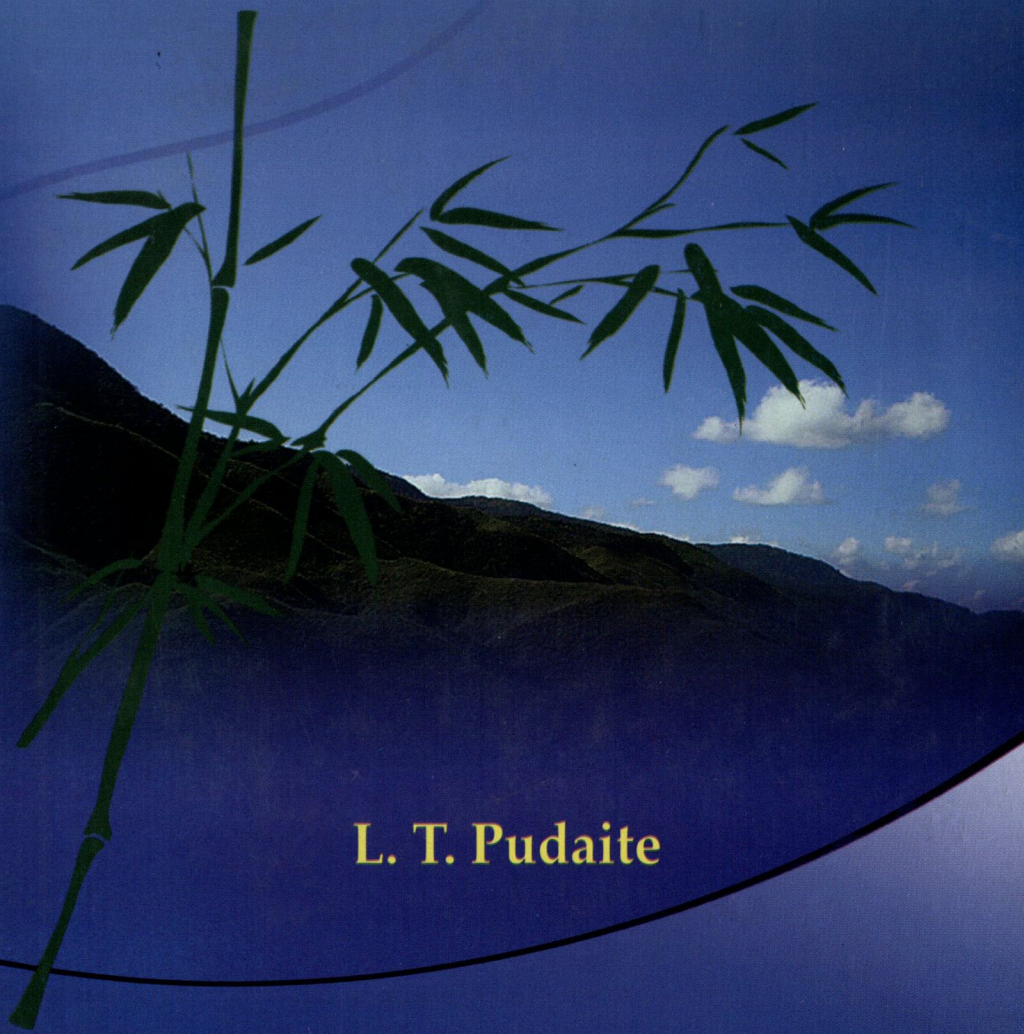


Mizoram And Look East Policy



L. T. Pudaite



Lal Thanzaua Pudaite (b. 1938)

Education: B.A. (Distinction)-1962

Career:

- 1962-64: Teaching - Sielmat
Christian High School
- 1964: Indian Audit & Accounts
Service
- 1966: Joined Indian Foreign
Service
- 1967-70: Third/Second
Secretary, Indian
Commission,
Hongkong
- 1970-1973: Deputy Chief of
Protocol (Special),
Ministry of External
Affairs, New Delhi
- 1973-1977: First Secretary (Pol. &
Com.), no. 2 in
Embassy of India,
Hungary.
- 1977-79: Consul General of
India, Zanzibar,
Tanzania.
- 1979-1981: Counselor (Pol. & Eco.),
no. 2 in Embassy of
India, Republic of San
Marino
- 1981-84: Counselor (Pol & Eco.),
no. 2 in Embassy of
India, Belgrade,
Yugoslavia.
- 1984-85: Charge' de Affaires
(Acting Ambassador),
Embassy of India,
Kuwait.

Contd.

- 1985-1989: High Commissioner
(Ambassador), Malawi.
1989-1992: Ambassador, S. Korea
1992-1995: Ambassador, Hungary,
Croatia, and Bosnia &
Herzegovina.
1995-1996: Ambassador, Myanmar.
1997-2000: Indian Representative,
Taiwan (re-employed
after retirement).

He has contributed articles, papers, etc. on various subjects in Mizo and English to various journals, magazines and for workshops / seminars in India and abroad. He was Managing Director, Tribal Welfare Agency (TWA), an NGO working for farmers in collaboration with Spices Board, Ministry of Commerce, Govt. of India and the Government of Mizoram and Chairman of Shelter for Women In Need Group (SWING), a society working for rehabilitation of ex-sex workers. He was appointed by the Mizoram Government as 'Agriculture Consultant' in the rank of Minister of State.

He has also authored a collection of Essays in Mizo – "Dawn Tisei".

ISBN 978-81-8370-221-8

Rs. 750/-

MIZORAM
AND
LOOK EAST POLICY

Lal Thanzaua Pudaite

AKANSHA PUBLISHING HOUSE
NEW DELHI • GUWAHATI • VISAKHAPATNAM

AKANSHA PUBLISHING HOUSE

4649-B/21, Ansari Road

Daryaganj, New Delhi-110002

Phones: 23268193, 09435116718

Email: ektabooks@yahoo.com

visit us: www.akanshapublishinghouse.com

ISBN 978-81-8370-221-8

PUD

Mizoram and Look East Policy

© Lani Pudaite

First Published 2010

ISBN 978-81-8370-221-8

7348
27/10/11

[All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without prior permission of the editors. Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.]

PRINTED IN INDIA

Published by Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi-110002 and printed at S.N. Offset Press, Delhi.

Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	<i>ix</i>
1. Mizoram	1
2. Linguistic and Cultural Affinity of Zo People	100
3. A Mizo Philosophical Heritage	116
4. Negotiating with Insurgency	130
5. Of Peace and Development in Mizoram	163
6. India's Look East Policy	175
7. Connectivity and Northeast	182
8. What Price for Peace	191
9. Theme: Vision NER-2020	197
10. Comments and Suggestions	208
11. The Basic Principles of Indian Foreign Policy	215
12. Union Christian College (U.C.C.)	220
13. Identity	225
<i>Index</i>	<i>227</i>

1

MIZORAM*

1. Physical Features

Location

Mizoram lies in the north east end of India, much of its southern part sandwiched between Bangladesh and Myanmar. It is situated between 21.56 to 24.31 degrees north latitude and 92.16 to 93.26 degrees east longitude, extending over a land area of 21,087 square kilometers. The Tropic of Cancer passes by the capital city, Aizawl. The length of the state from north to south is 277 km. At the broadest from east to west, it is 121 km.

Its major length in the west borders the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, spanning 318 km. In the east and the south, its border with the Chin Hills and Northern Arakans of Myanmar extends to about 404 km. On the Indian side, Mizoram is bounded by the states of Assam, Manipur and Tripura. The length of its borders with these states extends over 123 km, 95 km. and 66 km, respectively.

Districts-8; Sub-Divisions-15; Development Blocks-22; Villages-817; Towns-22; City-1. There are no City or Town Councils. These are administered by Local administration Department (LAD) of the State Government. Autonomous District Councils - 3, namely, the Chakma, Lai and Mara District Councils in the southern region.

* Written for Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) and Published in 2005.

Geography & Natural Resources

The mountain ranges in Mizoram run from north to south and largely taper from the middle of the state towards the north, the west and the south. The ranges in the west are steep and precipitous while those in the east are somewhat gentler. The average height of the hills in the west is 1000 meters, gradually rising to 1,300 meters in the east. There are several mountain peaks of medium height. The highest peak in Mizoram is Phawngpui (Blue Mountain), which is 2,157 m. high and is located in the southeastern part of the State.

Mizoram is interspersed with numerous rivers, streams and brooks. The important rivers in the northern part of the state, flowing northwards, are the Barak (Tuiruang) and its tributaries, the Tlawng (Dhaleshwari), the Tuirial (Sonai) and the Tuivai. The Tuivawl, a tributary of the Tuivai, is another important river in the area. The Barak, the Daleshwari, the Tuivai and the Sonai are navigable for considerable stretches. The Daleshwari in particular had been the main entry and exit routes for Mizoram through the ages. Forest produce like timber and bamboo are floated down the river from the interior of the hills to the plains of Cachar in Assam while food, consumer goods and merchandise are brought by boats from the Assam plains to the hills of Mizoram. Before fair weather road from Silchar in Cachar district of Assam to Aizawl was constructed during World War II, the administration depended entirely on this river for transportation of men and material. The Barak and the Tuivai constitute the borderline between Manipur and Mizoram and the two territories have through the centuries shared the facilities provided by these rivers.

The most important river in the southern region of the state is the Chhimtuipui (Kolodyne) with its four main tributaries—the Mat, the Tuichang, the Tiau and the Tuipui. The Kolodyne flows into Mizoram from Myanmar and turns west first and then southward within Mizoram and reenters Myanmar. Though interrupted by rapids, some stretches of

the river in Mizoram are navigable. The Khawthlangtuipui (Karnaphuli) and its tributaries - the Tuichawng, the Phaireng, the Kau, the Deh and the Tuilianpui - form the western drainage system. The Karnaphuli enters Bangladesh at Demagiri; at its mouth sits the port city of Chittagong.

Much of the potential of the river systems and water resources in Mizoram remains largely unexploited. The utilization of the hydro-potential for generation of energy, for example, in whatever form, large scale, mini or micro, is still fractional. There has been a modest improvement in the supply of drinking water but the sector lacks rational and systematic approach. The current condition of water transportation is less than retrogressive, partly because of the non-availability of transit facilities through Bangladesh.

There are three small plains in the state scattered over the mainly hilly terrain. The plains have thick layers of rich alluvial soil. The largest of these plains is the Champhai Plains, 10 km long and 5 km wide, and is situated near the Myanmar border, 150 km to the east of Aizawl. Another plain area is at Vanlaiphai, 90 km away to the southeast of Aizawl. It is 10 km long and $\frac{3}{4}$ km wide on average. The third such area is at Thenzawl, 100 km south of Aizawl. These plains have been put mainly to paddy cultivation. In addition, there are several small level grounds beside some of the rivers, which have been developed for wet rice cultivation.

The common rocks found in Mizoram are sandstone, shale, silt stone, clay stone and slates. The rock system is weak and unstable, prone to seismic influence. Soils vary from sandy loam and clayey loam to clay, generally mature but leached owing to steep gradient and heavy rainfall. The "soils are porous with poor water holding capacity, deficient in potash, phosphorous, nitrogen and even humus. The pH shows acidic to neutral reaction due to excessive leaching." (Environment & Forest Department Report, 2003).

