

CHAPTER IV

IMPACT OF IDENTITY

POLITICS AND SOCIO-

ECONOMIC CONDITION OF

THE MINORITIES IN DIMA

HASAO DISTRICT

IMPACT OF IDENTITY POLITICS AND SOCIO- ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE MINORITIES IN DIMA HASAO DISTRICT

Considering the impact of identity politics in Dima Hasao district, this chapter based itself on the socio and economic lives of the ethnic minorities, analyzing through the prospect and retrospect of identity politics. The central mandate of a nation is usually the promotion of higher standards of living, providing employment opportunities, development and socio-economic progress. Malfunctioning within the district put a brake on the overall developing system. The need for change in governance was felt necessary by the ethnic minorities who experienced a sense of negligence in social and economic spheres with its increasing social complexity in the district.

Identity politics often involve severe cause and consequences, economic factor can weakened the political institution and this is mostly seen aftermath of identity politics of ethnic minorities as it repressed those cultural groups with political grievances. When the economic benefits are disproportionately allocated among various groups, the political cleavages based on cultural difference are exacerbated a new ones are created which lead social disruption. Identity politics, by and large is an outcome of a number of interrelated factors. And it is necessary to study the different impact of identity politics so that step can be laid down for its further resolution.

With an aim to find its impact of and unravel the socio-economic conditions of the ethnic minorities interviews were conducted among those who have more knowledge about the place and the living conditions of the ethnic minorities in the district and questionnaire were distributed among the ethnic minority groups. In this chapter the socio-economic impact will be analysed considering the economy of the district and the prevailing social lives of the ethnic minorities.

4.1 Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of the respondents can be summarised as follows. The data has been collected from twenty villages of the three Developmental Blocks in the district five each from New Sangbar Developmental Block and Jatinga Valley Developmental Block and ten villages from Harangajao ITD Block. The name of the villages are New Sangbar, Mirphung, Malangpa, Ch Langlut, Silum, Mahur, Asalu, Nomzang, Saron, Longkai, Zion, Bethany, Fiangpui, Lodi, Khongsai, Muolhoi,

Muolpong, Jatinga, Songpijang, and Mission Veng. Questionnaire Schedule has been prepared to gather the information. Attempt has been made here to analyse the profile of the respondents in Dima Hasao district of Assam. The variables used to analyse the data are sex, age of the respondents, marital status, educational qualification, and religion, occupation, types of family and annual income of the respondents.

4.1.1 Sex of the respondents

The sex ratio is an important variable in the research. The dominance of a particular sex in the total population of the study can be accessed through gender distribution. To analyse the sex ratio, responses are classified into two, these are (i) Male and (ii) Female. The sex wise distribution of the respondents is shown in table 4.1

Table 4.1
Sex of the respondents

Sl. No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
1	Male	120	60%
2	Female	80	40%
Total		200	100%

Out of the total respondents, more than half of the respondents' i.e. 60% are male and 40% are female. The study represents that the male are more open than female.

4.1.2 Age group of the respondents

Age is one of the important variables in the present study. Since it has great influence in the thinking of the individual, it is also prominent criterion to identify variations in the opinion making. On the basis of age the respondents are classified into five categories: (i) 20 (ii) 21-30 (iii) 31-40 (iv) 41-50 (v) 50. The distribution of respondents into these categories is shown in table 4.2

Table 4.2

Age group of the respondent

Sl. No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
1	<20 years	10	5%
2	21-30 years	30	15%
3	31-40 years	50	25%
4	41-50 years	60	30%
5	>50 years	50	25%
Total		200	100%

The data indicates that 30% respondents are between 41 to 50 years, 50% are between 31 to 40 years and above 50 years i.e 25% each. The remaining respondents are between 21 to 30 years with 15% and and comprise of only 5% below the age of 20.

4.1.3 Marital status of the respondents

On the basis of marital status of the respondents, they were classified into two categories (i) Married and (ii) Unmarried. The distribution of marital status of the respondents is shown in table 4.3

Table 4.3

Marital status of the Respondents

Sl. No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
1	Married	108	54%
2	Unmarried	92	46%
Total		200	100%

The data shows that majority of the respondents are married of both sex with 54% while the remaining 46% are unmarried which represents that the unmarried are more reserved than the married people.

4.1.4 Educational qualifications of the respondents

Education being an important tool for social transformation, it is also an important indicator for socio-economic background of the respondents and they are classified under four categories (1) HSLC (2) HS (3) Graduate (4) PG and more. The distribution of the respondents on the basis of their educational qualifications are shown in table 4.4

Table 4.4

Educational Qualifications of the Respondents

Sl. No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
1	HSLC	30	15%
2	HS	22	11%
3	Graduate	125	62.5%
4	PG & more	23	11.5%
Total		200	100%

The data shows that out of the total respondents, majority of the respondents are Graduates with 62.5%, 15% of the respondents have attained HSLC, the respondents with Higher Secondary degrees are 11%. Respondents who have higher qualifications of PG and more have 11.5%.

4.1.5 Religion distribution of the respondents

Religious belief of the people shape the opinion of the people as it influences the individual groups, community and society to a great extent. The religious communities of the respondents can be classified under the following categories.

Christian (2) Hindu (3) Heraka and (4) Paupaise. The distribution of the respondents into these categories is shown in table 4.5

Table 4.5

Religion distribution of the respondents

Sl. No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
1	Christian	143	71.5%
2	Hindu	27	13.5%
3	Haraka	21	10.5%
4	Paupaise	09	4.5%
Total		200	100%

Out of the total respondents, the data reveals that the majority 71.5% of the respondents both male and female category belongs to the religion of Christianity followed by Hindu religion with 13.5%. The representation of Haraka and Paupaise i.e. fore father religion is 10.5 and 4.5 respectively.

4.1.6 Occupation of the respondents

Economic has a bearing on one's economic and occupational status. On the basis of occupations, respondents are classified into five categories (1) Service (2) Self Business (3) Agriculture (4) Students and (5) Others as shown in table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Occupation of the Respondents

Sl. No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
1	Service	68	34%
2	Self Business	27	13.5%
3	Agriculture	33	16.5%
4	Students	52	26%
5	Other	20	10%
Total		200	100%

On the basis of the data, majority of the respondents are in service with 34%, followed by the students with 26%. The table also shows that the respondents are also

taking small self business for their living with 13.5% and 16.5% respondents with agriculture as their occupation.

4.1.7 Types of family

Family is the basic and functional unit of social organisation. It is also a socio-cultural agency because of the composition and principles of integration underlying it. Two types of family units were identified among the subjects of this study. The nuclear consisted of husband, wife and children and the joint family living either with their parental family or with their brother's family. The distribution of the respondents into these types of family is shown in table 4.7.

