like work permit, introduction of a three-tier card system with 1971 as the cut-off year for the migrants, boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya, education policy and the Land Transfer Act, the State Government seems to be positive in its response towards the demands of the student and youth organisations. On the issue of reservation policy, the State Government tried to placate both the KSU and the GSU and its policy decision on the said issue seems to be in favour of the GSU. In this context, it is to be noted that if the State Government conceded to the demands of the KSU, then it would aggravate the demand of the GSU for a greater Garoland. Thus, the Government in its policy decision had to take into account that the rift between the Khasis and the Garos does not worsen further.

In this chapter, another observation is that, the pressure groups in the State employ certain pressure tactics to gain maximum mileage, such as, bandhs, office picketing, hunger strike, rallies, road blockade and so on. It is seen that when either a bandh or office-picketing is called by these pressure groups, the public response is immediate and positive. During office-picketing or bandh, the Government usually provides vehicles at different junctions of the city to take the Government employees to their respective offices. However, the public do not seem to make use of the Government transport and it is seen that almost all offices wear a deserted look and office attendance is almost nil. This seems to indicate that the pressure tactics used by these groups is quite effective. However, it has been observed that the pressure tactics employed by the pressure groups of Meghalaya such as, bandhs, road blockade, office picketing, etc. affect the common man to a large extent, especially, the daily labourers, the student community, the farmers, the business community, the smooth functioning of all the Government and Private firms, etc. In fact, the normal life of the society comes to a halt when the pressure groups resort to their pressure tactics which curtails the right of freedom of all citizens.

The study also reveals that these student and youth organisations which are always pressurising the Government to concede to their demands are themselves being pressurised by other unions or sections of the society. For example, the KSU is pressurised by the JSU and the GSU on the reservation policy. On the MBOSE issue, the KSU is pressurised by the GSU and on the issue of uranium mining, the KSU is pressurised by the landowners of the mining site at West Khasi Hills who are not in agreement with the KSU on the said issue.

This raises two questions, viz., Is the KSU losing its influence over the rural population of Meghalaya? Is it only influential within the urban limits of Shillong? In this context it is also seen that the FKJGP is being pressurised by some members from the Garo unit who in a rally organised at Garo Hills on the 22nd April 2006, asserted their stand to sever all ties with the Central body of the FKJGP, citing step-motherly treatment towards the Garos.

It appears that all student and youth organisations of Meghalaya profess to be champions of the interest of the respective ethnic communities whom they represent. But in reality, each of them harbours its own political ambitions. This is substantiated by the fact that KHNAM was floated by KSU and PDM was floated by FKJGP and ARMS was supported by both the student and youth organisations. The student and youth leaders who subsequently joined politics emerged as prominent leaders either in the Government or in the Opposition. For example, Paul Lyngdoh (former President, KSU) was the Urban Affairs Minister in the MPA Government. Limison Sangma (former Member of FKJGP) who was till March 5th 2009 with the opposition MUA switched allegiance to MPA Government and was appointed Parliamentary Secretary, PWD (Building) and on the 10th March 2009, left the ruling coalition and went back to the opposition MUA. This shows that pressure groups in Meghalaya are using a technique of infiltration into the world of power holders to fulfil their political ends.

An interesting point emerges from an analysis of the issues raised by these pressure groups. It appears that economic issues like regulation of trade by non-tribals, job

reservation for local tribals, etc. have a lot of primacy in the agenda of the student and youth organisations. However, general economic issues which affect the interests of the public at large, e.g., price rise of essential commodities like foodgrains, vegetables or a hike in the fuel prices, school fees, school books, etc. hardly find a place in the agitational programmes of these organisations. This is in sharp contrast to the politics of pressure groups elsewhere in the country where general economic issues affecting the masses do figure in the agenda of student and youth organisations.

To sum up, it may be argued that the student and youth organisations have acquired a measure of success in the State politics of Meghalaya, for most issues raised by them seem to get decided in their favour. The study further shows that the State Government on many occasions has relented under the pressure tactics of the student and youth organisations, with the exception of the issue of uranium mining. Since mining falls within the purview of the Union List, the Union Government may go ahead with the project, irrespective of the views of the pressure groups. It appears, therefore, that the politics of pressure groups has emerged as an important determinant of State politics in Meghalaya in view of the increasing bargaining capabilities of these groups to influence policy decisions of the Government.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX – I

Abstracts of Discussion with KSU President Samuel Jyrwa on 7th August 2003, 21st August 2003, 31st January 2005 and 14th March 2009

Q. 1. What is the relationship between KSU and JSU?

Ans.: We share a good relationship in fact, we have been working together for many years on common issues.

Q. 2. What is the relationship between KSU and GSU?

Ans.: We share a good relationship. There was a time when GSU was apprehensive about losing their quota on reservation issue, but at present everything is fine, we have reached to an agreement.

Q. 3. What is the relationship between KSU and FKJGP?

Ans.: We share a good relationship; in fact, in 1996 a Joint Action Committee was formed and we are also working together with PRAC (People's Rally against Corruption).