According to the report (2003) of the Department of Environment and Forests, 83 per cent of the total area of the

state (21,087 sq. km.) is covered by forests. However, due to the traditional practice of shifting cultivation called 'jhuming', uncontrolled fire, unregulated felling and arbitrary allotment of land to individuals, two-third of the area is reported to have been partly depleted and degraded. [Update, 2007-2008: Reserved Forest : 6465 sq. km, Protected Forest 941 sq. km].

The different types of land cover in Mizoram as estimated by Landsat Imagery are shown below: (sources: Department of Environment and Forest)

Different Types of Land Cover in Mizoram

<i>Type of Land Cover</i>	<i>Area (in sq.km)</i>
1. Closed (good) forest	4,190
2. Closed forest affected by shifting cultivation	13,520
3. Forest degraded by shifting cultivation	2,600
4. Non-forest	640
5. Water bodies	140
Total	21,090

Bamboo

Mizoram has abundant natural bamboo resources. Around 57 per cent of the area of the state is covered by bamboo forests, located in the areas ranging in height from 400 m to 1500 m above the mean sea level. These forests are situated mainly in the river banks and abandoned jhum lands, forming a dominant secondary vegetation.

Both the clump forming and non-clump forming bamboos are found in most parts of Mizoram. The exception is the high land parts of the eastern region. There are 20 species of bamboo in the state, of which *Melocanna baccifera*, locally called 'Mautak', is the dominant. Forming no clumps, it is a

fast spreading bamboo. The culms grow up to 8-10 m tall and are extensively used for construction of houses in the rural areas, especially for walling and flooring, and temporary dwelling of various sorts. They are also used for furniture, fencing, weaving and pulping, but are not yet processed for industrial use. During rainy season, the shoots form an important item of food for the population. At present, the State Government claims to have received annually Rs. 8 million in revenue mainly from bulk sales of unprocessed bamboos. This is done through the *Mahal* system, a practice of contracting out the rights of harvesting bamboos to individuals or firms on payment of nominal royalties.

The dominant bamboo in northeast India, the *Melocanna baccifera* is said to have a life cycle of 48 years, at the end of which it flowers and bears fruits and dies. The fruits when eaten by rodents apparently increase the fertility of the latter, resulting in an explosion of the rat population in a short time. Once the bamboo fruits are exhausted, the rats turn to eating whatever foodgrains available in the farms or in storage, causing severe depletion of food supplies for the population and resulting in famine. Such occurrence on two occasions in the past has been recorded in Mizoram. The next flowering of the bamboos is forecast to occur in 2007.

Climate

Mizoram as a whole receives an average rainfall of about 3000 mm a year, with Aizawl getting 2380 mm and 3,178 mm for Lunglei in the south. Rainfall is usually evenly distributed throughout the state. During rains the climate in the lower hills and river gorges is highly humid and exhausting for people, whereas it is cool and pleasant in the higher hills even during the hot season. A rather peculiar characteristic of the climate is the incidence of violent storms during March-early May. Strong storms arise from the north-west and sweep over the entire hills, often causing extensive damages to 'kacha' (temporary) dwellings and flowering perennials.

Temperature varies from about 12 degrees C in winter

to 30 degrees C plus in summer. Winter is from November to February, with little or no rain during this period. Spring lasts from end February to mid-April. Heavy rains start in June and continue up to August. September and October are the autumn months when the rain is intermittent.

2. Socio-Political Structure

Historical Background

Except for those written after the advent of the British in the late 18th century, there is no recorded history of the Mizos. Some of the tribes living outside of Mizoram prefer to call themselves 'Zomis or simply Zos'; 'mi' affixed to these terms means 'people or person/s'. The British variously referred to them as Lushais, Kukis (old or new Kukis, depending on the period of their contacts with the tribes) and Chins in Myanmar. All modern historians belonging to the various tribes, however, agree that all the tribal groups inhabiting the immediate neighborhood of the present state of Mizoram - in such areas as in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Tripura, Assam and Manipur - once belonged to the same proto-tribe. They often refer to themselves collectively as 'Zo Hnahthlak', people of Zo ancestry, origin or progeny.

While some of the tribes living outside Mizoram such as the Hmars, the Paites, the Thadous or Kukis, etc. still prefer to assert their sub-group identities for practical political or other reasons, the trend toward integration in a larger identity is gradually gaining strength. This growing awareness of belonging to a larger identity has the potential to upset in future the balance of the existing political demarcations in the sub-region.

Despite the absence of recorded history, most researchers conclude that the Mizos came to their present abode from southern China, possibly Yunnan province, by gradual migration through northern Myanmar. Dietary practices, customs, traditional values, legends, oral history, folklore and linguistic affinity are some of the bases on which these

investigations are conducted. Although there can be no certainty about the period in which the Mizos migrated to the present Chin Hills in Myanmar, it is generally believed that this took place about four to five hundred years ago. However, the Mizos of Mizoram appear to have arrived at their present settlement relatively recently, perhaps in the late 17th or early 18th century. Animesh Ray, a researcher of considerable thoroughness, put it in the early 18th century. (*Mizoram, India -The Land and The People Series*, 1993). As their oral history attests, the last wave of the migration of the Mizo tribes from Myanmar to India took place at about the time, or soon after, the institution of hereditary chieftainship gradually overtook their earlier practice of warrior chieftainship. Once hereditary rulers were installed, genealogy, even if orally passed on, became a reliable record of sort. Based on the genealogy of the chiefs, "early 18th century" appears to be the most likely period.

Traditional Institution

Although other Mizo tribes adopted and practiced hereditary chieftainship, the Sailo Chiefs of the Lusei or Lushai tribe were the most durable, perhaps, because they were the most enlightened. At any rate, their mode of governance became the norm for rural administration in much of the Mizo or Zo inhabited areas in pre-Independent northeast India. The British did little to interfere with the system of administration practiced by the Chiefs, except in rare cases of extraordinary misrule. Instead, they devised ways to ensure maintenance of law and order and social order through the Chiefs. Indeed, this practice of "indirect administration" was formally provided for in the Government of India Act, 1935, and on the basis of this Act, an official order, named 'Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas Order,' defining the areas to be covered, was issued by the King in Council on March 3, 1936.

The following paraphrase of an order issued by the Superintendent of Lushai Hills in 1898 also makes this clear:

1. Every Chief is responsible for all that goes on in his village. All orders affecting a village shall be sent to the Chief through the Circle Inspector (an official appointed by the British to liaise with the Chiefs).
2. Every Chief shall adjudicate all civil disputes between people of his village. He shall also dispose of all criminal cases, except those in which a person is killed or badly wounded. A Chief's order would not be interfered with unless he had acted in bad faith.
3. The Chiefs are responsible for ensuring that records are kept of the following:
 - i) All births and deaths in the village;
 - ii) All movements of people into or out of the village; and
 - iii) All changes in the licensed guns.

The authority of the Chief, though nearly absolute within his domain which may consist of one or more or a group of villages, was often restrained in practice by the Council of Elders (Upas), an advisory body appointed by the Chief to assist him in the performance of his duties. The members of this Council were usually so selected by the Chief as to represent and safeguard the interests of the different clans or sub-tribe groups among his subjects. Captain T.H. Lewin, a former British Administrator in Lushai Hills, was so impressed by the administrative system of the Mizo Chiefs that he described it as "a democracy tempered by despotism" worthy of being "classed among the visions of Utopian philosophy." (*Exercises in The Lushai Dialect*, 1874, London).

In return for his services, the Chief was entitled to:

- 1) Fathang - six bushels of rice grain from every household;
- 2) Sachhiah (Meat Tax) - anyone who bagged a four-legged big game must present him one of the hind legs; and
- 3) whenever his house required to be repaired or rebuilt, his subjects would do it for free.

Institution of Zawlbuk (Bachelor's Quarters)

Apart from the dispensation of the Chief and his Elders, the main instrument for ensuring discipline, instilling moral education, maintenance of law and order and the smooth functioning of the society was the institution of Zawlbuk. The exact date when this institution came about cannot be pinpointed. It is, however, certain that this tradition came to be established after the Mizos entered India and the Chief felt secure enough to regulate the management of social order for his subjects.

Though everyone was responsible to make sure that theft and other crimes were not committed, there had to be an organizing agency that was capable of ensuring this. This is what the Zawlbuk did. All boys from the age of about 10 to till they were married and had one or two children were required to sleep at Zawlbuk, a large dormitory like structure usually located in the middle of the village. This is where the boys were trained to fit themselves into society. Before a boy attained puberty, he was taught to shoulder his responsibilities for the community such as fetching water, collecting wood for use at the Zawlbuk, cleaning the Zawlbuk and its surrounding, and tending the Zawlbuk fire, which was used for lighting as well as for warmth. All the traditional values that the community held dear were passed on to the youth via the Zawlbuk life by way of practical demonstration.

A Historical Background

By the early thirties, Christianity, which entered Mizoram for the first time on January 11, 1894 via the Welsh Missionaries, had become the religion of the overwhelming majority of the Mizos. The Church had set up schools and rudimentary health services. Literacy was spreading fast. A few young Mizos had even gone to universities. At the same time, common people had begun to give up their old ways. Western ways of dressing and thinking had begun to spread, especially among the young men. Social life centered on the ways of Zawlbuk had gradually disappeared and had been replaced.

by that revolved around the Church. Through the organizing activities of the Church they began to understand the advantages of forming groups for focused goals.

The mass movements of the times for Independence in mainstream India, too, inspired in a few young men as yet undefined ideas about possibilities in politics. And they started thinking in terms of organizing themselves for common purposes. Thus was born the first district-wide and secular organization, Young Mizo Association (originally named Young Lushai Association after the name of the District) on June 15, 1935. A missionary initially headed the association; and its objectives were entirely non-political, namely, 1) to use leisure for beneficial activities; 2) to serve for the welfare of the people; and 3) to promote Christian way of living. In the same year was founded the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (Mizo Students Union) with a motto: 'Unity is strength.' Its aim was to promote understanding, cooperation and unity among all Mizo students, regardless of whether they lived in Mizoram or outside. Both organizations grew rapidly and soon became effective vehicles for the promotion of fellow feeling and unity amongst the young Mizos of various regions.

World War II and the anticipation for Indian independence during the same period were really that set the Mizos to think about politics. Once Burma fell to the Japanese, Mizoram became the frontline. Near panicking British administrators mobilized the Chiefs and the people to pledge loyalty to the Imperial Crown and to resist the advance of the Japanese army at all costs. Even before the war, a large number of young Mizos had enlisted in the British Indian Army and many of them were now fighting alongside the British. And, naturally, the families and friends of these soldiers were inclined to side with the British.

At the same time, increasingly tense were the anxieties of the Mizos for their future in the new dispensation that was to follow independence of India. It is also obvious that the then British administrators of Mizoram had given them more than a hint that the Mizos could still have the option to opt

out of the three dominions (India, Pakistan and Burma) to be created by the Independence of India Act, 1947 even as late as on August 14, 1947. Copies of the relevant documents are in Appendices. These documents as well as the Resolutions of the Chin-Lushai Conference held at Fort William, Calcutta in 1892 (also in the same appendix) were to form later the bases on which the Mizo National Front (MNF) 'declared' independence for Mizoram and resorted to insurgency in March, 1966.