Table 4.7

Types of Family

Sl. No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
1	Nuclear	174	87%
2	Joint	26	13%
Total		200	100%

The data shows that most of the respondents (87%) live in nuclear families while only 13% live in joint families. Thus the table indicates that many of the ethnic groups live in nuclear families.

Table 4.1.8 Annual income of the family

Family income of the person has an important bearing on the socio-economic background of a person and is considered as an important variable in analysing the socio-economic background of a person. The annual income of the family of the respondents are classified into five categories (1) 2 lakhs (2) 2.1-5 lakhs (3) 5.1-8 lakhs (4) 8.1-11 lakhs (5) 12 lakhs.

Table 4.8

Annual Income of the Family

Sl. No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
1	<2 lakhs	110	55%
2	2.1-5 lakhs	63	31.5%
3	5.1-8 lakhs	17	8.5%
4	8.1-11 lakhs	07	3.5%
5	>12 lakhs	03	1.5%
Total		200	100%

The data indicates that 55% of the respondents annual income falls in between lesser than 2 lakhs and 31.5% of the respondents annual income falls in between 2.1-5 lakhs. 8.5% of the respondent's family income is 5.1-8lakhs and 3.5% have the annual income of 8.1-11 lakhs while only1.5% has annual income with more than12 lakhs.

4.2 Economy of the district

(Source- Directorate of Information and Public Relations)

Economic scenario of Dima Hasao district inspite of its geographical remoteness, prospects of Agriculture, Horticulture and Forestry are bright. The district is blessed with good natural resources.

4.2.1 Agriculture

Entire rural people of the district are dependent upon agriculture. One of the distinctive features of agricultural practice of the tribal people in the district is jhumming which is a traditional way of their life. This is in fact a shifting process of cultivation in cycles. About 70 percent of the total cultivated area is jhumming area. This cultivation is done in autumn season either as a single crop or some times as mixed crop along with maize, ginger, turmeric, chillies and vegetables etc. Some horticultural crops cultivation, viz. pineapple, orange, papaya, and banana occupies a vital role in agricultural economy of the districts. Winter paddy cultivation in flat lands mostly in river valleys is done only in Rabi season. Efforts have been made by the departments of agriculture, soil conservation and irrigation to boost up the agricultural economy by some modern method. Though economic impact of

jhumming cannot be ruled out at present, it has many drawbacks. It turns the hill slopes barren by soil erosion and it is less productive and does not commensurate with time, labour and investment. Keeping this in view some private sector and some public sector under taking has taken up coffee and rubber cultivation in different localities of the district. Some agro based industries are being established so that cultivators become interested to new type of cultivation that feed industries.

4.2.2 Farming

Livestock and poultry occupy an important place in the rural economy. Buffalo, pig etc. are the most common livestock animals while hen and duck comprise the poultry birds. Many of the tribal communities depend their livelihood in farming.

4.2.3 Forestry

The major forest product consists of timber, cane, bamboo etc. Other minor forest product include Agar, chalmugra etc. Boulders and gravels in the river bed along with stones are also available.

4.2.4 Industry

Cement factories, saw-mills etc. are private organised sector industries in the district. There are four cement plants in the district. Also, NEEPCO has established KOPILI HYDEL project at Umrongso which produces sizeable quantity of electricity. Apart from these, weaving is also considered to be a household industry in this district. Large areas have been covered by Eri and Mulberry farm.

4.2.5 Mines and Minerals

The region has rich deposit of important minerals some of which are being commercially exploited while potential of other is yet to be prospected. Limestone and coal in small quantity are found in the neighbourhood of Garampani i.e. from Khorangma to Garampani which are exploited by Assam mineral development Corporation, Guwahati. The main user of the lime stone is the cement factories located at Umrongso. Carbonaceous shale is available in Bagha area. Good quality of lime stone, low in magnesia and suitable for cement manufacturing is also available. The major rivers like Kopili, Jatinga, Diyung and Langting are rich in minor minerals like stone, gravels, sand etc. and are extracted for construction of roads, buildings etc.

Dima Hasao is the hill district of Assam with geographical area of 4890 sq.Km. which is 6.28% of the total geographical area of the state. The area comprises of small percentage, approximately 5-10 % of flat and low lying land adjacent to the plain district of Assam. More than 90% population lived in rural areas. There are 13 tribes in the district and constitute 70% of the total population. The Provisional population in 2011 of the district (census of India 2011) is 2, 13,529 with population density (per Sq. Km) of 44.

4.2.6 Forest area/forest cover

The hill tract of the Dima Hasao district is rich in biodiversity with flora and fauna of great variety. The evergreen, semi-evergreen and deciduous forest grow in harmony with a host of other herbs, shrubs, climbers and grasses which impart unique vegetative features to this region. Though large area of the district is covered with vegetation, only a small fraction of it has been constituted reserve forest. There are three reserve forest:-

1. Langting-Mupa reserved forest: 49178.80 hectare (491.79 sq km)
2. Krungming reserved forest: 12860.00 hectare (126.80 sq km)
3. Borail reserved forest: 1760.00 hectare (17.60 sq km)

The total area of the reserved forest including proposed reserved forest is 636.18 sq. Km and 54.79 sq. Km respectively which is 14.13 % of the total geographical area of the district. Still vast tract remains in un-classed forest (council land/community land). The un-classed forest (council land/community land) areas have major vegetative cover, (3854.00 sq.km) i.e. 78.81% of the geographical area of the district.

Bamboo is the most commonly used materials in Dima Hasao. The major bamboo species found in Dima Hasao can be broadly categorised into commercial and industrial bamboo, depending upon the demand and usage in the market. The commercial bamboo is mainly used for house construction and other handicraft and day-to- day requirement by the local people.

In the industrial sector, the Cachar paper mill, Panchgram and Nagaon Paper mill, Jagiroad, two units of Hindustan Paper Corporation Ltd. are the major user of

the bamboo of the district. Bamboo is the major source of revenue earning of the Autonomous Council.