Q. 4. Does the KSU share the same opinion with the FKJGP regarding issue of illegal non-tribal traders?

Ans.: Yes, in fact, the KSU units in different parts of the State check illegal-non-tribal traders with the FKJGP, and they gave them full support on the said issue.

Q. 5. Opinion of KSU on issue regarding Railway head project

Ans.: Regarding Railway head if materialised will create more influx as in the case of Dimapur where there is majority of outsiders and the locals have become a minority.

Q. 6. Opinion of KSU on Uranium mining – Do they have a difference of opinion with the FKJGP?

Ans.: Yes, they have a difference of opinion with the FKJGP. The FKJGP on the basis of few people in favour of uranium mining support them. But the KSU feels that majority of the public are against it, therefore, KSU are against it. Moreover, uranium mining will cost health hazards.

Q. 7. Issue on Reservation Policy – Is the JSU and FKJGP is agreement with the KSU proposed reservation policy?

Ans.: Regarding the Reservation Policy, the KSU has met the GSU and the JSU and has agreed to 40 percent for the Garos and 50 percent for the Khasis and Jaintias and 10 percent for general based on merit. Latest stand – have sent the proposal to State Government.

Q. 8. Issue on Right to Information (RTI) – What is their stand on the said issue?

Ans.: It is an important Act it will give transparency and accountability to the public. The Government response is positive, next session the Government will take up the issue.

Q. 9. Issue on boundary problems especially between Assam and Meghalaya

Ans.: Since inception, the KSU has raised the issue of boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya. The Union is of the opinion that the government even after attaining Statehood for so many years have not demarcated the boundary yet, therefore, the State Government is responsible for the sufferings of the people staying at the border areas. The Government has not taken this issue seriously.

Q. 10. Issue on shifting of MBOSE from Tura to Shillong

Ans.: The Union is not demanding to shift the whole of MBOSE to Shillong but only the Higher Secondary level as to lessen the burden of the main body to prevent any lapse in the near future.

Q. 11. What is the stand of the KSU regarding the demand of the GSU for a separate Garo Land? Does the KSU also wish for a separate Hynniewtrep State?

Ans.: Their right to demand and if the Garos get a separate State, the Khasis and Jaintias will automatically get their own State.

Q. 12. Is there s preference for Khasi and Jaintia compared to Garo?

Ans.: Has no preference as such, love its own people and respect other communities.

Q. 13. Issue regarding affiliation of Sikkim colleges under NEHU – Comment.

Ans.: Oppose the issue, at present NEHU cannot accommodate the present student community, it will lead to deprivation of seats and employment to local indigenous students.

Q. 14. Issue of shifting Headquarter of Central Excise and Custom from Shillong to Guwahati – Comment.

Ans.: Is against it, in fact, the shifting of the Headquarter of the office was stalled, the Government responded positively.

Q. 15. Issue on influx, ILP, work permit, education policy, etc.

Ans.: On influx, create more checking gate – Government response on this issue nil.

On ILP, Government should create mechanism to check foreigners and non-tribals.

On Education Policy, Education should be job-oriented, Government response on this issue is nil.

Q. 16. Is it a male dominated organisation or are women allowed to take part in the activities of the organisation?

Ans.: Women are allowed to take part, in fact, three members of Girls' Wing are ex-officio members of Executive Council, and there is no bar against women joining the Union.

Q. 17. What is the relationship between the KSU and the political parties?

(a) Congress; (b) BJP; (c) KHNAM; (d) UDP; (e) NCP; (f) HSPDP; (g) MDP

Ans.: KSU does not share any relationship with any political party and is neither affiliated to any political party. KSU is a student body and polls apart from any political parties. KSU is of the opinion that political parties in the State have no proper ideology, have approach them many times, find the response lukewarm.

Not affiliated to KHNAM – in fact, KSU formed KHNAM. Since 1979 – KSU acts as pressure group and will remain to be so. KSU and KHNAM do not work together but are in fact independent of each other – main objective is to uplift its own community.

APPENDIX – II

Abstracts of Discussion with JSU Former President Charles Phawa on 7th August 2003, Former President JSU Colin Laloo on 1st February 2005, Former General Secretary JSU on 1st February 2005 and Present President of JSU, Elnathan Pale on 14th March 2009

Q. 1. What is the relation between JSU and KSU?

Ans.: We share good relationship, support each other on common issues, such as, influx.

Q. 2. What is the relation between JSU and GSU?

Ans.: We share good relationship, support them on common issues.

Q. 3. What is the relation between JSU and FKJGP, especially the FKJGP Jaintia Unit?

Ans.: We share no relationship with FKJGP. However, regarding Jaintia unit if need help or support on common issues, JSU is willing to help.

Q. 4. Does the JSU share the same opinion with FKJGP regarding issues of:

- (a) Illegal non-tribal traders
- (b) Railway head project
- (c) Affiliation of Sikkim colleges under NEHU

Ans.: (a) JSU supports such issues, in fact, in Jaintia Hills there is Jaintia Tribals Traders Association and they are the ones who raise such issues and JSU supports them and accompany them to do the checking if invited.