Political Parties

Thus, the objectives of the first two political parties formed immediately preceding independence also reflected the anxieties and debates of the times.

The Mizo Union, formed on 9 April 1946, was first named Mizo Common People's Union, reflecting the anti-Chiefs sentiments of the common people. Many had suspected that the British, working with the Chiefs, were trying to encourage a policy of isolated independence for Lushai Hills or Mizoram. The District Conference that had been convened in January 1946 by the then Superintendent, A. R. H. McDonald to advise him on future administrative set up for the Hills had had half of its members composed of Chiefs, in the face of opposition by the commoners. To enlist the support of the elite and the enlightened and liberal chiefs, the name of the party was changed to Mizo Union. However, it remained a party of the common people.

As independence was drawing near, there were sharp differences of opinion regarding the future of Mizoram. Though the Mizo Union was in favour of staying within India, a secessionist group came up in the Party favouring merger with Burma. (Their long term goal though not specified appeared to be independence. The draft of the Burmese Constitution had included the right to secession by the States within ten years vide Chapter X). The group, supported by most of the Chiefs, broke away from Mizo Union and formed a party called the United Mizo Freedom Organisation (UMFO) on 5 July 1947.

In 25 January 1947 the Constituent Assembly of India (the drafting body of the Indian Constitution) appointed an Advisory Committee on minorities, tribal areas and related matters under the chairmanship of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The Committee in turn constituted a Sub-Committee chaired by Gopinath Bardoloi for the northeastern tribal areas and the Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas. This became popularly known as the Bardoloi Sub-Committee and the members co-opted from Mizoram were Ch. Saprawnga and Khawtinkhuma, representatives of the Mizo Union.

On the basis of various memoranda submitted to it by political groups, including McDonald's District Conference and the Mizo Union, Bardoloi Sub-Committee in its Report to the Constituent Assembly suggested a special setup for the tribal areas. It recommended that the tribal people should be free from any fear of exploitation or domination by the advanced section of the people from the plains and that they should have full freedom with regard to their traditions, customs, inheritance, social organizations, village administration, etc. The pattern of administration recommended for the tribal areas in the northeast thus took shape in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution.

Early Elected Bodies and Related Activities

After Independence, as a prelude to the District Council, a 35 member Advisory Council was created and the elections to the Council were held on 15 April 1948. The Mizo Union captured all the seats, except two won by the UMFO. The Mizo Union soon came into conflict with Superintendent L. L. Peters, who was openly siding with the Chiefs over the latter's role in future administration. The Mizo Union then launched non-cooperation movement in December 1948, which lasted till February 1949 and for months thereafter in some far-flung areas.

District Council: As envisaged by the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, which was adopted on 26 January, 1952, six autonomous districts with District Councils came up

in Assam - the Mizo District Council being one such district. Regional Council was set up in the Pawi-Lakher Region in southern Mizoram. The Advisory Council had been dissolved in November 1951 and the election to the District Council was held on 4 April 1952. The total strength of the Council was 24, of which 18 were to be elected and six nominated. Out of 18 seats, 17 were won by the Mizo Union and one by UMFO. The District Council was inaugurated by Bishnuram Medhi, Chief Minister of Assam on 25 April 1952.

Under the Constitution, the District Council has law making powers concerning:

- (1) Management of land and forests other than reserve forest;
- (2) Use of canal or water for the purpose of agriculture;
- (3) Regulation of the practice of *jhum*;
- (4) Establishment of village or town committee and matters relating to village or town administration including public health and sanitation.
- (5) Appointment or succession of chiefs or headmen;
- (6) Inheritance of property;
- (7) Marriage and divorce; and
- (8) Social customs.

The District Council also has the power to constitute village councils and courts, appoint its officers and to prescribe procedures.

The Regional Council exercises all these functions within its area. There are certain exclusive jurisdictions of the District Council, which covers primary schools and the medium of instruction for them, dispensaries, markets, cattle pounds, ferries, fisheries, roads and waterways. The District or Regional Council has financial powers to levy taxes, fees, tolls, etc. over the subjects it is empowered to legislate. It

also has the power to control or regulate money lending or trading by non-tribals within its area.

The first budget of the Council in 1952-53 was RS. 17,175— which was mainly for establishment. From the start, the Council suffered from chronic financial inadequacy despite a grant announced by Prime Minister Jawharlal Nehru during his visit to Mizoram in October 1952.

Village Councils and the Abolition of Chieftainship: Through the sustained pressure of the Mizo Union, the Assam Government passed the Lushai Hills (Acquisition of the Chief's Rights) Act in 1954. In August 1954, the rights and interests of 259 Chiefs in the District Council area were taken over by the Council and the Regional Council assumed those of 50 Chiefs in the Pawi-Lakher Region. Village Councils were constituted to perform basically the same functions as hitherto discharged by the Chiefs and their *Upas*. The Mizo Union won the election to all the Village Councils, which was held on 24 July 1954, thus vindicating its stand for the abolition of chieftainship.

Demand for a Hill State: As they experienced some measure of autonomy within the confines of the Assam state, the Hills people started demanding for more. In 1953, the United Mizo Freedom Organisation (UMFO) passed a resolution demanding the formation of a hill state consisting of Manipur, Tripura, the Autonomous Districts of Assam and the North-eastern Frontier Agency (now Arunachal Pradesh). The attempt to impose the Assamese language as the official language of the state and the alleged discrimination by the Assam government against these areas were other reasons advanced. The resolution was one of several submitted to the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC), which was visiting Assam in 1954. (The Commission was charged to look into demands in various parts of India for re-demarcation of state boundaries or reconstitution of new states and to make recommendations to the Government of India). The Mizo Union also cited 'Assam's discrimination' against hill people as the source of

the clamour for a separation from Assam and demanded for the integration of the Mizo inhabited areas of Manipur and Tripura with Mizo district.

The SRC did not recommend creation of a Hill State; instead urged a review of the powers and the functioning of the district councils. The Nagas had boycotted the SRC. Most tribal leaders and their people were unhappy with its recommendations. The leaders met at Aizawl in 1955 and formed the Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU) to demand the creation of a hill state comprising the hill districts of Assam. The UMFO merged with EITU. As some parties like the Mizo Union did not join the EITU, a more inclusive forum to work for the same demand was set up at a meeting of hill leaders at Shillong on 6 and 7 July 1960. The forum was called All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC), which resolved at its meeting at Haflong in November 1960 that the hill districts should separate from Assam and form an eastern frontier state.

In 1961, Assamese became the official language of the state, amid vociferous protests by hill leaders. Disillusionment felt by the hill leaders with the government in Delhi and with the state authorities in Assam, in particular, crystallized into bitter opposition to their continued inclusion within Assam.

On its part, the Central Government offered what was termed the Scottish Pattern of autonomy, which still fell far short of the autonomy expected by the hill people, let alone, statehood. The Mizo Union boycotted outright the Commission designated to work out the details of the Pattern as it stuck to a demand for statehood for the Mizo populated areas. No Mizo leaders could afford to be moderate any longer. The more radical they appeared, the more they appeared to gain in popular support.

The Mizo National Front (MNF) and Insurgency

Such was the situation in Mizoram when Laldenga, the founder of the Mizo National Front, came on the political

arena in 1961. Opportunely for him, a famine brought about by an explosion of rat population resulting from the flowering of bamboos (called *mautam*) had ravaged the entire Mizoram hills two years earlier. Resentment against the Assam government for its "delayed and negligent" famine relief operations was high. A number of voluntary bodies sprung up to provide relief to the famine stricken people. The Mizo National Famine Front launched by Laldenga in 1960 was one such an organization, which achieved a striking success in enlisting volunteers. The Front dropped the word "Famine" from its name and, on 22 October 1961, became the Mizo National Front (MNF), a political party with an avowed aim of achieving an independent and sovereign Mizoram. (A copy of the Memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India, demanding independence, is at Appendix VI). The party grew rapidly, especially amongst the youth. By 1963, it managed to gain in a bye-election two seats of the State Assembly vacated by the Mizo Union as well as 145 Village Councils. However, the Mizo Union retained its primacy in the rural areas, winning 220 Village Councils.

Insurgency: Once the MNF declared 'independence' as its goal, it followed that it would have to resort to armed struggle to try and force the Indian government to concede independence to Mizoram. After preparing for three years, on 28 February 1966, the MNF volunteers commenced an armed struggle for independence and attacked different Government stations all over Mizoram. On 1 March it declared independence for Mizoram. Laldenga and sixty others signed the declaration, which appealed to all independent countries to recognize 'independent' Mizoram. With some lulls in the fighting, the rebellion 'officially' lasted 20 years, till the MNF armed cadres laid down their arms upon the signing of the so-called Peace Accord in 1986, technically termed 'Memorandum of Settlement.' (See appendix).

A brief assessment of the insurgency movement as a whole, however, may be relevant. The primary question that has often been raised is whether Laldenga actually intended

to lead the MNF into an open rebellion against the government of India. It has been argued that he was exploiting the disgruntled youth of the time in order to propel himself into political prominence. An ex-serviceman and ex-clerk of the District Council, suspended for misappropriation of funds, Laldenga had been a political nobody. He was no doubt an exceptionally charismatic demagogue. On the other hand, there was no doubt that most of the MNF cadres, particularly the educated and the armed cadres, had been fully aware of the inevitability of a protracted armed struggle and had been prepared for it, believing that independence would ultimately be a possibility. Even if Laldenga had not intended it originally, his own followers would have made rebellion inexorable. The question for him then really became how and when to end the insurgency.

According to Biakchhunga, who served as Chief of the MNF Army from 1971 to 1978 and then briefly acted as President, citing the urgency to "make contacts with foreign powers" Laldenga and his family along with a small escort left Mizoram for East Pakistan on the night of the uprising itself, i.e. 28 February 1966. He came back to Mizoram for about a week in December of that year to attend the first MNF Parliament Session at Sialsir village. These were the two occasions on which Laldenga was personally present in Mizoram throughout the duration of the rebellion. At the Parliament Sitting, Laldenga handed over the entire task of running the underground government that had been set up by the MNF to the Vice-President, Lalnunmawia, who kept his charge from December 1966 to May 1969. During this period, the bulk of the MNF underground activists remained within Mizoram. They then moved south to Chittagong Hills in East Pakistan in early 1969. On 20 May 1969, Laldenga again took over the Presidency of the MNF from Lalnunmawia. Since then, most of the rebel activities were carried out on specific missions directed from outside India. (Hnam Kalsiam or Nation Building, Biakchhunga, 1996 and personal interview with him).