4.2.7 Medicinal Plants

The economic life of the tribal communities living in the rural areas in the district is still closely linked to surrounding forest and its produce. The medicinal plants from forests are an important component of the Minor Forest Produce; otherwise known as Non Timber Forests Produce (NTFP). The district is rich in medicinal plants. They are principle health care resource for majority of rural people. The N.T.F.P including medicinal plant may play more than a subsidiary role in supplementing household income. Some of the Medicinal tree, herbs and shrubs, which grow naturally in some of our forest have great potential economic value. The demand for medicinal plants is increasing within and outside countries. There is depletion of medicinal plants resource in the district due to over exploitation as well as for practice of Jhum cultivation. The Medicinal Plants are mostly harvested from wild resource i.e. forest land and only a very few number of species found in the district are – Azadirachta indica(neem), Emblica Officinalis(amlam), Terminalia chebula(Hilika) T.belerica (Bohera), T. Arjuna (Arjun) Aegle Marmilos (Bel) Cinnamomum tamala (Tej patta) Crataeva magna (sibidokti) oroxyhum indica (bhat ghila) Aquilaria, Agallocha (Agar), Taxus. Walliciana etc. other important herbs and shrubs etc. are – Similax macrophylla (Chopchini), Rowlfia Serpentine (Sarpagarila), Asparagus Recemosus(Satamul), Homolaen Species (Gandhi), Tinospora cordifolia (Hagunilata), Discorea alata(bonkapahi), Alatita (Kath Alu), Acalypha indica (Bishohory), Jatropha curcus(Bongali Ara/Bhotera), Swertia tita(Chirata Tita) etc.

4.2.8 Orchids

Dima Hasao district which is considered as '*Nature's Treasure Trove*' is gifted with lush green hills, valleys, rivers, fresh stream, forest abounding with flora and fauna along with beautiful varieties of Orchids blooming in many areas of the district to add gaiety and colour to the existing landscape making it wonderful. In Dima Hasao there are as many as 80 varieties of orchids, which add colour and gaiety to the existing greenery. The orchids grow on the branches of trees, on rocks and on the ground. On account of their unusual shaped flowers which in most cases very attractive, orchids are very much sought for by botanist, and plant lovers all over the

world. Most of the orchids bloom with the advent of monsoon i.e. during spring season. Some of the important varieties like *Vanda Coerulea* (Blue Vanda) flowers during winter, *Acridos odonatum*, *A.multiferum*, *Rhyncho stylis retusa* bear beautiful inflorescence which is known as “Kopow Phul” in Assamese. Among various other common orchids of Dima Hasao reference may be made to different species of genus “*Dendrobium*”-*D.Muschatus*, *D.Pieritic*, *D.Devonianum* are found in these hills range. Besides *Dandrobium*, there are orchids belonging to the genus, *Cymbidium*, *Cypripedium*, *Aerids*, *Coelogyne* and terrestrial orchids like *Arundina*, *Bamsifolia*, *Thuniaalba*, *Phius* etc.

Demands of orchids is universal, therefore if orchids are cultivated and existing one is preserved in forest, it will be a great source of earning including foreign exchange for all time to come.

4.3 Economic profile of the region

Even after 50 years of independence the district remained outside the mainstream of economic life. Agriculture yields are low in the district while traditional farming with a shrinking jhum (shifting cultivation) cycle has become ecologically unsustainable. Despite a large geographical area, the agricultural yields are less. Agriculture is the main means of livelihood for the ethnic minorities. Jhum cultivation is practice by the tribal in the area which continues to be a major agricultural practice but it has adverse impact like soil erosion leading to constant landslides during the rainy seasons and also destruction of forest.

The region is lagging behind in the industrial sector too. Because of poor infrastructural facilities the people in the regions have poor standard of living. Although there is huge scope of improvement in the region but the lack of knowledge and poor infrastructure add to the economic misery of the people. Some of the agro-based, forest based product, mineral product including coal and handcrafts are all in very negligible quantities. The district hardly generates income due to lack of communications. The agricultural activities dominate the life of most of the ethnic minorities in the region but the lack of communication facilities in their areas makes its export a temporary phenomenon. The study also reveals that communications channel has not been fully tapped. Lack of local and regional markets in the areas of ethnic minorities compounds these problems.

The analysis of the study reveals economic backwardness as one of the root cause of the rise of identity politics among ethnic minorities in the district. The ethnic minorities failed to develop their internal financial resources due to lack of infrastructure and lack of adequate provision from the government as it does not enjoy the necessary power and resources provided by the government.

4.4 Impact of identity politics on the ethnic minorities in the district

Marginalisation has become a critical concern in national and international communities. It has gained significance in this era of globalisation because of its socio economic consequences. In many third world countries people of the lower classes and communities are pushed to the margins of society as a result of various historical and developmental factors. The question of self representation has become relevant in social research. Tribal communities virtually have become marginalised in every sphere of social life. Since the mid 1970s a new political consciousness among the tribal groups emerged in India. The present study dwells upon the question of identity politics and marginalisation in the specific context of ethnic minorities' mobilisation in Dima Hasao. The basic question of ethnic minorities in the district is the unwanted designs of the majority in the district to turn the land of various ethnic groups into their land i.e. Dima Raji by changing the old district nomenclature N.C. Hills into Dima Hasao district.

The Constitution envisages constitutional guarantee to protect them from various exploitation and to promote their developments at all levels but the ethnic minorities continued to remain marginalised. The change of district nomenclature apparently set a stage for political mobilisation of the ethnic minorities. The successive governments failed to address the perpetuation of injustice against non Dimasas in the district. This led to the emergence of identity politics among ethnic minorities. The impact of identity politics on the ethnic minorities will be studied in this chapter considering the socio-economic problems faced by them. The discontentment among the ethnic minorities was visible since the early 1980s due to the internal conflict between the ethnic groups with the Dimasas.

4.4.1 Socio-Economic conditions of the ethnic minorities

North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council was established to protect and promote the identities, rights and interest of the different tribal groups of the district

without any bias but the exercising of power and functions of the present Autonomous Council is taken by the ethnic minorities as totally against the espoused principles and ideals and has emerged as the main front to pursue the biased interest of a particular community. To the minorities, Autonomous Council has strayed from its democratic principles and has been grossly misused to promote the vested objective of one particular community. The various incidences which meted out the minorities in the district were beyond imagination.

Economic development of the region moved at a low place compared to the other districts of the state. Economic activities got concentrated in the select pockets of majority community. The perpetuation of select and focus development impeded the efficacy of modernization in the region. Nothing significant has yet come out during the last several years despite the various efforts initiated. The roots lie deep in the relative deprivation of the ethnic minorities in the district.

Insurgency is another factor responsible for economic under development of the minorities. Problems with food insecurity, breakdown in transport and communication, deprivation in political administration, disruption of labour, destruction of property, land grabbing were experienced by the minorities. This was followed by commercial disruption, diversion of resources, misallocation and unexpected expenditure, infrastructural disruption, fluctuation of prices and the sudden price hike in the district. Degradation in environment caused by destruction of ethnic clash is the several socio economic problems faced by the ethnic minorities during the clash which finally give shape to the discontentment of the people into identity politics. The ethnic conflicts resulted in economic destruction and social disorganisation. The growing discontentment challenged the integrity of the ethnic groups in the district.