(b) There is a positive and negative point to the issue, the former will create employment and the latter will create influx.

(c) There was a meeting between the KSU, the JSU and the GSU on this issue and the three Unions are against the issue.

Q. 5. What does the JSU have to say on the current issues raised by the student organisation, such as,

- (a) Boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya,
- (b) Reservation policy – Does it share the same opinion with the KSU?
- (c) Right to information,
- (d) Shifting of MBOSE from Tura to Shillong,
- (e) Issue on influx, ILP, work permit, education policy, etc.,
- (f) Issue on uranium mining.

Ans.: (a) The JSU support the other organisations on this issue. At present the Government has appointed a Facts Finding Committee headed by Deputy Chief Minister of Jaintia Hills to settle the problem and according to them, the Government is responding positively.

(b) JSU demanded 30 percent for the Jaintias, is of the opinion that if the Garos can enjoy separate quota of 40 percent reservation, why not Jaintias?

(c) Very important Act, will create transparency because public have the right to know and JSU supports other organisations on this issue.

(d) MBOSE should remain in Tura, however, branches should be opened in other parts of the State to meet the grievances of students and at the same time, lessen the burden of the main office.

(e) On issue of influx – support others
On issue of ILP – should be introduced and check gates be made strong
On issue of Education Policy – NEHU should change its education policy. Education should be job-oriented.

(f) Support the KSU on the said issue.

Q. 6. Is there a preference for Jaintias and Khasis compared to Garos?

Ans.: Depending on the issue, there should be mutual understanding.

Q. 7. Is it a male dominated organisation or are women allowed to take part in the activities of the organisation (exclusion of women)?

Ans.: It is not a male dominated organisation, in fact, Girls' Wing is there in the Union.

Q. 8. What is the opinion of the JSU regarding the demand of the GSU for a separate Garo Land?

Ans.: If the GSU wants a separate Garo Land, JSU supports them.

Q. 9. What is the relationship between the JSU and the political parties?

(a) Congress; (b) BJP; (c) KHNAM; (d) UDP; (e) NCP; (f) HSPDP; (g) MDP

Ans.: Not affiliated to any political party and has no plans to float a political party. The Government response to their demands at times is positive, however, regarding current issues, the Government act as if it is willing to help and at the same time use delaying tactics to keep off the issue.

Main objectives of JSU, not only to cater to the needs of students but also to upgrade hospitals, PHC, water supply, in short, to bring over all development to their community as a whole.

Q. 10. On the issue of Uranium Mining – commented by the Present JSU President.

Ans.: The President Elnathan Pale asserted that the Union is in favour of mining, if there is natural resources in the State which will benefit the society, it should be exploited.

Q. 11. On the issue of Railway head commented by the Present JSU President.

Ans.: The President Elnathan Pale asserted that the Union is in favour of Railway head for without transportation how will the State develop? The Railway head if possible should reach Shillong city itself.

Q. 12. On KSU floating KHNAM – commented by the Present JSU President.

Ans.: The President Elnathan Pale asserted that the student body should not join politics and should remain as students.

APPENDIX – III

Abstracts of Discussion with GSU Former President, Purno K. Sangma on 21st August 2003, Aldo Sangma, Former President, GSU (Khasi Hills Zone) on 12th July 2007 and present President, GSU (Khasi Hills Zone) Sanjeeb A. Sangma and General Secretary, GSU (Khasi Hills Zone) Rondon K. Momin on 18th September 2008

Q. 1. What is the relation between GSU and KSU?

Ans.: We share cordial relationship with KSU.

Q. 2. What is the relation between GSU and JSU?

Ans.: We share cordial relationship with JSU.

Q. 3. What is the relation between JSU and FKJGP, especially the Garo Unit?

Ans.: Do not share such a good relationship with FKJGP, in fact, is of the opinion that the main body is meting out step-motherly treatment towards the Garos. Therefore, no Garo community belongs to the FKJGP, has severe all ties with the main body – the letter ‘G’ is in name only.

Q. 4. Does the GSU share the same opinion with FKJGP regarding the following issues:

- (a) Illegal non-tribal traders,
- (b) Railway head project,
- (c) Affiliation of Sikkim colleges under NEHU,

Ans.: (a) The GSU share the same opinion with the FKJGP on the said issue. The non-tribal seeking trading licence should get verification of their identity from the Nokma or Headman, mainly the Land owner, then they should get a written permission from the GSU office only then the GHADC should issue them a trading licence. But the fact remains that a lot of malfunctioning is happening, therefore, trading licence is issued even to those who have just recently settle in Garo Hills.

(b) On issue of Railway head – in favour of it, economically the State will develop and the public will be benefited.

(c) Against the move to affiliate any colleges under NEHU.