Soon after Laldenga reclaimed the overall charge of the movement, he secretly sent Rozama and Vanlalngaia, ranking Intelligence Officers of the MNF, as emissaries to make contact with the officials of the Indian government. Though these messengers were arrested by the Indian Police at Karimganj on 5 July 1969, before they could reach Delhi, the result of their interrogations by the Police was bound to have been conveyed to the Indian Intelligence. It may thus be safely assumed that the Indian authorities became aware of Laldenga's readiness to end the insurrection on a bargain. Vanlalngaia said to this writer on 11 August 2004, "On that fateful day when Laldenga dispatched us to make peace overtures to the Indian officials, I realized that the struggle for independence ended then and there." This was around the time the 'sub-state' of Meghalaya, comprising the Garo Hills and the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, was being formed. Mikir hills and North Cachar Hills were given option to join the sub-state. It became apparent that Meghalaya, without firing a single bullet, would soon attain full statehood. The future of Mizo Hills, however, significantly remained to be decided.

As for Laldenga's "mission" to mobilize foreign governments for aid to the MNF movement, on account of which he had absented himself for nearly three years from the scene of the real struggle, his performance seemed rather dismal. The Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan, which was always looking for an opportunity to fish in India's troubled political waters, naturally facilitated his move to East Pakistan and later to West Pakistan or rather Pakistan after the creation of Bangladesh. Even the ISI did not seem to lavish him with funds. The current Chief Minister of Mizoram, Zoramthanga, then Private Secretary to Laldenga, often speaks today in public speeches of the times when they had to "pray" all night to God to provide them with needed funds and of how miraculously they were always provided. The reason behind the ambivalence of the ISI towards the MNF must have arisen from the suspicion that Laldenga was not resolute in the struggle he had initiated, a suspicion that

was beginning to exasperate the educated cadres of the MNF soon after the move to East Pakistan. China's assistance to MNF either in the form of weapons or training seemed nominal. It was also apparently a one time affair and, according to Biakchhunga, it was discontinued due to "difficulties of communication."

It became clear that from late 1969 onwards, Laldenga was secretly searching ways to make contact and commence negotiations with the government of India. However, this was about the time India was preoccupied with the liberation movement in East Pakistan and later with the birth pangs of Bangladesh. Apparently, the impending fall of East Pakistan greatly demoralized the MNF leadership. Zoramthanga, the then Private Secretary to Laldenga, even proposed on 16 December 1971 that they might surrender to the advancing Indian forces at Subalong (Biakchhunga). The main forces of the MNF were also later occupied in settling down in the Arakan Hills of Myanmar, as they could no longer stay in independent Bangladesh. As Laldenga and his personal staff were on their way to Islamabad, former Vice-President, Lalnunmawia and a Minister, R. Zamawia were deputed on 18 December 1971 once again to sound out the Indian authorities for peace talks.

It was only since November 1973, after Laldenga settled down in Pakistan, that regular contacts between the MNF and Indian authorities begun. In a letter to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi dated 20 August 1975, Laldenga stated, "Since November 1973, my officials have been meeting your representatives to discuss the question of restoration of peace and normalcy in Mizoram...." In this letter, he asserted that the solution of the Mizoram problem could be found within the framework of the Indian Constitution and revealed that his senior colleagues did not know as yet his overtures to the Indian government. He requested "the utmost secrecy" be kept about his peace moves and sought the help of the government in persuading his radical colleagues to come to the negotiating table.

The story after this in a nutshell was that of Laldenga and his coterie working together with the Indian Intelligence in the attempt to "persuade" the "radical elements" in the MNF to accept a settlement within the Indian Constitution. Those who could not be persuaded were pressured or sidelined or marginalized. However, it took much effort and time before the entire MNF outfit could be brought around to agree to cease fire. Settlement could perhaps have come earlier, but for the fact that the political situation within Mizoram from 1979 to 1984 was such that no arrangement could be made for Laldenga to become the Chief Minister without election, the minimum prize that he would have wished for, for giving up arms. During this period, the People's Conference Party, a regional political party, was in power and the Chief Minister, Brigadier (Rtd) Thenphunga Sailo would not give up his office unless he was defeated in an election.

It was only after the Indian National Congress (I), a party that could be directed and controlled from Delhi came to power in 1984 that the prospect for peace in Mizoram became bright. The then Chief Minister, Lal Thanhawla offered to vacate his office in favour of the MNF chief Laldenga if that would facilitate the peace negotiations, much to the relief of the people who were by now extremely frustrated at the protracted negotiations.

After resumption of talks in late 1984, the two sides finally came to a settlement in early 1986. The Memorandum of Settlement was signed on 30 June 1986. The text of the accord is in the Appendices.

As provided for in the agreement between the Indian National Congress and the MNF, upon the signing of the peace accord Laldenga was installed as the Chief Minister of Mizoram on 21 August 1986. Before the signing of the accord, Laldenga had amended the constitution of the MNF making it a political party. The MNF became a regional party in Mizoram.

Major Political Parties

Indian National Congress

The District Branch of the Indian National Congress was established by A. Thanglura on 11 April 1961 when Mizoram was still one of the districts of Assam. Its presence in Mizoram remained uneventful and lacking in influence till the election to the fourth and last District Council in April 1970, in which the Congress won 10 out of 18 elected seats. In the election to the newly created Union Territory of Mizoram held in April 1972, it won six seats whereas the Mizo Union got 21 seats out of the 27 elected members. Soon after this election, the Mizo Union, which had formed the government in the Union Territory, decided to merge with the Congress. Since then, the party has been playing a leading role in the affairs of Mizoram, either as the ruling government or in opposition.

For the first time the Congress came on its own into power in Mizoram in the 1984 election to the UT Assembly. It won 20 seats against 8 by the PC. Lal Thanhawla, the President of the party, became the youngest Chief Minister in the country on May 5, 1984. Upon the conclusion of the peace settlement between the MNF and the central government, however, Lal Thanhawla vacated the Chief Minister's office and the MNF President, Laldenga became the Chief Minister on August 21, 1986. He became the Deputy Chief Minister instead.

After a short break, the Congress again formed the Mizoram government, upon winning the sixth Assembly election in 1989 with 23 MLAs out of the 40 seats. The last time the Congress came into power was in the election to the Assembly held on November 3, 1993. It contested the election jointly with the Mizoram Janata Dal, a name briefly assumed by the People's Conference party led by Brig. T. Sailo. The two parties together won 24 seats as against 14 by the MNF and two Independents. Though the People's Conference Party or Janata Dal withdrew from the coalition government after 5 months, with the support of eight MLAs who defected from the MNF and the PC, the Congress government managed to

serve its full term. In the State elections held after this, in 1998 and 2003, the Congress won only 6 and 12 seats respectively and thus had to be in opposition.

To some justification, the Congress has been blamed for bringing corruption into the politics of Mizoram. Its refusal to continue development plans initiated by its predecessor Ministry, the Sailo government, is responsible for the lack of infrastructure in Mizoram. And these are the main reasons for its failure to come back into power. Credit must be given to the introduction by the Congress of the New Land Use Policy (NLUP), a plan to replace the practice of jhuming by settled cultivation, even though it was largely unsuccessful. The concept behind the policy has highlighted the seriousness of the problem.

Lal Thanhawla remains the President of the Party and as the leader of the largest group of MLA's (12) in opposition, he is the official Leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly. At present, the party is the second largest political party in Mizoram. (Update: The Indian National Congress led by Lalthanhawla won the Assembly election in 2008 by absolute majority)

Mizo National Front (MNF).

Founded on 22 October 1961 as a revolutionary party to fight for independence of Mizoram by Laldenga, it was transformed into a normal political party on the day of the signing of the peace accord between it and the government of India. Upon the death of Laldenga, Zoramthanga was elected President of the party and remains so till today.

For the first time, the MNF contested the 1987 election and won with a 25 members majority. Congress won 13 and PC two. Its rule was, however, short-lived. As two of its MLAs broke away from the party on August 9, 1988, the Ministry was reduced to a minority and the Assembly had to be dissolved. After a brief President's Rule, another election was held on January 21, 1989, in which the Congress replaced the MNF government.

In the next two terms of the State Assembly, the MNF remained in opposition and staged a come back only in the 1998 election. It fought the election jointly with the MPC and the two parties together won 33 seats. Zoramthanga, the MNF leader, was installed as the Chief Minister while the MPC President, Lalhmingthanga, became the Deputy Chief Minister. As the MNF on its own has a majority in the legislature, the MPC members were evicted from the Ministry within less than a year. In the last Assembly election held on November 20, 2003, the MNF won 21 seats; and in alliance with two independents and 1 former MPC member, it formed the present Ministry. It thus remains the largest political party in Mizoram.

Corruption in high places appears to be less rampant in the present MNF government than it was in the time of the Congress. However, its practice of openly bestowing favours to loyal party workers is its drawback. While such a practice may earn votes at the time of elections, it prevents the government departments from fully focusing on development works. It has also yet to work out a thorough going plan for infrastructure development, for example, in the energy sector, without which no effective development programmes can be pursued in Mizoram.

Mizoram People's Conference (MPC)

Upon retirement from the Army in early 1974, Brigadier Thenphunga Sailo set up a Human Rights Committee to monitor and record human rights abuse and excesses committed by the security forces, especially on the innocent civilians, in the course of their operations against the insurgents. The reports prepared by this group were brought to the notice of the central government, with the result that the security forces became more careful and less high-handed in their operations. The Human Rights Committee became very popular and many people hailed Brigadier T. Sailo as a father figure and protector.

With a view to playing an effective role in the affairs of Mizoram, the Committee thought of setting up a political

party and convened a general conference of people of all walks of life. The conference decided to form a political party named 'People's Conference' (PC) on April 17, 1975. Brig. T. Sailo was elected the first President. It was the first party in Mizoram, which clearly defined its objectives, particularly with regard to development plans for the territory. Its candidate, Dr. Rothuama won the 1976 Parliamentary election with an impressive margin.

In the second election to the Mizoram Assembly, PC won 23 out of 30 seats and its President Brig. T. Sailo became Chief Minister on June 2, 1978. However, due to internal dissension, the PC government fell; the Assembly was dissolved and President's Rule had to be imposed on November 11, 1978. After five months of President's Rule, fresh elections to the Assembly were held again. This time also, the People's Conference won a majority of 18 MLAs and new Ministry headed by Sailo was sworn in on May 8, 1979. The ministry served its full term of five years but was ousted in the 1984 election by the Congress (I). For the first time in Mizoram, the Sailo government embarked upon infrastructure development for energy, transport and communications, rail links, etc. Despite the continuing insurgency situation, it managed to lay substantial foundation for future development work. However, these development foundations have not been consistently pursued by successive ministries till today.

The PC party was later renamed 'Mizoram People's Conference (MPC) party. Apart from briefly sharing power in coalition ministries with the Congress(I) in 1994 and with the MNF in 1998, it has not been in power since 1989. With only two MLAs in the current legislature, it looks destined to disappear from the political landscape.

Social Organisations

The Young Mizo Association (YMA)

The YMA, which was founded in 1935, with a total membership of 145004 in 2003 in the northern zone alone, is

still thriving. Its membership is open to both officials and non-officials. All political parties cultivate its support, though it has managed to remain to be seen as neutral and non-political. Its role in the preservation of traditional values and useful customs, and even in the maintenance of law and order is pivotal. Its approach to issues concerning the community is often conservative and at times tends to infringe on individual liberties.

Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP)

This Association of Mizo Women was founded in the early 50s and has spread all over the state. Its available membership figure for the 5 districts of northern Mizoram in 2003 was 1,57,302, making it probably the largest NGO in India. Its motto is: To help others, though in the course of time, it has tended to concentrate on women issues. The YMA and MHIP are the two main NGOs, which are engaged in effective social work and charitable activities in the rural areas. As leaders of large and influential organizations, the leadership of these associations in the urban areas tends to waste time and energy in irrelevant popular activities.

Mizoram Upa Pawl (MUP) or Mizoram Senior Citizen's Association

Founded in the early 80s, the association in 2003 had 50400 members in the northern zone of Mizoram. The membership is open to men and women above the age of 50. Its aim is to preserve traditional values and to work for the welfare of senior citizens.

Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) or Mizo Student's Association

The association was established in 1935 and has since gained preeminence as the forum of the youth. It was originally concerned with the interests and welfare of the Mizo students, especially in the endeavour to create understanding and unity among them. In addition, it has now transformed into a non-partisan political pressure group on various issues affecting not only the student community but also Mizoram

as a whole. Its leaders have also increasingly used it as a staging ground for entry to full time participation in politics.

The Churches

The Mizos take pride in proclaiming that their community is 100 percent Christian. Christianity is indeed omnipresent in the life of the community. This is amply demonstrated by the fact that no community activities can commence without what is termed '*hunserh*,' a brief dedication service where some verses of the Bible is read, followed by a prayer for blessings on the particular activity of the occasion.

The established Churches are the Presbyterians in the north and the Baptists in the South. The Roman Catholic Church is also present and is slowly gaining adherents. There are a few other denominational groups with widely differing number of followers. The Churches organize their activities under various wings such as the youth, women, children and a common social front. In addition to the regular Church services, a number of camping crusades are held every year.

The liberal minded often allege that too much time is wasted on religious activities. The imposing presence of religion in the life of the community also appears to promote conformity while, in real terms, it does little to reform the daily lives of its adherents. As the result, uprightness in appearance and form without inner reform, indeed, hypocrisy seems to be slowly becoming a norm in Mizo society.

3. Economic Profile

The economic life of the Mizos has always been centered around *jhum* or shifting cultivation. During the rule of the Chiefs, the chiefs distributed *jhum* land every year from the land under their control to their subjects. The Village Councils now do the allocation of *jhum* land by letting the villagers draw lots. The sizes of the plots used to be usually between 1.5 and 3 hectares per family, depending on the number of able-bodied persons in a family. However, as land available for *jhuming* is becoming less due to allotment of lands to

individuals, plot sizes in recent years have become smaller. Besides, the earning per man day in this practice of farming is so low that many young people now prefer to work as wage earners in services and other sectors.

Jhum sites selection is done in November/December and by mid February, felling of the vegetation is usually finished. The dried vegetation must be set on fire preferably before the early rains in mid March. After the unburned debris of trees and bamboos are cleared, the plot is ready for cultivation.

The crops grown in the plots are mixed. Paddy remains the principal crop and others that are inevitably grown are common vegetables and pulses for household consumption. Nowadays, cash crops such as ginger, turmeric, bird's eye chilly, oilseeds, maize, sugarcane, etc are grown. A variety of spices, herbs, flowers, fruits and oilseeds like sesame, soybeans and mustard and cotton can grow well in Mizoram. The basic problem is the method of farming the land, that is, the practice of shifting cultivation, which causes depletion of forests and biodiversity, soil erosion as also a complex of environmental damages. Crop yields from unlevelled lands cannot be very high either. A new scientific thinking says that it is better to improve them through scientific methods than through replacement with plantations which represent an alien intrusion into a scientific pro-environmental as well as silk zone. It is important to better jhum, restrict its spread and involve micro-credit agencies and give better alternative markets. The jhumia is poor and marginalized. His work and that of his fellow – to be and improved. That lives and income grow, instead of condemning them with the prejudice of government and insensitive "encouragements". Alternative arrangements such as settled farming have not worked. This remains the basic task facing the governments that has yet to be structurally dealt with. Attempts to change the practice of jhuming through the programmes initiated by the Congress under the New Land Use Policy and by the present MNF government under the Mizoram Intodelh (Self Sufficiency) Project (MIP) have so far made no substantial difference.

Indicators of Current Status

The following selected facts and figures may help in assessing the current economic standing of Mizoram:

1. Population - 891058; females per 1000 males: 938; persons per square kilometer: 42; rural population: 53.9 per cent. (2001 Census).
2. Foodgrains production - paddy: 109,205 MT; maize: 14879 MT and pulses: 4986 MT. (2002-2003).
(Update: 2007-08: paddy: 16688 MT, Maize 729 MT & Pulses : 2362MT)
3. Per capita income - Rs. 7517 (1993-94 in current prices).
(Update: 2005-06: Rs. 23900) Compare this with an all India average of Rs. 7185.
4. Employment breakup - farmers (mainly *jhuning*) 66 per cent; manufacturing - 5 per cent and government employees, trading and services - 29 per cent.
5. Sources of the domestic product of the State - 40 per cent from farming, 15 per cent from manufacturing and 45 per cent from government employees, trading and services.
6. According to the central Planning Commission, those who were in 1993 below the poverty line (BPL) in Mizoram were 26 per cent (about 200000) whereas the State government reckoned it to be 56.07 per cent.
7. Literacy is 89.49 per cent as compared to all India's 52 per cent. While in literacy among the states of India Mizoram is placed second after Kerala, the drop out rate from Grades I - V in 1994-95 was 63 per cent. This clearly shows that the number of those who are able to go to High Schools is quite limited. For examples, in Aizawl District the number of enrolment in Primary Schools in 2001 was 33874, those who went

on to High Schools was 18389 and those went to Higher Secondary Schools was 5705. This is largely in an urban area where the schools are relatively well equipped with teaching staff and instruments. The corresponding figures for Champhai District, mostly rural area, are - Primary School, 14577, High School, 4947 and Higher Secondary School, 402. (Figures for the whole State are not yet available).

[Update : See page 37]

Resources

Mizoram has no known mineral resources, which are commercially exploitable. The few surveys that the Geological Survey of India and the Oil and Natural Gas Commission have conducted so far did not find any. In addition to human resources, the only natural resources of Mizoram are its fertile but fragile soil, forests, sub-tropical climatic condition in slopes of varied elevation and highly conducive to growth of various fruits, flowers and crops, and its numerous rivers. About these natural resources have already been detailed.

Infrastructure

As noted earlier, Mizoram is critically deficient in infrastructure development particularly in the physical kind. The few initiatives taken by the Sailo Ministry in 1979-84, especially in the power sector, have remained unimplemented. A brief account of what has been done in this sector will show the actual state of affairs.

Energy

The potential in this sector is enormous, particularly in the generation of electricity by means of the hydropower. Beside the active investigations that were conducted on hydropower projects such as Tuirial (60 MW), Tuivai (210 MW) and Serlui-B (12 MW), the Bairabi Hydel Project (120 MW) on the Tlawng or Daleshwari River had been ready for execution in the early 80s in the tenure of the Sailo Ministry.

The successor Ministries continued to ignore the project. It has now been revised with a reduced capacity of 80 MW. With the new policy of commercialization of large hydro projects in India, however, the State government faces a serious funding problem, unless the central government makes exception for Mizoram.

The North-East Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO) has taken up Tuirial and Tuivai, but progress is slow. Only 12 percent of the electricity produced by these projects will be owned by the State and the rest of its requirement will have to be purchased. The Power Department is currently undertaking five Mini/Micro Hydel Projects: Tuirial-B (12 MW); Maicham (11MW); Tuipanglui (3 MW); Kau-Tlabung (3MW) and Lamsial (500 KW).

The Power Projects under investigation are: Kolodyne I - 120 MW (completed and pending for techno-economic clearance); Kolodyne II - 300 MW; Tuipui - 30 MW; Bairabi II - 50 MW; Tuichang - 30 MW; Tuirini - 60 MW and Tuivawl - 50 MW.

The current position regarding supply and consumption of electric power is:

Estimate of requirement: 102 MW as against existing supply of 72 MW; Electricity generated by the State: 22 MW (Diesel - 16 MW and Mini/Micro - 6 MW); Purchased from neighbouring States: 50 MW and shortage: 50 MW.

[Update: 2007-08: Installed: 37.17: Generation 366.34MW]

Transport System

The length of the network of roads in the State as on March 31, 2001 was 4122.37 kilometers, which included 328 kilometers of National Highways constructed and maintained by Border Road Organisation (BRO). Motorable roads connected 704 villages and the road length per 100 square kilometers was 19.54 km. (The Draft Five Year Plan for 2002 - 2007). Not only is construction of roads in the hilly terrains

difficult, maintenance of these roads is extremely expensive. Often there are days when some areas remain inaccessible due to blockage of roads by landslides or other damages caused by heavy rains. Except for the National Highways and a few leading roads, much of the road length in Mizoram is unusable for load bearing heavy vehicles.

The main supply route for Mizoram is the National Highway-54 from Silchar in Assam to Aizawl and beyond. If this road is blocked even for a few days, many consumer goods become scarce. The other roads linking Mizoram with Manipur and Tripura are not yet pliable by heavy vehicles on a regular basis. Even otherwise, these States cannot supply the requirements of Mizoram as they are equally remote from the centers of manufactured goods as Mizoram is.

Mizoram's hilly terrain limits the scope of rail and air links. There are not many stretches of level land where long runways can be made. On December 12, 1998, the first airport was opened at Lengpui, near Aizawl, where medium-sized jet aircraft can land and take off. No facilities for transportation of air cargo are available yet. Nor is there any night landing facility. The entire airport building is over-large, over-expensive and underutilized. It is another example of the Center's partnership with local authorities without a proper cost-benefit analysis. The only rail link to Mizoram is by a narrow gauge railroad, which terminated at Bairabi, a town situated at the bank of Daleshwari, 3 km. from Assam border. Surprisingly, the urgency of development and expansion of this lone rail link does not seem to register with the present authorities.

Two Inland Waterways, on the Karnafuli river between Chittagong and Demagiri in Mizoram and on the Daleshwari river, that were in much use during the British rule became virtually unused after the partition of India. After the construction of the Kaptai Dam on the Karnafuli in Bangladesh, a huge area around Demagiri has been submerged. This created a good potential for inland water transport in the

area, provided understanding in the matter can be reached between the governments of Bangladesh and India. The Tlawng or Daleshwari joins the Barak in Cachar and was used by the Mizos for travel and transportation down to areas, which have become Bangladesh, and even to Shillong and the plains of Assam in India. Except for floating down forest produce like bamboo and timber, Mizoram hardly uses this route any more, perhaps, due to uncertain transit facilities beyond Cachar.

The Barak river and a long stretch of its tributary, Tuivai, was also much used by the inhabitants of northeast Mizoram and the southeast area of Manipur for supply and travel route. Due to insurgent activities across the rivers on the Manipur side, the use of these waterways has become erratic. The Kolodyne in South Mizoram can also, perhaps, be harnessed for transit to Akyab in Myanmar, once the projected hydro dams on it are constructed.