The logic with which Sixth Schedule was introduced for the protection more than the development of the communities remained in the minds of the leaders for a long time. This is also one reason for which the paradigm of development for the areas under Sixth Schedule came into being much later in the district. Under development have become integral to the understanding of the political process and economic development of the region's practice of corruption has been endemic in the district and so despite the offer of several autonomy packages, adoption of policy of political accommodation violence has also been endemic in the area. Denial of the

right of self determination of the minority people as well as political suppression is responsible for the discontentment prevailing in the region.

Economic factor remain common the most of this case. Economic factor in the district appear to be the most potent reason for the continued political unrest and uncertainty in the entire region. The transportation and communication linkages are very poor in the region especially the areas of New Sangbar Development Block and Jatinga Development Block. There are many villages which still lack road communication which results in the poor economic life of the ethnic minorities. Economic activities got concentrated in the hands of few. Vast areas therefore remain backward and inaccessible even today. Together with the perpetuation of traditional practices in economy and focus development impeded the efficacy of the process of modernization in the region.

Moreover the lack of infrastructure in the region has been responsible for the sluggish growth of industries in the region despite abundance of natural resources and endless planning of modernizing the economy of the district. Nothing significant came during the past several years despite the efforts of policy formulation were made to cater to the developmental needs of the people in the district. Poor infrastructure has hampered the industrial growth in the district. Insurgency ethnic conflict and political instability in the district are inimical to economic development.

The poor infrastructure in the district has added the plight of the people. Parent's agony increased with the problem of education of their children. Many parents could not afford their children to private college or outside the district which increase many drop outs in the district. The poor infrastructure of the only government college in the district Haflong Government College has deprived many aspiring students with poor economic background from taking admission in the college due to less intake capacity. The students are not equipped to study and compete outside the region because of financial problems as they cannot afford to study in private institutions and outside the region. Lack of infrastructure, poor road connection, inefficient communication network, shortage of water is the few major concerns in the district. Shortage of water also increased the plight of the people as many could not afford to buy.

The prolonged socio-political conflict results in economic destruction and social disorganization. Economic consideration and goals of development are sacrificed for politically valued gains. Political power and economic resources become principal bones of contention between ethnic groups, so is the case with the ethnic minority. As resources wealth and jobs are distributed unequally among various ethnic groups the roots of socio political conflict firmly got entrenched in the tribal society of Dima Hasao district. The economic considerations played a major role in generating and perpetuating identity politics among the minorities in the district.

The socio economic differences in the district result with ethnic differences. The seeds of isolation, relative deprivation and feeling of alienation can also be traced to the period for changing the district nomenclature. Though several institutions like autonomous council were strengthened to safeguard the rights of the people sustained effort has not been experienced by the ethnic minorities.

Economic development always entails significant social changes but this could not be fruitfully experienced by the ethnic minorities because of the lack of economic development. This dissatisfaction finds statement in unwanted activities with expectation rising and pace of economic development becoming slow and uneven. The emerging youths of various ethnic minorities and the educated section easily got drawn towards identity based politics. The fear of deprivation is more prominent among the youths. They also sense the thread of encroachment upon their cultural autonomy and territorial identity and sought to protect those at times adopting violent means against their adversaries.

Considering the literacy rate among the ethnic minorities against the literacy rate in the past few years has considerably increased but the increased of uneducated employed and the level of total job seekers have gone up in the region compared to that of the majority ethnic group in the district. This is the result of deprivation on various job opportunities in the district. The study reveals that due to stagnation in the economy there are no opportunities for their employment in the region. But education has given the youth with political awareness amongst them.

Despite availability of requisite qualifications among the youths it becomes difficult for them to get jobs in the district. Because of the political domination of the

majority it becomes difficult to seek job without any backup supports system in the council. The inherent frustration lead to distancing themselves from the wider district life of the region and results in a feeling of regionalism for separate district and assertions become once again the natural fall-out. The prevailing pattern of education in the district has alienated the people from notion of hard work for a living but also from their traditional cultures.

Corruption has become a common place word in the district which restricts the actual impact of developmental activities in the region. The study emphasises the stark presences of black money in the region. The study highlights that legitimate power elites facilitate the transfer of resources into the underground economy which was solely meant for the benefits of the people. The ethnic minorities in this case are the worst sufferers.

The study also reveals that the ethnic minorities are faced with problems of extortion and a large amount meant for the development of the district has been siphoned off. The funds received were utilised to fulfil the vested interest. The region has undergone frequent administrative changes during the past several years and the ethnic minorities expected that it would resolve the economic and social issues dominating the district political scenario. But the economic and political deprivation resulted in the demand for separate district for the ethnic minorities. The demand for administrative unit persists even today.

The responsibility for social economic development lies with the central government, the North East Council and the local government. The main thrust of the central schemes is on the establishment of industries, extension of communication facilities and makes provisions for the better livelihood of even the minorities of the minority. But various schemes for development and contracts are controlled and granted to the majority community. The rural people are straight and simple in thought and deed. So in most cases they fail to understand the real motive of the political and administrative leaders and easily get deceived by the leaders with selfish interest. No efforts have been made to make the people ideal citizens or to make the people aware of the hazards of the changing socio-political situation.

Despite various efforts at policy formulation to cater to the developmental needs of the people in the district nothing substantial has turn out from it. The steady

flow of funds into the hands of local elite has indirectly discourage local initiative and deprived majority of the ethnic minorities, which could have been otherwise harnessed to raise the financial resources of the different villages in the district. This has given rise to a political leadership more interested in grabbing funds than in actually using them to uplift the economy of the district. In the absence of healthy sustainable economic activity in the district, the expanding class of young neo-literates feel it immensely remunerative to join the insurgent movement or involve in illegal activities for easy money for it offers them material prospects.

The district have witnessed ethnic hostilities over the years, that have led to the loss of innumerable innocent lives, large scale of internal displacement of populations, destruction of infrastructure and an upheaval in the laws of the people causing immense physical pain and psychological trauma. The socio-economic impact of identity politics among the ethnic minorities in the district can be analysed with the socio-economic conditions of the ethnic minorities in the district. These underline social realities of inequality accounts for large difference between the non-Dimasa ethnic minorities and Dimasas.