Q. 5. What does the GSU have to say on the current issues raised by the student organisation, such as,

- (a) Boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya
- (b) Right to information
- (c) Issue on influx, ILP, work permit, education policy, etc.
- (d) Issue on uranium mining.
- (e) Issue on Reservation policy
- (f) Issue on shifting of MBOSE from Tura to Shillong

Ans.: (a) Is with the KSU, the Government should take a serious note on this issue and try to solve it. However, the problem is difficult to solve, the only way is for the State of Meghalaya to demarcate its boundary and develop the areas belonging to it and based on its development, it will ultimately indicate that the area belongs to the State of Meghalaya and thereby issue proper papers to the people residing at border areas.

(b) RTI is an important Act, to some extent will provide transparency.

(c) On issue of influx – is of the opinion that the Government is weak, therefore, unable to check influx.

On issue of ILP and work permit – is of the opinion that it is not needed, the Government must create strong mechanism to check foreigners. However, introduction of ILP and work permit will stop influx to a certain extent.

On issue of Education Policy – should upgrade the existing grassroot level of education and revamp the education policy in accordance with the modern world.

(d) Not in favour of mining at the moment, should educate the people more about the said issue before mining, people are not ready yet.

(e) Demand for status quo for the Garo community because the Garos are much behind socially and economically compared to Khasis and Jaintias.

(f) Against shifting – should upgrade the Department and appoint more man power.

Q. 6. Demand for a separate Garo Land – Don't you think it will lead to a kind of ethnic polarisation in the delicate scenario of Meghalaya?

Ans.: GSU feels that the demand is justified, however, would want separation with love and understanding. The Centre has stated that if feasible then they will see to it, however, the State Government does not want the separation. GSU is seeking support from other NGOs from their community and political party, such as HSPDP.

Q. 7. Is there a preference for Garo compared to Khasi and Jaintia?

Ans.: Yes, there is a preference for Garos compared to Khasis and Jaintias.

Q. 8. Exclusion of women in the Union – Comment – Is it a male dominated organisation?

Ans.: It is not a male dominated organisation, women are not bar from joining, in fact, they have a Girls' Wing also in the Union.

Q. 9. What is the relationship between the GSU and the political parties?

(a) Congress; (b) BJP; (c) KHNAM; (d) UDP; (e) NCP; (f) HSPDP; (g) MDP

Ans.: The GSU share no relationship with any political party nor is it affiliated to any political party.

Question on KSU floating KHNAM – Is of the opinion that the opposition in the State is not effective, therefore, the student feel that as student union cannot do anything but as a political party could influence the policy decision of the Government.

APPENDIX – IV

Abstract of Discussion with Former President, FKJGP Basaiawmoit on 15th June 2003, present President, FKJGP, Emlang Lyttan on 28th January 2005 and on 12th March 2009, present General Secretary, FKJGP, Joe Marwein on 28th January 2005.

History of the FKJGP

The FKJGP was established on November 1989 by a group of youths and elders from the tribes of Khasi, Jaintia and Garo under the leadership of Sounder Strong Cajee. The decision to float the organisation was taken at a largely attended meeting held at Khasi National Durbar Hall, Mawkhar.

The FKJGP has no Constitution although it functions democratically based on consensus and majority decisions. Its policies, decisions and election of office bearers are carried out in the best example of democracy. Moreover, the Federation is not even registered organisation.

Aims and Objectives of the FKJGP

The FKJGP was founded with the sole objectives of uniting the indigenous tribes of the State for the common purpose of socio-economic growth, political rights and common issues. It also aims to fight against threat to the local people from influx, protection of their social and economic and political rights and to act as a powerful voice through democratic means against oppression, corruption and nepotism in the Government.

Organisational Structure of the FKJGP

The FKJGP has three organisational structures, namely, the Central Executive Committee (CEC), General Executive Council (GEC) and District Executive Committee (DEC). The CEC is presided over by the President and it is the policy making body of the Federation. It comprises of all elected office bearers and meets as and when it is required. It has full authority over the functioning of the Federation in all matters and its decision is always final except on those matters which require the general approval of the GEC. The GEC is a powerful body which comprises all office bearers of all circles and units of the Federation. Issues of general importance including which the CEC alone cannot decide like the matters relating to elections of the President and CEC members are usually taken up in the GEC meeting. The DEC is a body comprising of office bearers of the Federation in a particular district of the State and functions independently except on issues that need guidance and authorisation of the CEC. There are 39 circles in West Khasi Hills, 20 circles in East Khasi Hills, 5 circles in Ri-Bhoi district, more than 30 circles in Garo Hills while in Jaintia Hills the process of constituting of circles is still going on. Moreover, the number of circles is based on the present records available although expansion programme is continuing.

Issues Raised by the FKJGP

There are a number of important issues raised by the FKJGP in accordance with time. The first issue taken up by the Federation after its inception in 1989 was on illegal trading by non-tribal businessmen in the State. The Federation took up the issue as an open violation of trading by Non-Tribals Regulation Act 1954 of the District Councils, most of the non-tribal traders have been found violating the Act and carry out their business in the State without possessing valid trading licence issued by the District Councils. Other major issues taken up by the FKJGP which are yet to be implemented by the Government include review of the education policy, introduction of marriage Act and introduction of railway head for goods trains in the State besides strengthening of Meghalaya Land Transfer Act to ensure ownership of land in the State exclusively for indigenous local tribes (Khasi, Jaintia and Garos).