Yet 4.7 million Rupees was earmarked for development of inland water-ways in the plan for 2002-2007—a reflection of poor planning and perception and especially when one consider the huge investment in air links.

[Update: upto 2008 PWD National Highway: 328.00 Km; State Highway: 699.79 km; Project Pushpak Road 1558.44 Km.]

Communications

As the network of post offices depends for the dispatch of mails on the physical transport system, its services are relatively slow. Non-courier mails from Delhi take a week or more to reach Aizawl while Speed Post takes about 3 to 4 working days. The population per Post Office in 1993-94 was 1920. As of June 2003, there were nine telephone exchanges in Mizoram with working connections in the Secondary Switching Area, numbering 54255 subscribers. The telephone equipment currently has the capacity for 73120

connections. Mizoram is now linked by an underground optic fibre wires. The telecom system still does not have the capacity for information highway. During the year preceding June 2003, 1027 new Internet connections were provided.

[Update: 2008: 360 Branches of Post Office: 60; Telephone Exchanges: Mobile Phones Subscribers : BSNL: 55594; AIR TEL: 121869; RELIANCE: 79300; AIRCEL : 28509]

Water Supply

Water supply during the dry season has always been a special problem of Mizoram. The villages were traditionally situated on hilltops, as a part of the strategy for defence against on coming enemies. The practice has still continued. Thus, the only viable way to provide water supply to these settlements is to pump river water to a reservoir located on a high point above the settlements and distribute the water by gravity. This is being done for the urban areas and some selected villages. With the chronic shortage of electric power supply, it will be a long way before adequate supply of water, if at all, can be arranged for the people of Mizoram.

The Department of Public Health Engineering, which is responsible for water supply and sanitation, also promotes tapping of underground water by means of hand pumps. A number of these pump sets have been distributed yearly. With severe depletion of underground water during dry season, this is a poor supplement to water supply work. Harvesting of rainwater is a practice long known in Mizoram. Since there is usually excess of rainwater during the rainy season, with improved collection, storage and distribution facilities, rainwater can be gainfully harvested and substantially augment the water supply during the dry season. The government of Mizoram has yet take meaningful initiatives in this direction.

Human Resources

The department of School Education and that of the Higher and Technical Education are in charge of human resource development. Like in the rest of India, a scheme for quality education for all (Sarva Shiksha Abhyian) was introduced in 2003 in Mizoram. Under this scheme, all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years are expected to attend school. In 2003, there were 8,985 out of school children from this age group as compared to 17,993 in 2002, representing a signal progress. For the age group of 15 to 35 years, a new project called 'Eradication of Residual Illiteracy' (ERIP) has been introduced. With the implementation of these two projects, the State expects to achieve full literacy by 2007.

The main weakness of the education system has been the continuing lack of technical equipment and quality staff for science and technical education at the school level. This has cumulatively resulted in a very low proportion of scientists and technologists among the educated Mizos. There is also a distinct lack of what might be termed 'scientific temper' among the intellectuals. At present, except for veterinary sciences, there is no degree level school for engineering or medical subjects. The Mizoram University, which opened in 2001, has not been able to introduce courses in physical sciences.

The present position of educational institutions in Mizoram follows:

Primary Schools: 1225; **Middle Schools:** 777; **High Schools:** 408; **Colleges:** 30; **Polytechnics:** 2; **Teachers Training Institutes:** 2; **University:** 1. There is a University of Veterinary Sciences run by the central government. There is also a Regional Institute for Nursing, Laboratory Technicians and Pharmacology owned by the North-East Council (NEC). There are a few departmentally managed, diploma levels, vocational training institutes for information technology, mechanics, etc.

[Update: 2007-08: **University:** 1; **Student:** 1988; **College, Including Law Collage:** 22; **Student:** 5465; **Training Institutes:**

15; Student: 4309; Hihger Secondary School: 82; Student: 12816; High School: 508; Student: 43675; Middle School: 1090; Student: 57399; Primary School: 1752; Student: 134656].

Public Health

In terms of persons per public health care establishments, Mizoram may have the most health care facilities among the States of India. With 14 hospitals in the State, the number of persons per hospital bed in 1991 was already 627, the lowest among the northeast States. The next lowest, Arunachal's was 755 as compared to all India for 1324 persons. But this is about quantity, not quality. The main problem affecting the health care system in Mizoram, like in education, is the lack of equipment, medicines and specialists, compounded by erratic and fluctuating electric power supply. Without adequate diagnostic, radiological and other laboratory facilities, the most competent physician cannot be effective.

Because of this persisting problem, most patients with complicated cases, especially those who require sophisticated surgery, had to be referred to private medical institutions outside Mizoram in such places as Guwahati, Kolkata, Vellore, Chennai, Delhi and Bombay. This not only creates easily avoidable hardships for the people, but is also a serious drain on the finances of the State since so many of its employees undergo medical treatment outside the State. The fact that patients who need bandages or syringes have often to buy them from private suppliers outside the hospital amply demonstrates the seriousness of the situation.

The government is currently constructing a hospital designed to serve as Referral Hospital, to be so equipped and staffed as to obviate the necessity of sending patients to places outside the State. With the basic foundation of the health care system in disarray as it is now, it is doubtful if the government will be competent enough to manage such a hospital.

The number of health care centers managed by the government are as follows:

Subsidiary Health Centers: 351; Primary Health Centers: 58.

[Update: 2007: Hospital: Nos. 10; Beds 944; Community Health Centre: Nos 9; bed: 270; Primary Health Centre : Nos. 57; Beds: 570; Sub Centre: Nos. 366].

Banking and Finance

The common people in Mizoram seldom use banking instruments for their financial transactions. They mostly use cash money. Those who use banks do it mainly for saving or term deposits. Taking loans from banks against collaterals is also popular. The number of 'bad loans' is said to be high, particularly those loans extended by the first financial institution set up by the State, Zoram Industrial Development Corporation (ZIDCO).

ZIDCO was set up by the State government in collaboration with the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) to foster the start up and the growth of industries in Mizoram. Another semi-financial institution, Mizoram Khadi and Village Industries Board (KVI) in 1986, was set up to promote various types of small scale and cottage industries. These two institutions extend credits to individuals and cooperative bodies for starting small industries. Part of the funding for the loans they service comes from the central credit institutions for development.

There are two central government sponsored financial institutions, North Eastern Development Finance Corporation (NEDFI) and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), which have recently opened branch offices in Mizoram with junior official representatives. These two have yet to make substantial contribution to the development of Mizoram. Full fledged banks that are operating in Mizoram are: State Bank of India (SBI); Vijayya Bank; United Commercial Bank; Mizoram Cooperative Apex Bank; Mizoram Rural Bank and Mizoram Urban Cooperative Bank. The Credit-Deposit ratio in 1996 was 16.

[Update: 2008: SBI: UCO: VIJAYA: IDBI: UBI:AXIS: SYNSICATE:CBI:BOB:PNB:MCAB:MRB:MUCO: Total Branches: 108: Total Deposit: Rs. in crores 1668.05 Total Advances: 990.82: C: D Ratio 5940].

The banks in Mizoram were not authorized to deal in foreign currency exchange until recently. The State Bank of India is now authorized to do so.

Selected Economic Sectors with Prospects

1. Agriculture

The major agricultural crops, total yield for each crop in 2002-2003 in metric tons, and the area sown in hectares are given below:

Paddy (jhum):	67,076: 41,356;	
WRC:	33,725: 12,905;	HYV: 8,404: 2,806.
Maize:	14,879: 7,489;	Pulses: 4,986: 4,666;
Oilseeds:	5,285: 7,132;	Tapioca: 1,330: 232;
Sugarcane:	7,443: 1,370;	Potato: 726: 369.

As already explained elsewhere, shifting cultivation of rice is uneconomic and has no future. Alternative crops that have already been identified as suitable for Mizoram, especially horticultural crops, must be encouraged.

[Update : 2007-08 Production in 2008-2009 in metric tons and sown in hectares.

Paddy (jhum):	68917: 51990;
Maize:	9318: 9558;
Oilseeds:	2514: 2275;
Pulses:	3646: 3931;
Sugarcane:	13696: 1342;
Potato:	1569: 269].

2. Horticulture

<i>Production in 2002-2003</i>	<i>Area in Ha.</i>	<i>Production: MT</i>
1. Fruits	21,150	57,858
2. Plantation Crops	3,478	6,844
3. Vegetables	7,581	40,970
4. Spices	7,058	36,439
5. Roots & Tubers	850	5,286.

Systematic promotion of horticulture in Mizoram is recent, although plantation of fruits like orange, hatkora (of citrus family) and pineapples has been in long practice. Mizoram has been identified to be ideal for a variety of horticultural crops. The State government is now making a thrust in this sector. The crops with potential are briefly described in the following:

- A. *Fruits*: Grape: Bangalore Blue is cultivated in an area of about 1,000 Ha. in the eastern high altitude area. The yield is 70-80 quintal/acre. Passion Fruit: Cultivated so far in about 2,000 hectares, it is said to grow well again the eastern region. Orange: Mandarin was popular but has declined owing to disease. It is being revived with improved seedlings. Banana - growing is getting large scale and is now marketed in Meghalaya and Assam. The variety of banana grown in Mizoram is perhaps the best in the world.
- B. *Spices*: Turmeric - Lakadang variety as well as the traditional turmeric, native to the place, grows well. The native turmeric called 'Ai-eng' can grow as shrubs in wooded sites and can be left wild for a few years. Its roots do not deteriorate but multiply and the quality appears to improve. Promotion of this crop is at the initial stage. Only 2785 MT was harvested in 2002-2003. Ginger - has been increasingly grown, but with frequent price fluctuation, its prospect is uncertain. It also causes serious

soil erosion. In 2002-2003, 47,821 MT was harvested. (This was obviously not included in the spices production listed herein earlier). Chillies - a variety of chillies has been grown. Bird's Eye chilly is indigenous to Mizoram and is the most sought after for export.

- C. *Plantation*: Arecanut - is grown in the western and northwestern lowlands. It does not yet meet local consumption.
- D. *Flowers*: Rose- grows well and has good prospects but not enough yet for export outside the State. Anthurium - was tried for mass production only in 2002. It is already sold as cut flower in metropolis of other States. It can be harvested in 10 months and appears to be better in quality than those grown in other States. Bird-of-Paradise (BOP) - was introduced two years ago. It was expected to flower in 3 years, but has done so this year. It seems to have a bright future.

Other varieties of horticultural crop being tried are black pepper, cardamom, jatropha carcus, vanilla, etc. Medicinal herbs, native to Mizoram, have also yet to be identified and the case of growing others to be explored.

[Update : Production in 2008-2009 Area in Ha. Production in MT:]

1. Fruits	26,600:	9,193.5:
2. Plantation Crops:	8,507:	10,072:
3 .Vegetables:	3,527:	3,527:
4. Spices:	28,751:	6,000:
5. Medicinal Plants:	1,525:	721.5:
6. Flowers:	233	23,00,000: no.
7. Turmeric:	9,625:	39,862.5:
8. Ginger:	10,391:	34,290:
9. Bird's Eye chilly	7,185:	14,429:
Anthurium:	26 Ha:	75lac.
Rose:	6 Ha:	27lac.