In terms of economy the district is bestowed with rich natural resources. An analysis of the present resources reveals that it could be materialised for increasing the economy of the district which on its proper use could solve the economic problem of the people on a large scale. The exploitation of natural resources for sufficing the needs of the poor people in the district has accompanied environmental degradation. There is lack of awareness about the preservation of nature and making it sustainable in the long run. With the rapid increase in population in the district the resources are under pressure and the rates of de-forestation have greatly increased.

Majority of the people in the district depend their livelihood on agriculture and majority of the ethnic minorities in the villages depends on forest resources. Non-equitable distribution and excessive demand leads to conflict in the district due to intense competition among the increasing population. Natural resources in the district are not limitless and serious consequences like deforestation, extinction of species, soil erosion, increased humidity compared to moderate and pleasant climate in the past, water pollution arise from the careless and excessive consumption of these resources have been experienced in the district. This adversely affected the economic life of the ethnic minorities living in villages.

The field study reveals that corruption is endemic and is very high in the district. The study reveals that improper use of funds and large scale corruption to meet the travelling expenses of the council leaders and other expenditure incurred in activities which are in no way related to the duty and function of the council became the order of the day. Instead of focussing on developmental activities, the present autonomous council regime appears to be pre occupied with the Dima Hasao Raji issue and the ceasefire between DHD (J) and the government of India failed to figure in its election manifesto of ASDC/ BJP alliance huge deduction from the beneficiary of any developmental fund under DRDA scheme was made for the Dimasa militant were certain issues raised by the ethnic minorities.

In matter regarding appointments, contracts, supply, developmental scheme and other facilities meant for Sixth Scheduled areas, the indigenous people have been deprived in all sphere and were always at the receiving end. L.P teacher's appointment made by the ASDC led Unite Democratic Alliance (UDA) government of N.C.Hills Autonomous council, out of 44 persons appointed, only 5 belong to other indigenous community group and the rest belong to Dimasas. Various government lands had been encroached upon where the authorities seem to turn a blind eye. In such a condition it became a grave concern for all ethnic minorities as to who will safeguard their rights.

The Dima Hasao Raji issue caused much resentment and confusion as the Autonomous Council authority with a support of vested interest wanted to declare the Borail wildlife sanctuary which is bound to have adverse impact on the social, economic and political lives of the ethnic minorities in the district and the decision was taken without taking the opinion of the people likely to be affected by the sanctuary. Since the Borail range is one of the areas in which most of the ethnic minority people are concentrated, this caused great resentment among the people.

There is problem of land encroachment in the district. It was found that various government lands had been encroached and houses were built for their residents upon where the authorities seem to turn a blind eye. Mention can be made of the areas near Haflong Lake, Sericulture farm in Sarkari Bagan area, Fishery office areas in Umrangso, Vetenary farm in Harangajao and Mahur etc. Negligence towards the Council has been observed towards land demarcation. The Council remain mute spectator in this regard. The non-eviction of these immigrants increased the

discontentment of the ethnic minorities. In such a condition it became a grave concern for all ethnic minorities as who will safeguard their rights.

Access to information helps citizens hold their governments accountable. Media improves governance by monitoring the actions of those in power and alerting the public to corruption or abuse of trust. The study reveals that a media sector that reaches and gives voice to the vulnerable can create informed citizens that can better monitor the actions of incumbent politicians is regrettably poor in the district. The newspapers reach the district lately in the district which deprives them of their social contacts easily. In order to make development just and sustainable citizens must productively participate in the decisions that shape their lives by making themselves aware of the thing happening around them.

The North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council according to the ethnic minorities which was established to protect the rights of the people failed in preserving its espoused principles as it failed in performing its duty and function in an impartial manner, devoid of any democratic principle and not living up to the expectation of the ethnic minorities. The bias and partial functioning of the council has been clearly resented by the ethnic minorities and the gross financial irregularities were not considered seriously by the government which added to their misery. It added more to the grievances of the people with the non payment and pending salaries of employees in the district for more than a year. It failed to regain the confidence of the minorities assuring them of their due share in all sphere of social, political and economical development.

The state government has set a very unhealthy precedent of militancy triumphing over democracy. Ethnic minorities in the district feel that the government has also decided to leave the fate of the non-Dimasa communities at the mercy of the Dimasas who are in a dominant position and have tactfully manipulated the Autonomous Council and the district administrative machinery to exploit and intimidate the minority communities. Not contented with having more than 90% share in the Autonomous Council despite their population showing otherwise, the Dimasas have been strategically engaged in rooting out the ethnic minorities and violating their fundamental rights. Since the last decade, many ethnic riots have taken place due to the unwanted design of the Dimasas according to the ethnic minorities. Starting with its violent campaign against the Hmars in 2003, the Dimasas launched

unprovoked killings against the innocent people during the ethnic conflicts between the Dimasas community with Karbis and Nagas in 2005 and 2009 respectively.

4.4.2 Gross Human Rights violation

The study reveals that the ethnic minorities experienced huge violation of their rights. Gross violation of Human Rights was meted out by Choto Nianglo, Guilung village, Luchirang village in 2009, Tunje village in 2010 created great resentment among the ethnic minorities and the Naga community in particular. The violation of Human Rights by 17th JK Rifles stationed at Laisong village has ignited to a discontent state among the people. The jawans during their patrolling were said to put queries on some youths where they were being beaten severely after few questions asked to them. They were said to forcefully make to hold AK Rifles and took photographs of them. They further continued their atrocity by beating up men folk in the village including the village Gaon Bura leaving him unconscious state. The village faced the inhuman torture and brutality of the army personnel and the victims had to be hospitalised.

The army personnel who were expected to provide safety and security to the poor innocent people shattered their hopes when they attacked Choto-Nianglo village and killed an innocent villager. This led loose a reign of terror as that of the Dimasa militants. Another incident meted out with a villager in Guilung village where the villager was picked up by the army personnel along with group of Dimasa militants took him from his home and shot him dead outside the village. The dead body of the victim was recovered by the villagers. This inhuman act of JK Rifles in connive to Dimasa militant group raised doubts among the people about the security personnel if there is nexus between the army and militants to flush out the minority communities from their own ancestral land.

The respondents shared that in another incident the Sikh Regt with its Head quarter at Mahur went to Lungchirang and picked up three villagers where two were released and one was killed framing him to be a terrorist by keeping pistols under his pillow. The gross violation of Human Rights towards the community finally erupted with conflict between Dimasa and Naga communities in 2009.