Q. 1. What is the relation of the FKJGP with the student organisations?

(a) the KSU; (b) the JSU; (c) the GSU

Ans.: (a) The organisation has a good relationship with all the three student bodies of the State, in fact, had supported and participated on a number of occasions on issues of common interest for the local indigenous tribes of the State. Though not a student body, had fought on many issues related to academic interest of the students, e.g., Review of Education Policy.

Q. 2. What is the relationship between FKJGP and the political parties – Congress, BJP, KHNAM, UDP, MDP, HSPDP, and NCP?

Ans.: The FKJGP is a political organisation and as such has no relationship whatsoever with any regional or national parties in the State. However, the organisation had been taking up with all political parties in the State issues related to the interest and development of the State, besides, opposing any political issues which are detrimental to the interest of the State.

Q. 3. Issue on Reservation Policy – Do the FKJGP agree with the KSU proposed reservation policy. What have the FKJGP to say about its presence in the all party meeting convened by Mr. E. K. Sangma to oppose the Government's move to review the reservation policy?

Ans.: FKJGP is happy with the reservation as it is at present. (First part)
No comment (Second part)

Q. 4. Regarding Uranium Mining – Do they share the same opinion with the KSU?

Ans.: At the moment the organisation is neither against it nor for it, waiting for the Government to decide, then only will comment on the said issue.

Q. 5. Regarding Railway head – Is there any difference of opinion between the student organisations (KSU, JSU, GSU and FKJGP) on the said issue – What is the Federation’s latest stand on the issue.

Ans.: Do not want to comment on others but the FKJGP is very much in favour of the Railway head.

Q. 6. Right to Information – What is their stand on the said issue?

Ans.: This Act is very important, came at the right time for corruption is high.

Q. 7. Regarding issues like influx, ILP, work permit and boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya – What is the opinion of the FKJGP – Do they share the same opinion with the student organisations?

Ans.: They do share the same opinion with the student organisation on the above issues.

Q. 8. Is the FKJGP in the same wavelength with the KSU regarding the GSU demand for a separate Garo land?

Ans.: FKJGP support Garos on this issue.

Q. 9. What is the relation of the FKJGP main body with Jaintia Unit and the Garo Unit? (There was a rift with the GSU Unit over ANVC atrocities – has it been sorted out).

Ans.: FKJGP main body shares a good relationship with both Jaintia and Garo Units. However, though the District body of Garo Unit wants to sever all ties but the circles and units are very much with the main body and working alongside with it. At present, the Jaintia unit has no leader.

Q. 10. Is it a male dominated organisation or are women allowed to take part in the activities of the organisation?

Ans.: There is no exclusion of women, in fact, welcome women to be a part of it and is working alongside with some elders, such as, in PRAC.

Q. 11. Regarding the issue of shifting MBOSE from Tura to Shillong – What is the stand of the FKJGP – how will the Garo Unit of the Union react?

Ans.: On this issue, the FKJGP has taken a neutral stand, neither for it nor against it.

Q. 12. Is there a preference for Khasi and Jaintia compared to Garo?

Ans.: No preferences, all are the same.

Q. 13. What is the opinion of the FKJGP on the Delimitation issue – Here again, do we find any differences of opinion between the main body and the Jaintia and Garo Unit?

Ans.: Against the issue – in fact, the FKJGP raised the issue of the proposed tagging of seven Assembly Constituencies of West Khasi Hills to Tura Parliamentary Constituency.

Q. 14. Issue regarding affiliation of Sikkim colleges under NEHU – Comment.

Ans.: Not in favour – should affiliate to North Bengal.

Q. 15. Issue of shifting Headquarter of Central Excise and Custom from Shillong to Guwahati – Comment.

Ans.: Against the said issue.

Q. 16. Question on being bias towards the Khasis and Jaintias

Ans.: E. Lyttan, the present President asserted that it is not true. Important posts are held not only by the Khasis and the Jaintias but also by the Garos, for example, when S. Cajee was detained in 1994 by the Police, then late Cyprian Sangma too over as the acting President of the Central body. This indicates that there is no bias in allotting the important posts to the different members of the organisation irrespective of the community they belong.

Q. 17. Question on the FKJGP not having a Constitution

Ans.: E. Lyttan, the present President stated that the Federation is not a registered organisation till date. Therefore members of the Federation do not feel the need of the Constitution, although they do have By-Laws which are amended at regular intervals depending on the need of the hour. The organisation was set up in 1989 and till date is functioning smoothly without a Constitution.