3. *Forest-Based Industry*

Apart from processing horticultural crops when it has in optimum quantities, the most suitable industrial sector for Mizoram appears to be forest-based. Bamboo in particular is plentiful and is easily renewable. At present, due to the shortage of electric power, large-scale industrial plants cannot be set up.

4. *Others*

In 2002, there were 1500 cottage and small-scale industries operating and producing goods worth Rs. 370.5 million. There were 4258 registered small industries in 2003. (Mid Term Appraisal of Five-Year Plan). Animal Husbandry, Fishery, Sericulture and Tourism sectors are not yet in the take-off stage.

[Update: : Registered during 2007-08: Small Scale Industries: 205 : Employed Persons : 594: Investment: 593 Rs. in Lakhs]

Tourism, however, seems to have a good potential, if international standard infrastructure and facilities can be provided. Mizoram can be projected as a unique and exotic tourist destination.

4. *Relations with Neighbouring States*

Apart from the inter-States interactions initiated by the North Eastern Council (NEC), the present political leadership of Mizoram does not maintain much interaction with its neighbours. This may be partly because the current party in power, the MNF, is a regional party with no direct links to other parties. However, with several problems in common with the other States in the region, such as security, law and order, infrastructure needs, health care, etc., close coordination with them cannot but be useful.

Relations with Assam

One outstanding problem with Assam is the issue of the northern boundary of Mizoram with the Cachar District of

Assam. The present demarcation was specified by Section 6 of the North Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971. Vide Section 4.2 (1) of the Peace Accord signed with the Government of India in 1986 the MNF Party accepted it. And the then Congress government of Mizoram countersigned the Accord, implying that the State government also accepted it. The MNF and the Congress are the only two political parties, which came into power after the 1986 Accord. Since their hands are tied by the Accord they had signed, they are not in a position to dispute the boundary arrangement.

However, from the time of the Mizo District Council in the 1950s till the early 1980s, the authorities in Mizoram as well as the general public had been objecting to what was fixed first as the *de facto* boundary of the then District and later of the Union Territory of Mizoram. The UT government even constituted a 'Fact Finding Committee' in 1973 on the matter. The 'Summary Finding' of that committee stated, "The Mizos are unsatisfied with the line and manner in which their Northern Boundary with Cachar was fixed arbitrarily by the British and are likely to remain so for generations to come, unless and until it is refixed based on certain reasonable grounds like historical, traditional and occupational backgrounds. From the study of the boundary fixation herein related, it is clear that there was such a line and in its final form is represented by the Inner Line of 1875."

This is not a live political issue at present, but the general public has still not accepted the boundary. NGOs like YMA and MZP have been keeping the issue alive by raising it in public and the media. And the State government may one day be forced to dispute the boundary in the future.

Under the existing Inner Line regulations, Indians other than Mizos as well as foreigners are required to obtain Inner Line Permit (ILP) before entering Mizoram. There is therefore no problem of migration from Assam into Mizoram. There is, however, a large floating population of masonries, carpenters and construction workers from Assam, particularly

the Kaimganj area of Cachar, scattered all over Mizoram. Some who came without ILP or overstayed their Permit or commit crime are occasionally deported by the authorities.

As Mizoram's entire supply of manufactured and essential goods and construction materials comes from or through Assam, it cannot afford to disrupt its relationship with Assam. No trade figures are available, as interstate trades are not recorded. The entire surplus of cash crop produces of Mizoram, such as chilies, ginger, cotton, oilseeds and other product like orange and grapefruits are sold to Cachar. Way back in 1994, a group called 'Hnam Chhantu' (a group campaigning for self reliance for Mizoram) conducted a research on the extent of the dependence of Mizoram on food products of Assam. The food items selected were vegetables, cooking oil, fish and eggs. They found that the city of Aizawl alone consumed these items in one month, which cost at the time over Rs. 28 million.

Relations with Manipur

Mizo tribes or people of Mizo origin inhabit the southern and western hill areas and some parts of the northern region of Manipur. These people freely come and go. As insurgent groups have been active in these hills areas, a number of people from the area, especially the South District of Manipur, fleeing from the disturbed area, have been migrating to Mizoram. The migrants are largely accommodated and face no difficulty in integrating into the society. A National Highway from Aizawl crosses into the southeast of Manipur and there are thrice weekly flights of Indian Airlines between Aizawl and Imphal. There is a steady flow of people on both sides.

Two small insurgent outfits, based in Manipur, are occasionally active in the northern part of Mizoram. The Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRA) claims to work for the reunification of what it terms 'Zomis' or tribes of Zo origin and is active in the Paite inhabited area of northeast Mizoram. The Hmar People Convention (Democratic) or HPC (D)

demands the curving of Hmar Autonomous District Council in the Hmar tribe occupied area of mid north Mizoram and occasionally launches its activities either from Cachar Hills of Assam or southwest Manipur. Their leader, Lalhmingthang, hailed from Khawlian village of Mizoram and now usually resides at Lakhipur in Cachar District. The ZRA personnel are mostly drawn from Paites of south Manipur while those of the HPC (D) is a mixture of Hmars from Manipur and Mizoram. Some times, the insurgents of the Manipur valley, the Meiteis, also cross over to northern Mizoram and encounter the security forces.

The Nagas demand the integration of all the Naga inhabited areas of India. If this is agreed to by the Government of India, a large chunk of northern Manipur will have to be integrated into Nagaland. In that event, the Mizo tribes of southern Manipur are likely to fight for incorporation into Mizoram. The Meitei insurgents foresee this and are steadily asserting their writ over the area. This is a possible future issue that can seriously complicate the relationship between Manipur and Mizoram.

Relations with Tripura

Mizoram and Tripura are, perhaps, the least interactive of neighbours. Some 7000 Brus, a non-Mizo ethnic group, fled from western Mizoram to Tripura in 1998 and are now encamped as refugees in two locations there. They are being looked after by the central government, though their presence could strain the services sector in the area. The refugees claim that the Mizos tried to force them to convert into Christianity and that they had to flee Mizoram for fear of being persecuted. The Mizos amongst whom the Brus had lived and the State government vehemently denied this. They in turn claim that false rumours spread by vested interest working against Christianity in Mizoram alarmed the Brus and they migrated to Tripura of their own accord. During the last election to the Legislative Assembly of Mizoram in November 2003, there was an unsuccessful attempt by the Opposition parties and some NGOs to block the postal ballots cast by these refugees.

The Tripura Chief Minister alleged in 2003 that there were some training camps in Mizoram of the insurgent groups fighting against his government such as the All Tripura People's Liberation Organisation and the All Tripura Tiger Force. Given the mobility of the mostly hill men fighters operating against the Tripura government and their familiarity with the jungles of the 66 km. long border with Mizoram, it is quite possible that they sometimes set up shelters on the Mizoram side of the border. The present Chief Minister of Mizoram, Zoramthanga, a former rebel leader, has often been accused by the Opposition Parties of secretly enlisting the support of insurgents such as HPC (D) and ZRA and of abetting the transportation of weapons by the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isaac-Muivah) or NSCN (I-M) through Mizoram. These accusations have not been proved or conclusively substantiated, as there has not been constituted a formal enquiry to look into these matters.

Across the state boundary in Tripura is the Jampui Hills range, which is peopled by the Mizos in about a dozen villages. These people look towards Mizoram for their cultural succour. A number of the educated among them migrated to Mizoram and some of them occupy high official posts. They make no political demand and provide a potential useful bridge between the two States, though they have not been used as such so far.

There is no direct air link with Tripura. Two fairly good roads link the two States. There are markets along the road across Kanhmun (Mizoram) on both sides of the border. Some manufactured goods of daily needs and local agricultural products are traded in these markets. Some goods smuggled from Bangladesh especially processed baby foods and used clothes pass into Mizoram at this border. The trade between the two States is negligible.

External Relations

Relations with Bangladesh

In the scheme with which India has so far conducted its

relationship with Bangladesh, the interests of the Northeast States, particularly of Mizoram, do not seem to figure prominently. (A copy of declassified Note on Indo-Bangladesh Relations is at Appendix G). This is perhaps due to the fact that the spirit and the level of bilateral cooperation have not attained the stage where detailed sub-regional concerns can be accommodated. It can also be because the Mizoram government has not made concrete structural proposals to the Government of India for beneficial relationship between the State and Bangladesh.

Some officials and non-official trade representatives including the Chief Minister have recently made visits to Bangladesh with the ostensible purpose of improving the officially non-existent trading relations. Without agreed border trade posts and transit arrangements at the level of the two national governments, and improved land transport system in the border areas, there can be no meaningful trade exchanges between Mizoram and Bangladesh. The manner in which India pursues its relations with Myanmar (noted hereinafter) clearly attests to this. The political leadership in Mizoram sometimes spoke of proposals for setting up border trade posts along the border with Bangladesh. But such proposals do not figure in the notes of the Ministry responsible for the conduct of India's external relations.

As noted earlier, inland water transport and border trade posts, to begin with, can be easily arranged on the Karnafuli River and the Kaptai dam area in the south. What is missing appears to be close coordination by the State government with the central government. Small scale informal trade does exist in the area, with mainly bamboos and some agricultural products going into Bangladesh while fish and some merchandises come from there.

Except for a few underground Bru or Tuikuk volunteers, who are demanding a separate administrative arrangement for themselves in the northwestern area of Mizoram, the border area is largely free of insurgents. As the border with Bangladesh can be freely crossed in all seasons, however,

migration from Bangladesh, particularly of the Chakmas, has long been a problem disturbing the Mizos. During the British rule and after Indian independence till 1954, the Standing Orders issued by the successive Superintendents of Lushai (Mizo) Hills District specified the Chakmas as foreigners and they were required to obtain permits to work in Mizoram. The Chakma tribe was also not listed among the minority tribes in the Indian Constitution at the time of its adoption. In the 1941 Census, there were 18 Chakmas in Mizoram and their number shot up to 15,297 in 1951. By 1971, when the Parliament passed the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act (NEAR Act), they became so numerous that the Government of India decided to set up the Chakma Autonomous District Council within Mizoram.

No public protest was orchestrated against the creation of Chakma District at the time. The then District Council formed by the Congress had not objected to the proposed NEAR Act; and on October 2, 1971 the General Assembly of the Mizo Union also accepted it. The PC party started the campaign against what it termed as the unjust creation of an administrative district for foreigners. Upon coming into power in 1979, the PC government headed by Brig. T. Sailo prepared plans to differentiate genuine Indian Chakmas, who entered Mizoram before January 26, 1952 from those Chakma foreigners who came after the adoption of Indian Constitution. It proposed to expel the latter, but could not execute its plans as the government was voted out in the 1984 election. In 1986, three MLAs from the PC party tabled a draft resolution in the State Assembly, proposing the dissolution of the Chakma Autonomous District Council. The MNF and the Congress combine voted against it and defeated it. (Proceedings of the 6th Session of the Fourth Legislative Assembly of Mizoram - pp.161). Since then, the Chakma issue has been kept alive of and on mainly by the MZP. Political parties also often rake it up during election years. The population of Chakma District as per 2001 Census was 34,528.