The whole non-Dimasa community of the district were in a state of shock and confusion over the brutal killing of Shri J.T. Roia Ngamlai, President of Biata

Devanpui (Apex body of the Biatae tribe) by DHD (J) militants at Fiangpui, Haflong on 16th May '08. A part from the dastardly act of killing an innocent old man on his sick bed, the perpetrators of this act cited the non-signing of the proposed changing of district nomenclature to Dima Hasao Raji as the reason behind the killing which has caused much frustration and extreme infuriation among the non-Dimasas of the district. In this ethnically sensitive district which has witnessed a number of ethnic flare-ups, the killing of a particular community's leader has every potential of igniting ethnic clash.

The sadful incident also brought to light the adverse impact of the Dima Hasao Raji issue which has emerged as the bone of contention between the Dimasa and the non-Dimasa tribe who are always at the receiving end. According to the respondents not contended with receiving the lion share in every sphere of the district administration, the JNH (Jadikhe Naisho Hoshom) apex body of the Dimasa tribe, with the active support of DHD(J) placed before the Executive Committee of the North Cachar hills Autonomous Council to change the district nomenclature from N.C. Hills to Dima Hasao Raji much against the wishes of the majority non-Dimasa communities and did not even bother to consult the concern communities before placing such a proposal. The Executive Committee too showed undue haste in passing a resolution for changing the district nomenclature which was bound to have far-reaching consequences.

To the minority communities this proved that the Council Administration, the JNH and the militants were hand in glove; otherwise there was no reason at all for the DHD (J) militants to kill one particular community's leader for refusing to put his signature on a proposal put up by the JNH. It may also be noted here that the proposal to change the district nomenclature to Dima Halali led to Hmar-Dimasa ethnic clash in 2003 due to which many innocent lives were lost and also lost their homes and properties.

The deteriorating law and order situation in the district become a matter of grave concern to one and all with violence becoming the order of the day. And the main perpetrators of these violent acts is the DHD(J) faction which has let loose an orgy of violence in the small hill district while the JNH and the ruling UDA regime turn a blind eye to these heinous acts according to the respondents. These incidents

have again brought to light the plight on innocent civilians who have always been at the receiving end.

The inhuman acts of killings and assault on innocent labourers working BG line conversion projects, NHAI projects and on trains and trucks without any provocation is blatant violation of human rights besides the law of the land. The experience of the people with DHD (J) in their continued practice of killing, extortion and threats on the innocent villages and civilians and the inhuman incident meted out with the minority created greater resentment. An innocent villager returning from jhum was killed brutally by a suspected DHD (J) militant group at Dimanu village. Moreover, the repercussions of these violent acts have been felt in the neighbouring districts and there have been assault on buses and travellers from N. C. Hills. All developmental activities came to a standstill due to the merciless killings in the district.

The Indigenous Peoples Forum (IPF) raising its banner of protest against the centres intension to sign a memorandum of understanding with militant Dima Haram Daogah(DHD) ignoring the IPF's demand for bifurcation of the hill district into two Autonomous Council. Indefinite bandh was called by the IPF in protest against the move to sign pact with the DHD turned violent as it precipitated clashes between IPF and cadres of DHD in truce. There was a clash between the bandh supporters and the police which forced the administration to call indefinite curfew to prevent any untoward incident in the district.

4.4.3 Other issues faced by the ethnic minorities

After few years of the incalculable miseries of ethnic conflicts during the several years in 2003, 2005, 2009 the DHD militants surrendered before the Government. The fear of the conflict situation lingered in the minds of many after the surrender of the militants. The accommodation of the Government authorities to the surrendered DHD (J) insurgents in the newly constructed, Red Cross Hospital in Jatinga, Haflong in 2009 October created panic situations to the ethnic minorities residing near the areas. According to the respondents some cadres were given shelter in the Members Hostel of the District Council, Haflong in the vicinity of Haflong Town near Don Bosco School who were later shifted to the vacant offices and residential quarters of the Veterinary Staffs and officers and also the residential

quarters of Veterinary farm, which consequently resulted in ineffective functioning of the said offices and farms.

Notwithstanding the surrender of the cadres, their presence and habitation in the posed great threat to the security of the general public. The people lived in fear and apprehension disturbing the peace and serenity of the people. This became a matter of serious concern as the Government also intended to shift some of the cadres in the P.W.D. I/B,, Block Developmental Office and Soil Conservation campus. The question of security and safety and emotional well-being of the minority groups became a serious concern. A petition was sent from the office of Indigenous Women's Forum with a prayer of shifting the designated camps of the DHD (J) and DHD (N).

There have been talks of the government granting Territorial Council to the Dimasas, if such move will lead to lasting peace, the people do not have any problem with it on the condition that such Territorial Council should be formed only after the bifurcation of the district and that it should not include any part of the new district. It wanted the Govt to realise that the pleas for bifurcation is not by choice but born out of compulsion, failing which their very survival in their forefather's land would be at risk.

Going through experiences, the respondents said that the hard fact has dawned that until and unless they have a district of their own, their rights and dignity will always be trampled upon. They also stated that if the government can fulfil the demands of the Dimasas for renaming the district, non-fulfilling the legitimate demands of the minority non-Dimasa indigenous communities of the district would be a total violation of the principle of justice and equality. Further delay in dividing the district and neglecting their grievances will be taken as an act of step-motherly treatment which will have serious consequences in the long run.

The existing political structure that is provided within the ambit of the provisions of the sixth schedule of the Constitution has not been able to do justice according to the ethnic minorities. The developments at the grass roots have not been forthcoming although transfer of finances both from the central as well as the state government has been increasing over the years. The North Eastern states have been recognised as special category states and are entitled to get 90% of Central Assistance as grant and 10% as loan. Huge amount of money are received by the administrative

set ups in the form of grants-in-aid, but little step has been taken to become self-generating revenue earners.

The policy of providing subsidies has made inroads to the very debts of the societal framework in the region. Initially though the policies were made to alleviate the imbalance of economy in the district, the mis-utilisation of funds and subsidies have demotivated the people in the region. This inevitably leads to the situation of assertions (Gulshan, 2000). The perceived ill-treatment from the dominant groups compelled the group to start with movement for autonomy in the region demanding a separate unit of administration.

The field study reveals that medical coverage of the minority villages is very low. Some areas which have health units do not have adequate staff and equipments. Most of the areas of the three developmental blocks of our study are still deprived. Feeling of deprivations has become very strong among them and this untied them to search for an alternative way to redress their problems. This feeling of relative deprivation show that the democratic breakdowns are more likely to occur as the ethnic minority still have in large shares to meet their basic demands.

The socially shared representation of history has been important in creating, maintaining and changing people's identity and thus it is central to the construction of its identity norms and values. The autonomous council have failed in promoting development according to the ethnic minorities. Development agenda is very limited even budget prepared by them and approved by the state government are seldom fully met. The money disbursement has been irregular. There is a need of transparency and accountability in the functioning of NCHAC.