Q. 18. Question on the Garo Unit severing all ties with the main body

Ans.: E. Lyttan, the present President asserted that the District body of Garo unit wants to sever ties with the main body but the circles and units are against it and are with the main body and in fact working along side with it. He further asserted that the post of President can be held by any member from the three communities. Therefore, the allegation of the Federation meting out step-motherly treatment to the Garos is not true.

Q. 19. On the question of KSU floating KHNAM.

Ans.: No comment.

APPENDIX – V

Abstract of Discussions with prominent political leaders of Meghalaya, viz., O.L. Nongtdu (Congress) on 3rd August 2006; A.L. Hek (BJP) on 11th July 2006; P.T. Sawkmie (MDP) on 19th July 2006; Lambor Malngiang (KHNAM) on 18th August 2006; S.D. Khongwir (UDP) on 29th August 2006; H.S. Lyngdoh (HSPDP) on 19th July 2006 and Jemino Mawthoh (NCP) on 25th August 2008

Q. 1. It is seen that political affiliation is given to most student organisations that exist in India today – The question here is, why in Meghalaya no such thing exists till date - with the exception of PDM and recently KHNAM?

Ans.:

O.L. Nongtdu (Congress): No encouragement of political affiliation to any student or youth organisation.

A.L. Hek (BJP): Did not give a direct answer, however, stated that Congress has got its youth wing so does the BJP, i.e., ABVP. The youth wing of BJP is totally political in nature and not a student body. Other parties have no affiliation to any youth wing.

P.T. Sawkmie (MDP): MDP has their own youth wing called the MDP Youth Wing and deals with issues concerning the youth.

S.D. Khongwir (UDP): According to experience in Meghalaya, no such political affiliation is given to any student or youth organisations - No.

H.S. Lyngdoh (HSPDP): There are some political parties which have youth wing and women's wing.

Jemino Mawthoh (NCP): Is of the opinion that even those political parties which have youth wings does not encourage the youth to function independently.

Lambor Malngiang (KHNAM):

Q. 2. What is the relationship between the political party and the following organisations,
(a) FKJGP; (b) KSU; (c) JSU; (d) GSU

Ans.: The answer to this question is unanimous – No relationship either political or otherwise with any of the student and youth organisations of Meghalaya.

Q. 3. What is the opinion of the political party regarding the issues raised by the youth and student organisations, such as,

(a) Reservation Policy – Is the party in favour of the proposed reservation policy by the KSU – If yes, why? and if no, why?

(b) Railway project - Is the party in favour of the railway head project. If yes, why? If no why?

Does the party share the same opinion with the FKJGP which is in favour of the said issue or is it with the KSU which is against it. Please clarify.

(c) Uranium mining

(d) Boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya

(e) Inner Line Permit, Work Permit, Influx

(f) Education Policy

(g) Land Transfer Act

(h) Demand for a separate Garo Land

(i) Issuing of trading licence to non-tribal traders

Ans.:

(a) O.L. Nongtdu (Congress): Not against any change of it in its present form.

A.L. Hek (BJP): Reservation should be only within the context of employment and not on education. It should be based on merit, 10-15 percent on merit to General, i.e., to the minority of the State and the rest to the local indigenous tribes. Here, reservation should be for the minority and not the majority for the tribals are the majority in the State.

P.T. Sawkmie (MDP): In agreement with the proposal of the KSU.

S.D. Khongwir (UDP): Reservation policy needs to be reviewed.

H.S. Lyngdoh (HSPDP): Reservation should be based on population in the State, it should be proportionate.

Jemino Mawthoh (NCP): Reservation policy should be reviewed is of the opinion that KSU is right in demanding the said issue review should be done at regular intervals, based on data collected from survey conducted. Garos are demanding status quo, Jaintias feeling deprived and the three tribes are affected.

Lambor Malngiang (KHNAM): Supports the KSU, feels the distribution of quota is unfair, for based on population the Khasis and Jaintias deserve more quotas. However, balance should be there between the three tribes.

(b) O.L. Nongtdu (Congress): Is of the opinion that KSU, Ri-Bhoi district is in favour of it, however, main body is against it. Congress is in favour of the said issue, will benefit the State and public in many ways.

A.L. Hek (BJP): In favour of the said issue, it is going to benefit the common man and enhance the economy of the State. His party by supporting the issue is neither with the youth nor against the student body.

P.T. Sawkmie (MDP): Is in favour of it, the Railway head should reach upto Burnihat, goods will be easily available, prices will be low, will generate employment, in short, enhance economy of the State as a whole.

S.D. Khongwir (UDP): Is in favour of the said project, however, feels the KSU has the right to express their opinion.

H.S. Lyngdoh (HSPDP): Is very much against the said issue. Is of the opinion that proper demarcation of boundary with Assam counterpart should be made or else the latter will claim the area to Burnihat.

Jemino Mawthoh (NCP): Is in favour of it, feels that majority are for it, especially, the business community feels the need of a railway head. Is of the opinion that mindset of the people is changing and the said issue is welcomed by most sections of the society.

