THE REPRESENTATION OF THE KHASIS IN
THE LEGISLATURE AND MINISTRIES SINCE 1920


Till 1920, Khasi and Jaintia Hills and other tribal areas were classified as backward areas. As such, they were excluded from the Legislature. Shillong, the capital of Assam since 1874 was not represented. But in 1921, when the Shillong Urban Constituency was created in the General Election held in 1921, Rev Nichols Roy was elected to the Assam Legislative Council from the Shillong Urban Constituency by securing 358 votes while his rival Srijut Sivanath Dutta got 112 votes.

In accordance with the Government of India Act, 1919, the Legislature of the Assam Province consisted of one House, the Legislative Council which first met at the Council Chamber of the Government House, Shillong
on the 12th February 1921. Members present were:

1. Hon'ble Mr. J.C. Arbuthnott C.I.E. President.
2. Hon'ble Mr. W.J. Reid C.S.I.
3. Hon'ble Mr. A. Majid C.I.E.
4. Hon'ble Rai Bahadur Chanashyam Barua.
5. Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Syed Abdul Majid.
6. Mr. A.R. Botham C.S.I., M.L.C.
7. Mr. A.R. Edwards I.C.S., M.L.C.
8. Mr. J.N. Taylor, C.I.E., M.L.C.
9. Srijut Nilmoni Bhukan M.L.C.

Besides the 'Elected Members', there were also 'Nominated Members'. Thus in the same year 1921, to give fair representation to the other areas, Jaggin Sangma Laskar, a Garo was nominated by the Governor to the Legislative Council. But since he was ignorant of the language and could not understand the proceedings of the Assembly, he was replaced by a Welsh Missionary, Rev. Robert Evans. But it should be noted that the work of this missionary was concentrated only in Khasi Hills - hence, the other hill areas were not fully represented.

In 1926, during the next general election, Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy was again elected by an overwhelming majority over Sibnath Dutta and A. Macdonald Kongor. The
third Legislative Council met on the 22nd February 1927. Members of the Legislative Council were Syed Mahamad Sadulla, Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy and others. Besides there were nominated members, Rev. J.C. Evans being one of them. It was in 1927, Rev. Nichols Roy was the first hillman to be appointed as Minister for Medical Services by Sir John Kerr, the Governor. Besides, Ministers appointed by the Governor over "Transferred subjects" the Governor also appointed Executive Councillors over "Reserved Subjects".

Under the operation of the Government of India Act 1935, Khasi and Jaintia Hills was declared as Partially Excluded Area and was given representation in the Assam Legislative Assembly. In the Ninth Schedule of the Government of India (Provincial Legislative Assemblies) Order, 1936, the names of the "Constituencies" of the Assam Province are shown. In Khasi and Jaintia Hills District, there were four constituencies, as follows:

1. Shillong Constituency which includes "British areas" of the Shillong Sub-division. This Constituency also includes "Shillong Sylliem State portion".

2. Jowai Constituency which includes Jowai Sub-division.

3. Women's (Shillong) Constituency which includes women voters and women candidates.
In the election of 1937, there were three candidates for the Shillong seat - Rev. Nichols Roy, Ajra Singh Khongphai and A. Macdonal Kongor. Rev. Nichols Roy was elected by a minority vote. For the Shillong women seat, Miss Mavis Duna was declared elected over Berlina Diengdoh. From the Jowai seat, there were three contestants - Rev. L. Gatphoh, Larsing Khyriem and Sorendro Bareh. Rev. L. Gatphoh got an overwhelming majority and was declared elected as an Independent candidate.

In 1937, with the inauguration of the provincial Autonomy Scheme, Rev. Nichols Roy became the leader of the Assam Nationalist Progressive Party, within the Assam Legislative Assembly. The first Ministry of Sir Saiyid Mahammad Sadullah as Premier was sworn in on 1st April 1937. Rev. Nichols Roy was included as Minister of Co-operation in the first Sadulla Ministry.

The first Legislative Assembly met on the 7th April 1937 in the Legislative Assembly Chamber, Shillong. The Assembly was presided over by Mr. F.W. Hochenhull M.L.A., nominated by the Governor, in accordance with sub-section (3) of Section 65 of the Government of India Act 1935, to run the House till the election of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. There were two
contestants for Speakership, Srijut Basanta Kumar Das and Khan Maulavi Karamat Ali, the former got 56 votes while the latter 51 votes. The first Ministry of Sir Sadulla consisted of Srijut Rohini Kumar Choudhury, Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy and others. Shortly before the Budget Session, the Premier resigned and formed a new Ministry. In the second Sadulla Ministry, which was formed on the 5th February 1938, Rev. Nichols Roy was included as Minister for Local Self-Government.

When the second Sadulla Ministry was voted out of office on the 20th September, 1938, the first Bordoloi Ministry refused to accept Rev. Nichols Roy in his Ministry. It included Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, Rapnath Brahma and others.

However, under the stress of the Second World War the Congress High Command instructed all Congress Ministries in all Provinces to resign. The Bordoloi Ministry resigned on the 7th November 1938. On the same day, the third Sadulla Ministry was sworn in. Miss Mavis Dunn, a Khasi lady was taken into the Ministry of Sadulla on the 5th December 1939. But on the 25th December 1941, the Sadulla Ministry was voted out, thereby bringing the Province under Governor's rule under Section 93 of the Government of India Act 1935 which
lasted till 25th August 1942. The fourth Sadulla Ministry was formed in 1942. Mavis Dunn was included in the Ministry but Rev. Nichols Roy left for the United States in 1943. On the 23rd March 1945, the fourth Sadulla Ministry resigned but the following day, on the 24th March 1945, his Ministry was formed again as a result of an understanding with the Opposition Party. However, in this new Ministry, no tribal was taken by the Sadulla Ministry. This fifth Sadulla Ministry remained in power after which the second Bordoloi Ministry came into being on the 11th September 1946.

As a result of the second World War, the General Election which was scheduled to be held in 1942 could not be held. It was held only in 1946. It should be noted that for the first time in the election in Khasi and Jaintia Hills that the Indian National Congress set up its candidates in this election of 1946. From the Jowai seat there were three candidates Rev. L. Gatphoh and Larsing Khyriem as Independent candidates and Wiking Singh as a Congress candidate. In this election, Larsing Khyriem defeated Rev. L. Gatphoh by a minority vote.

From the Shillong seat, there were three candidates - A. Macdonald Kongor, who, in spite of his being
the president of the Congress Committee was not given a Congress ticket and therefore, he contested as an Independent candidate. Rev. Nichols Roy contested as a Congress candidate, Mr. A.S. Khongphal contested as a candidate from the Khasi-Jaintia Political Association. However, Rev. Nichols Roy won with an overwhelming majority after which he entered the Bordoloi Ministry.

From the Shillong Women Constituency, Mrs. Bonily Khongmen contested from the Congress ticket, Miss. Mavis Dunn, from the Khasi Jaintia Political Association ticket, Berlina Diengdoh and Mrs. T.W. Shadap as Independent candidates. Mrs. Bonili Khongmen was declared elected with an overwhelming majority. She was also elected as the Deputy Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly. In conclusion, the Bordoloi Ministry which was sworn in on the 11th September 1946 continued in power till it resigned on the eve of the inauguration of the New Constitution of India.