The administration was not adequately accountable to those whom it was designed to serve. There is lack of responsiveness of administration, this is due to non- accountability. The administration can be made more responsive if it is made representative but the inadequate representation in the council made it more unresponsive and thus lack accountability as well.

4.4.4 Nomenclature of the District

Ethnic minority communities comprising of principal ethnic groups like Nagas, Kukis, Hmars etc. raised their voice on the issue of Dima Hasao Raji. Though directly not involved in ethnic clash, the Kukis, on several occasions, are said to have

also bore the brunt of Dimasa high-handedness and many innocents have lost their lives. The suffering of the non Dimasas has reached its peak and to them they have been pushed too far.

The Jadikhe Naisho Hoshom (Dimasa apex body) claims that the district has been traditionally known as Hasao Raji and the nomenclature of North Cachar is based on the dominating presence of Dimasa Kachari. This claim is politically motivated, biased and a distortion of historical facts according to the ethnic minorities. According to many eminent historians the term Cachar was derived from the Sanskrit word 'KOCHCHAR' meaning a vast area on the foot hill or valley. The Sylhetis of East Bengal called the inhabitants of these areas Kacharis irrespective of the fact whether they were tribal or non-tribal. Since the district is a hilly area situated in the northern part of Barak valley, it has been called North Cachar hills district and this, in no way, is related to the Dimasa kingdom or domination. According to the claims of the minorities, the term Dimasa means 'son or people of the great river' and in the hills of North Cachar Hills, there is no river big enough to be called great and it is only in the plains that vast and big rivers are found eg. Barak, Brahmaputra etc.

According to history, the Dimasa capital flourished at Pragjyotispur and Dimapur, the Dimasas settled only in the plain areas or river valleys and never ventured into the high hills like other tribes of the district; their last capital Khaspur was also in the plains of Cachar district. Even the so called Dimasa kingdom could extend its influence in the high hills dominated by other tribes. So the renaming of one of two hill districts of Assam in favour of an ethnic group whose origin and history are basically based in the plains is a violation of the Sixth Schedule provision and the Constitution itself to the ethnic minorities.

4.5 Measures initiated by IPF

The detail of demands of Indigenous Peoples Forum (IPF) had been manifested in the Memorandum submitted to the Chief Minister of Assam, the Governor of Assam, Honourable Union Minister. It highlighted the various problems of the ethnic minorities in the district relating their grievances with the change of the district nomenclature, socio-economic and political deprivations like employment safeguard of Human Rights etc. The demand stated for creation of separate district for the ethnic minorities. Several joint memorandums and petitions were submitted to the authorities

in regard to their several problems and demand of separate district. The leaders of the movement explored some reasons for the creation of separate district for them. They were of the firm belief that only a separate district could redress their grievances. The acute unemployment amongst the youths specially the youths of ethnic minorities, the relative deprivation in socio economic life pushed to think of a separate district for ethnic minorities and the existing political system could not satisfy their requirements. To them for adequate representation of the ethnic minorities a separate district was the only solution.

The question of identity is another reason for demand of separate district. In a diverse land of Dima Hasao the basic question of survival, preservation and growth of ethnic identity under the majority ethnic group is the most important and genuine factor for demanding a separate district. The IPF in order to articulate their demands called bandhs on several occasions. To press for bifurcation of the district with separate autonomous council hundred hours bandh was called by IPF throughout the district. The Government did not take any step for the bifurcation of the district despite submitting several memorandums to the Government of India and Government of Assam but through its several activities it tried to attract the attention of the government in fulfilling its demand. IPF had repeatedly not only submitted memorandum but its also have had a number of other activities democratically in connection with the demand which is worth mentioning as shown below –

(Source IPF official document)

Sl. No.	Activities	Date
1.	Sit in dharna (Haflong)	10 th March 2010
2.	24 hours N. C. Hills Bandh	09 th April 2010
3.	3 (three) days Rail Roko (Haflong)	17 th – 19 th April 2010
4.	Sit in Dharna (Haflong)	02 nd April 2010
5.	Procession-cum Rally (Haflong)	15 th July 2010
6.	Procession-cum Rally (Haflong)	30 th July 2010
7.	24 hours N. C. Hills Bandh	20 th October 2010
8.	24 hours N. C. Hills Bandh	28 th October 2010

9. 100 hours N. C. Hills Bandh	22 nd – 26 th January 2011
10. Mass Rally (Haflong)	06 th June 2011
11. 24 hours N. C. Hills Bandh	20 th July 2011
12. A 2 (two) day Hunger Strike	30 th June onward 2011
13. 100 hours N. C. Hills Bandh	08 th August onward 2011
14. 12 hours N. C. Hills Bandh	10 th October 2011

They also reiterate that they shall never compromise with any other offers except the very constitutional and genuine demand to bifurcation of N. C. Hills with a separate Autonomous Council that is clearly mentioned under 3(C) of Article 244 (2) & 275 (1).

4.5.1 Allocation of Project Site

Jaypee Cement sought to start a plant in Umrangso, area principally inhabited by the ethnic minorities. The Dima Hasao Autonomous Authority handed over possession of land to Jaypee and received Rs. 13, 76, 87, 5000/-as payment for the said land. But no payment of compensation is made to the affected villages for their standing crops and properties. They allotted the land to Jaypee Cement without any information to the affected villages. They did not make any kind of agreement jointly with the affected villagers. The local MAC did not discuss the matter to the affected villagers prior to the allotment of land. A joint Memorandum by Karbi Apex Body Umrangso and Karbi Students Association Umrangso was submitted to the Hon'ble Member of Parliament Shri Biren Sing Engti.

The affected villagers were already shifted once from old Garampani due to the estd of NEEPCO in 1875 and the land for the proposed cement plant measuring 750 bigas at Umrangso 19 km and Langmeklu is the only source of livelihood for the villages of Umrangso 19 km, Langmeklu and the neighbouring villages. The entire land is used for agricultural purposes, but because of financial instability and acute crisis faced by the Council in terms of money the people decided to give the land to Jaypee Cement Plant in between 18 km (AMDC) and Vinay Cement where it will not hamper the source of livelihood to the villagers.

4.5.2 Demands for compensation and rehabilitation by IPF

IPF demanded the compensation and rehabilitation of the affected people and laid a petition to direct the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council Authority and the Jaypee Cement Authority to take steps for the greater interest of the affected people in particular and local tribal in general. It requested the Autonomous Council Authority to include the affected villagers in signing an agreement with the Jaypee Cement Plant. Adequate amount of compensation as per Central Government norms should be provided to the affected villages.