Lambor Malngiang (KHNAM): Is in favour of it as it is going to benefit the whole State. However, on the stand of the KSU, is of the opinion that discussion should be held with the KSU and make them realise the benefits of the said issue.

(c) O.L. Nongtdu (Congress): Basically whether public are in favour or not, all minerals belong to the Central Government, therefore, no one can stop the Centre from mining it, especially, uranium ore which is one of the raw materials in developing nuclear power. Moreover, it is not for the people to decide but the scientists to decide whether it is a serious threat or not to the people.

A.L. Hek (BJP): Is of the opinion that if there is gold in the State, one should not sit on it but should exploit it but it should be assured that it does not harm the public or cause health hazards.

P.T. Sawkmie (MDP): Is for the Government to decide. However, his reasons for opposing the said issue are, viz., health hazards; revenue promised by the Company UCIL to the State Government is only Rupees fifty lakhs per year whereas the proposed project is about one thousand crore, therefore, revenue offered to Government is very much less; employment will not be created since the UCIL will bring their own people and infrastructures promised by UCIL will not materialise until mining is over which might never happen.

S.D. Khongwir (UDP): Is not in favour of the said issue.

H.S. Lyngdoh (HSPDP): Very much against it for it is going to cause serious health hazards, support KSU on the said issue.

Jemino Mawthoh (NCP): Is in favour of the said issue because going to benefit the people, however, the UCIL should fulfil the conditions placed before mining, in fact, a committee should be formed to maintain the workings of the Company.

Lambor Malngiang (KHNAM): Is against the said issue, is detrimental to the society. Moreover, the Government will not benefit from the project, UCIL will pay only Rupees fifty lakhs per year whereas the cost of yellow cake is Rupees fifty lakhs per Kg, therefore, not fair – UCIL taking advantage of the State Government.

(d) O.L. Nongtdu (Congress): Both the State of Assam and Meghalaya should come to an agreement and solve the problem.

A.L. Hek (BJP): Politicians are making it a political issue. Now there is Congress Government in Meghalaya, Assam and Centre, therefore, it could be solved. The State should not depend solely on the Centre but should try to find a solution which till date has not taken a concrete action regarding this issue.

P.T. Sawkmie (MDP): The State Government is not serious at all in solving this long pending problem. The State Government should discuss the matter with the Central Government and its neighbouring State and put an end to this problem.

S.D. Khongwir (UDP): The Governments of both the States should sit together and discuss about it and try to find a solution to it.

H.S. Lyngdoh (HSPDP): The problem has to be solved by the Governments of both Assam and Meghalaya.

Jemino Mawthoh (NCP): The said issue could be solved by the intervention of the Centre.

Lambor Malngiang (KHNAM): The Government of both Assam and Meghalaya are unable to solve the problem because of fear of losing power and of not returning back to power.

(e) O.L. Nongtdu (Congress): Is in favour of work permit. Influx is created by locals only, especially, the contractors by bringing labourers from outside the State. People should be educated by NGOs of problems of influx.

A.L. Hek (BJP): India being a democracy should not have ILP, moreover, it affects tourism. Work permit should be only for outsiders, e.g., Bangladeshis. Indians should not be considered as influx but Bangladeshis coming as labourers should be stopped. Labourers from other States of India should be encouraged.

P.T. Sawkmie (MDP): Implementation of ILP will affect the economy of the State and is of the opinion that it is not necessary to introduce ILP in the State. Work permit should be issued only to outsiders. Outsiders mostly, Bangladeshis

are coming in large numbers, therefore, Government should do something, is with the student and youth organisation on this issue.

S.D. Khongwir (UDP): Is in favour of implementation of ILP. Work permit should be issued to only outsiders. On issue of influx, Government together with NGOs should work together.

H.S. Lyngdoh (HSPDP): ILP should be issued to foreigners. Work permit will safeguard interest and welfare of the people. Against influx, strong mechanism should be put up at the boundary areas to check influx.

Jemino Mawthoh (NCP): In the absence of other mechanism ILP and work permit should be implemented at the earliest. To check influx, the three-tier card system should be introduced.

Lambor Malngiang (KHNAM): Is in favour of ILP and work permit. Mizoram introduced ILP for safety of society our State should do the same. Work permit should be issued to outsiders. On the issue of influx, the Government has formed a committee to look into the issue, waiting for the report of the committee.

(f) O.L. Nongtdu (Congress): Education policy should be revamped, should introduce job-oriented courses.

A.L. Hek (BJP): Education should be job-oriented. Vocational education should be introduced.

P.T. Sawkmie (MDP): A committee comprising of Educationists should be formed and they will decide how to revamp the whole education system.

S.D. Khongwir (UDP): Education policy should be revamped.

H.S. Lyngdoh (HSPDP): Education policy needs to be revamped, add vocational and technical courses.

Jemino Mawthoh (NCP): Education policy needs to be revamped, Shillong is the education hub, however, there are 77 percent dropouts indicating the poor state of education, there are inadequacies, a change is needed. It is a State subject, therefore, make it more technical, job-oriented and strive for quality education.