Relations with Myanmar

Mizoram does not maintain direct political relationship with Myanmar, as the subject is the concern of the central government in Delhi. However, the Government of India conducts its relationship with the Myanmar regime, essentially with a view to promote and safeguard the interests of the Northeast States especially those bordering Myanmar. Without the active cooperation of the Myanmar authorities, India is clearly aware, the major problems of the Northeast, namely insurgency, underdevelopment, drugs and arms smuggling cannot be eliminated. A number of agreements that India has concluded as also its proposed projects with Myanmar clearly attest to this. Officials of the State government have invariably included in the Indian delegations when such delegations are mandated to discuss matters concerning the respective Northeast States. As a democracy, India is naturally bound to favour a democratic Myanmar, but its vital interests compel active cooperation with whatever regime that country has. A copy of a declassified Note on Indo-Myanmar Relations is at Appendix H.

The major project proposals that concerns Mizoram are India's offer to upgrade Rhi-Tiddim and Rhi-Falam roads linking Mizoram with Chin State, setting up of border trade post at Zokhawthar-Rhi and the Kolodyne or Kaladan Multimodal Project for a combination of inland water transport and highway linking southern Mizoram to Rakhine. These projects and other ideas of infrastructure links were already initiated during the time when the present writer was Indian Ambassador to Myanmar in the mid 1990s. It was however not possible to take them up quickly as the Myanmar authorities were at times frustratingly cautious and slow to respond. The bridge on the border river, Tiao, and a smaller one farther into Myanmar were constructed by India in that time, though. The same Mizo ethnic groups inhabit the entire regions adjoining Mizoram on the Myanmar side. And, perhaps, this is part of the reason that makes Myanmar cautious. The presence of some Chin pro-democracy activists in Mizoram

and the fact that the Chin insurgents (the Chin National Army) have occasionally taken shelters inside Mizoram have not helped matters.

Though the border trade post is yet to be officially opened, the age-old traditional informal trade goes merrily on. Sources in the Customs authorities indicated that the goods "seized" during the last three years were: 2000-2001: Rs. 13.2 million; 2002-2003: Rs. 17.6 million; 2003-2004: Rs. 38.6 million. These are supposed to be the costs of goods confiscated and sold in auction by the Customs. Except for narcotics and arms, real seizures are rare and so are real auctions. Except for trade in head loads of local produces within 30 kilometers on both sides of the border, the entire trade is illegal. And the Customs officials are supposed to seize all goods that come from Myanmar. However, this is not the case in reality. In the assessment of knowledgeable circles, the above figures should represent only 40 per cent of the trade or even less.

The main items of trade that come from Myanmar are: kitchen wares and gadgets; entertainment electronics like TVs, Hi-fi sets, radios; watches; electric goods; garments and other textile products; jewelries including unworked gold and precious stones; furniture and carpentry tools; etc. Light goods and not so light goods like refrigerators and washing machines that a household needs are all available. Vendors often sell them from house to house. The products smuggled are mostly made in China, Japan, S. Korea, Thailand and Taiwan.

The goods that enter Myanmar have been estimated by the Customs to cost about the same as those that come from there. These are mainly Indian made products such as light building materials like kitchen and bathroom fittings and fixtures, bicycles and spare parts, sewing machines, all kinds of pharmaceutical products including proxyvon (which is abused), finished leather products, textiles (loin cloth pieces), plastics and linoleum products, etc. Much of the smuggled drugs and pharmaceuticals is said to reach southern China.

Once legal border trade posts are established on both sides of the border and the roads across Mizoram are improved, the volume of trade exchanges is likely increase substantially. Then, there will have been an official channel that can be abused.

A large number of Myanmar "guest workers" (considering the size of Mizoram population) are in the State. Apart from a few handloom weavers from the plains of Myanmar, most of these workers are from the Chin Hills, who can become fluent in Mizo language in a matter of weeks as they belong to the same ethnic group. They are mainly engaged in menial jobs like housemaids, gardeners, drivers, farm workers and daily labours while a few are in trading and services. Before 2003, their number hovered around 40,000, about 5 per cent of the State population. In late 2003, an incident of rape of a minor girl committed by one of them triggered a widespread protest and a large number were forced to leave Mizoram, thereby attracting adverse comments even by the UN Human Rights Commission and the Amnesty International.

The State government has since started registering these workers and regulating the duration of their stay. Their number is said to have dwindled somewhat. However, the registration is done only at Zokhawthar-Rhi whereas the porous border can be crossed and is crossed at several points in the dry season. International agencies tend to regard these workers as victims of political oppression. They are more of 'economic migrants', some temporary, some not so, much like the Bangladeshis moving into India by various means elsewhere.

Regional Cooperation

Situated on the northeast end of the country, Mizoram is among the remotest of outposts in the North East. If the Partition put back the economy of the NER by a quarter-century, as reckoned by B. G. Verghese, (India's Northeast Resurgent, 1996), it must have put back the economy of

Mizoram at least by half a century. The Partition completely cut off its main traditional market, now Bangladesh, and rendered its only inland waterways, the Karnafuli and the Daleshwari, useless. Its only fragile link to the rest of the world became by a mountainous fair weather road from Cachar to Aizawl, which was subjected to frequent blockages by landslides during the rains. Though this road has been much improved and became a National Highway, it remains the main supply line for Mizoram. Fifty-seven years after Independence, the isolation of Mizoram is still acute.

In order to break out of its isolation, it is an absolute must for Mizoram to have access not only to a network of transport systems but also to other infrastructure linkages in the NER and beyond. The proposed or existing Asian Highways (AH) and the Trans-Asian Railways (TAR) systems do not include Mizoram. It seems to remain a "forgotten patch" of geography. Without access to the regional or sub-regional transport systems, it will obviously not be able to benefit from the regional cooperation intended by such groups as the Bay of Bengal Initiatives on Multi-sector, Technical and Economic Cooperation, the South Asian Development Quadrangle and the Kunming Initiatives.

Following are a layman's suggestions to give additional connectivity to Bangladesh while providing Mizoram the much-needed integration to the regional network of transportation:

1. While the proposed diversion of AH from Sylhet - Karimganj (Assam) - Silchar - Jiribam - Imphal - Tamu (Myanmar) may still stand, the existing road link from Agartala - Aizawl - Champhai (Mizoram) - Tiddim or Falam (Myanmar) can be extended to AH either in Bangladesh at Sylhet itself or in Cachar (Assam). This will also bring Tripura, Mizoram and Chin Hills, all underdeveloped States, into the AH network. The immediate advantage is that there are no insurgent activities anywhere along this road whereas Jiribam -

Imphal section of the other route is in the middle of insurgent area. The sections in Mizoram and Chin Hills in Myanmar pass through hilly terrains but can be upgraded without much difficulty, as they are essential supply lines constantly in use. Government of India has already offered to upgrade Rhi - Tiddim and Rhi - Falam roads.

2. Linking Chittagong by Highway-cum-Inland Waterway via Kaptai dam and Demagiri (Mizoram) to the proposed Multi-Modal Highway-cum-IWT Project on the Kaladan through the existing road in Mizoram from Lunglei to Saiha is another possibility. Another road can also be constructed in south Mizoram to link with the proposed Chittagong - Yangon road, which is already in advanced stage of construction.
3. Once transit through Bangladesh by rail and road to Kolkata is possible, linking the existing network of roads in the middle section of Mizoram will not be difficult.
4. If Tripura is linked by rail across Akhaura in Bangladesh, the same can be extended to the proposed Hydel Project at Bairabi in Mizoram by road-cum-rail, thereby extending farther into Mizoram via IWT.
5. Linking Jiribam by rail or road or both to the proposed Hydel Project at Tipaimuk on the Barak River may also be feasible. This again will provide IWT links to the interior of both Manipur and Mizoram.

REFERENCES

1. Biakchhunga, former Army Chief and President, MNF, *Nation Building* (Hnam Kalsiam - Mizo), 1996, Mizoram Publication Board.
2. Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, *Basic Statistics Relating to Indian Economy*, Bombay.
3. Centre for Northeast Studies and Policy Research, *India's Northeast & Bangladesh, Problems & Opportunities*, 2004.
4. Comptroller and Auditor General of India, *Reports on Government*

of Mizoram, Shillong.

5. Deputy Commissioner of Customs, Aizawl.
6. Government of Mizoram, Mid Term Appraisal for Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007); Draft Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007); Annual Report of Environment and Forests Department (2003); Statistical Abstract of Department of Agriculture & Minor Irrigation; 30 Years of Mizoram Assembly; Unpublished Manuscript on Mizoram Economy and The Development of Mizoram in the Last 4 Years (2003) by the Directorate of Information & Public Relation; Extracts from Draft Annual Plan of Horticulture Department for 2005 by courtesy of Samuel Rosanglura, Director of the Department, *Statistical Handbook*, 2003; Extracts from the Records of Planning Cell of the Public Works Department (PWD) - courtesy of Mr. Sanghrima, Executive Engineer, etc.
7. Institute of Developing Economies, Japan, Sub-Regional Relations In The Eastern South Asia: With Special Focus on Bangladesh and Bhutan by Kyoko Inoue, Mayumi Murayama, M. Rahmatullah and Centre for Bhutan Studies, 2004.
8. Keivom, L., Zoram Khawvel - I (The World of Zoram -Mizo), M.C. Lalrinthanga, 1992. Aizawl.
9. Lalthanliana, Dr., *Mizo History - Before 1900* (Mizo), 2000, Aizawl.
10. Lalthangliana, B., *The History of Mizos - In India, Burma & Bangladesh* (Mizo), Remkungi, 2001, Aizawl.
11. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India: *Notes on Indo-Myanmar Relations and Indo-Bangladesh Relations*. Personal interviews were conducted with Mrs. Neelam Deo, Joint Secretary (BSM), Mrs. Mitra Vashisht, Joint Secretary (SEA-I) and Mr. Lal Dingliana, Joint Secretary (FSI & Technical Cooperation).
12. NEC, *Basic Statistics of Northeast Region*, 1998, Shillong.
13. Pudaite, L. T., Personal data bank based on materials collected in the process of extensive travel on both sides of the Indo-Myanmar border, experience and reports sent to Government of India as Indian Ambassador to Myanmar (1995-96) and later as a freelance writer. The sources cannot now be listed as no record of references was made at the time.

14. Ray, Animesh, *Mizoram, India - Land and the People Series*, 1993, National Book Trust, New Delhi.
15. Sailo, Brig. T., *A Soldier's Story*, Cambridge Laser Print, 2001, Calcutta.
16. Sing Khaw Khai, *Zo People and Their Culture*, Khampu Hatzaw, Lamka, Mainpur, 1995.
17. Vanlalchhawna, Dr., *Zofate Economy (Economy of the Zos - Mizo)*, Zamzo Publishing House, Aizawl, 2004.
18. Verghese, B.G., *India's Northeast - Resurgent*, Konark Publishers (Pvt) Ltd., 1996.
19. Vumson, *Zo History*, Author, Aizawl,
20. Zakhuma, Dr. K.M., *Political Development in Mizoram from 1946 to 1989*, Mizoram Publication Board, 2001.