Assurance of job reservation in all sectors and grade and all kinds of contract works to the affected local people should be mentioned in tripartite agreement point. To them Jaypee Cement plant must adopt the local villages as their own by providing free medical treatment facility, free education or scholarship, providing honorarium to the Gaon Buras, providing Community Halls, club, provide donation to NGO's working in the interest of the society to promote the cultural activities and Governmental consciousness among the masses.

But with regards to the matter of action of the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council the leaders worked against the interest of the affected villages by neglecting the affected and the local people of Garampani constituency in matter of allotment of land to Jaypee Cement Plant. The leaders signed an agreement with Jaypee Cement Plant without any prior notification of the villagers. The CEM comment that he does not need to consult the villages in matter of allotment of the land in lease to the Jaypee Cement Plant. The land was given against the will of the villagers.

4.5.3 Blocade of two Mega projects

The blockade of two Mega projects (NHAI & Railways) by the North Cachar Hills Indigenous Students Forum (NCHISF) was proposed. NCHISF threatened the blockade of NHAI and Railways to bring the grievances of the people to the authorities. The projects had added to the loss of the people in terms of land and resources and also adding inconveniences to the normal life of the people. The Deputy Commissioner of the district inspected the ongoing works of these projects in places like Boro Muolkoi and Rekho near Harangajao on 17th Feb'2015 and had noticed that some of the areas in these places were damaged and dumped with earth dug out of the excavation works by the Railways (construction). But he could not ascertain whether

the areas seen to have been dumped were village lands or the acquired lands of the Railways and the NHAI.

President, NCHISF stated that they were not against construction of NHAI road & BG conversion works. But their works have led to loss and damage of village lands. So the local people approached the NCHISF to take up their grievances. Accordingly, the ISF submitted memorandum to the Railways and the NHAI with copy to the Deputy Commissioner, but no initiative appeared to have been taken by them. Hence, they were compelled to go on agitation path. However, the Deputy Commissioner agreed to joint inspection by the District Administration, the NHAI, the Railways, and Revenue Officials of the Autonomous Council and the members of NCHISF along with the people of the locality.

The President, Mahur Block of the ISF said that the existing road from Harangajao to Lunding was not maintained properly causing loss of human habitation, huge chunk of roadside earth was deposited during rainy season. He pointed out that volume of spring water which was the only source of drinking water for the villagers residing in that area was greatly diminished due to activities of the National Highway. He referred to the Semdikor village which was on the verge of collapse because of the excavation done by the National Highway. He mentioned some villages such as Songbung, Saron etc. which were also greatly affected due to the National Highway construction works.

The problems faced by the people were appraised to the Deputy Commissioner. The Deputy Commissioner listened to all the grievances expressed by the representatives of the local people and after judiciously considering all aspects, it was decided to undertake joint inspection of the affected areas which was expected to largely address the grievances of the aggrieved people. Hence the Deputy Commissioner said that by 10th of March 2015 assessment of the damages to land shall be worked out by the joint inspection team to be notified by the Deputy Commissioner, Dima Hasao. This committee shall consist of the representatives of the District Administration, the Railways (Construction), the District Police, the Revenue Officials of the Autonomous Council, representatives of the NCHISF and the affected villagers.

The impact of identity politics was visible in the integrity of the people effort in bringing awareness among the people after the formation of IPF. Problem of infiltration was faced by the ethnic groups in their villages. The IPF with the support of the ISF staged protest against the infiltration of Bru people at Kaieng Valley under Harangajao Block who were seeking settlement in the valley. IPF protested their entry into the valley because it will cause a great threat to the local people's existence in the small valley. They organised public meetings, seminars, workshops and mobilise public opinion.

Since the objective of the IPF is to bring equality among the ethnic groups it took an initiative to support the less privileged children in Schools in acquiring scholarships. It made all possible efforts to provide scholarships to the poor students by approaching the concerned authorities. This brought benefit to the students and this enabled the deprived people to create glimmer of hope in asserting their problems. The students living below the poverty line acquired financial assistance from the scholarships provided by the government after the pursuance of the Indigenous Students Forum which usually remained unutilised or misutilized. With the initiative of the ISF some minority students could avail the Minority Scholarship Schemes which helped the poor students pursue their study without financial problem.

The people of Dima Hasao experienced ethnic based discords appearing in the fields of politics and administration. The question of ethnic autonomy remains unanswered. The IPF movement is an expression of the people's democratic yearnings. It is a silent but people's revolution for a separate N.C. Hills District for the ethnic minorities within the District. The various ethnic minority tribes expressed their solidarity with the IPF movement through demonstrative forms of railway blocking, rallies, boycotting elections etc. The difference of the present identity politics among the ethnic minorities with those in the past is that it is primarily a mass based one which include not only one tribe but various tribes within the district.

The protest has direct connections with the relative deprivation of the ethnic minorities in the district. The novelty of designing unique forms of protest by the IWF, ISF has attracted everyone's attention. With the participation of various women and students organisations, the movement has become a massive one and expects a separate district to be achieved as a solution of their grievances. The movement developed because the idea of injustice to the ethnic minorities in the district has

accumulated in the minds of the people. The silence of the Government to its demand for bifurcation of the district aggravated their disparities. It is quite clear that the Government's promise to look into the matter and solve the problems faced in socio-political milieu has failed till now.

IPF tried to create an awareness among the people of the social problems and unfolding the possibilities of problem resolution, mostly through memorandums submitted to the Government of India and the Government of Assam, student agitations and life sacrifices, thereby championing the felt need. The decades of neglect by the Government has left the ethnic minorities with feeling of marginalisation and the near absence of development among them breeds insecurity and creates a sense of relative deprivation. Several talks were held with the Government on the issue, and submitted memorandum but the problem is still remaining in its original form.

The district of Dima Hasao is far from the problem of ethnic conflict and identity movement. The cumulative effect of such situation is very negative. In course of time, it has not only jeopardized the economic development of the region but has turned the region into a hot bed of politics. Serious and complicated problems of the ethnic minorities of various hues abounds in the district. There are linkages between insecurity, under development and insurgency in North East India. Economic under development creates unemployment which further generates the problem of insurgency, an insurgency in turn generates insecurity leading to further economic under development. Controversial Human Rights record and sluggish economic growth rates are ever increasing in the district which badly affected the lives of the people in the district. The next chapter will focus on the political implications of identity politics started by the ethnic minorities for fulfilling their demands and redressing their grievances.