Lambor Malngiang (KHNAM): The whole educational system needs to be revamped.

(g) O.L. Nongtdu (Congress): It should remain as it is for it really protects the local indigenous tribes.

A.L. Hek (BJP): Against inclusion of other tribes, should include only local indigenous tribes of the State.

P.T. Sawkmie (MDP): No other tribes should be included, it should remain as it is at present.

S.D. Khongwir (UDP): It should remain in the present form.

H.S. Lyngdoh (HSPDP): Land Transfer Act should be in favour of the local indigenous tribes.

Jemino Mawthoh (NCP): Existing Land Transfer Act is fine and should remain as it is, should benefit public interest.

Lambor Malngiang (KHNAM): Against inclusion of other tribes, should remain as it is at present.

(h) O.L. Nongtdu (Congress): Not in favour of more smaller States.

A.L. Hek (BJP): The Garos fought with the Khasis for the Hill State, however, if they want a separate State, should go about it without politicising the issue and without affecting the people and creating a differences among the tribals.

P.T. Sawkmie (MDP): It is for the Government of India to consider the issue.

S.D. Khongwir (UDP): Is neither for nor against the said issue.

H.S. Lyngdoh (HSPDP): Is in favour of the Greater Garoland, supports the GSU and other NGOs on their demand.

Jemino Mawthoh (NCP): Is not in favour of the said issue and formation of smaller States and is of the opinion that Garos should stay together with Khasis and the Jaintias.

Lambor Malngiang (KHNAM): At the moment, demand for a separate Garoland is not correct for the Garos, they will become a minority in their own State with the increasing population of Muslims in Garo Hills.

(i) On the issue of trading licence the answer is unanimous, all political leaders are of the opinion that trading licence should be issued to those non-tribals who have been verified that they are genuine citizens of the State of Meghalaya.

Q. 4. In their opinion, do the political party think that the student and youth organisations are acting as effective pressure groups in the State politics?

Ans.:

O.L. Nongtdu (Congress): Student organisations is being influenced by politics

A.L. Hek (BJP): They act as pressure groups only on those issues which they could pressurise the Government.

P.T. Sawkmie (MDP): As an MDP representative, the student and youth organisations are not acting as effective pressure groups.

S.D. Khongwir (UDP): Compared to other parts of India, the pressure groups in Meghalaya are strong and effective.

H.S. Lyngdoh (HSPDP): The student and youth organisations act as pressure groups to a certain extent.

Jemino Mawthoh (NCP): Compared to other parts of India, the pressure groups in Meghalaya are strong and effective.

Lambor Malngiang (KHNAM): Is of the opinion that they are not acting as pressure groups but raise issues which compel the Government to do something. And the Government respond because certain political parties are supporting the issues raised by the student and youth organisations.

Q. 5. According to the political party, are the demands/issues raised by the student and youth organisations justified? If not, why and if yes, why?

Ans.: The answer to this question is unanimous all the political leaders asserted that in certain cases issues raised are justified, for example, education policy, boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya, etc. However, issues like railway head are not justified for it hinders the progress of the tribals as a whole.

Q. 6. What is the view of the political party regarding the student body, such as, the KSU floating their own political party?

Ans.:

O.L. Nongdu (Congress): The students should spend 99 percent of their time on student problems and leave politics to senior citizens.

A.L. Hek (BJP): The student and youth organisations have the right to float political party but should not mix their agenda with political issues.

P.T. Sawkmie (MDP): As an MDP representative, feels that India is a democracy, therefore, any student or youth body have the right to float their own political party.

S.D. Khongwir (UDP): Do not think it is a right decision for student body to mix with politics.

H.S. Lyngdoh (HSPDP): Student body should not get involved with politics.

J. Mawthoh (NCP): Students should not have any link with political party. If student leaders wish to stand for election should detach themselves from student bodies but not advisable to work together. For example, in the last election, KHNAM could have won more seats if the relationship between KHNAM and KSU is good but seems otherwise.

L. Manlgiang (KHNAM): KSU did the right thing, for as student body agitated for years on many issues but Government not responding. Therefore, decided to pressurise the Government from within as political party.

APPENDIX – VI

Questionnaire Schedule on Public Opinion

- Q. 1. What is your opinion regarding the issues raised by the youth and student organisations on:
(a) Reservation Policy, (b) Railway head, (c) Uranium mining, (d) Boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya, (e) Influx, ILP, Work Permit, (f) Shifting of MBOSE from Tura to Shillong, (g) Education Policy, (h) Issuing of Trading Licence to non-tribal traders, (i) Demand for a separate Garo Land, (j) Land Transfer Act.
- Q. 2. Is the presence of student and youth organisations as pressure group enhancing the political consciousness of the people?
- Q. 3. Are the student and youth organisations playing a constructive/ negative role as pressure groups in the society of Meghalaya?
- Q. 4. What is your opinion regarding the student body, such as, the KSU floating their own political party?
- Q. 5. Are the demands/ issues raised by the student and youth organisations justified?

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