

ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF NORTH-EAST INDIA

Volume V **Mizoram**

H M BAREH

India's North East was long an enigma, veiled in a pale of mystery. Very little was known about the region before the advent of the British in the first half of the 18th century.

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H.M. BAREH born and brought up at Meghalaya, received his education first at the St. Mary School, then the Government High School, Shillong and Graduated from Jesus and Mary.

He received his M.A. and Ph.D from abroad. His important works are—*The Lepcha Tribe; Culture of Khasi People; The Seven Sisters of North east* etc. He had served on various academic and cultural institutions and organisations.

He contributed several papers at seminars and articles to the journals on different subject—matters such as—social change in north east; Tribal education, economic issues of hill areas, etc.

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THE EDITOR

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Edited by
H.M. BAREH



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H-13, Bali Nagar,
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Phones: 5163610, 5431361

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Preface

North Eastern region of India comprising the eight states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura is endowed with vast natural resources and has enormous potential for development. The economic structure of North East India is similar to the general economic structure of India as a whole. But because of its topography as well as social and political conditions it has a relatively backward economy.

The strategic importance of the region along with its sensitive geopolitical location extremely diverse nature of its population with different cultural, linguistic, religious and historical background make this region characteristically different from the rest of the country. In fact its diversity is so profound that the region may be rightly called a 'mini' India. Its topography and historical factors have not only contributed to the heterogeneous character of the region but also prevented the emergence of a homogenous culture. The tribals living in the hills have century old tradition of self-rule and a strong sense of suspicion of the people from the plains, aroused by the latter's superiority complex which generated in them the fear of losing their cultural and linguistic identities. Foreign Christian pseudo-missionaries in the initial stages of independence took full advantage of this situation and succeeded in creating a feeling of alienation and secession among the hill tribes. The awareness

among the people and the forces working in this part of the region along with the emergence of the new states opened new vistas of opportunities to develop and remould their lives.

The region is landlocked and rich in natural resources. Lack of transport and communication facilities has been responsible for the economic backwardness and social neglect of the region. The Council has undertaken a regional survey to study the transport needs of the region for the next fifteen years. The whole country is watching eagerly the developments in the region. The Council has not only to play a pivotal role in making its member units self-reliant but even to justify its institutional viability as well. The Council must also act as a forum for evolving a homogeneous culture in this region which was marked by political rivalry and cultural insularity till recently. In these new roles, the Council must make greater efforts to seek the cooperation and trust of its various units and also endeavour to create a climate of mutual respect, and goodwill among the different sections of the society inhabiting the region. The Council can perform the new role with the attitudinal change in the political forces operating in the region. The trend so far is encouraging and there is need to give due encouragement and correct direction to its efforts. Increased awareness of the changing role of the Council is essential and beneficial for all.

The people of the northeastern region have been provided an opportunity to act as torchbearers in regional planning and cooperation and show the path of self-reliance to the smaller states of the Union. This in itself is a commendable task for which the northeastern region may feel proud.

Editor

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Introduction

Mizoram is a mountainous region which became the 23rd state of Indian Union in February 1987. It was one of the districts of Assam till 1972 when it became a union territory. Sandwiched between Burma in east and south and Bangladesh in west, Mizoram, occupies an area of great strategic importance in northeastern corner of India. Hills in Mizoram run from north to south with a tendency to be higher in, east, to the territory and tapering in north and south. Average height of hills is about 900 metre, the highest peak being Blue Mountain (Phawngpui) rising to 2,210 metre, Mizoram has great natural beauty and an endless variety of landscape and it is rich in fauna and flora. About 60 per cent of the people of Mizoram are engaged in agricultural pursuits. The main pattern of agriculture followed is Jhum or shifting cultivation. Out of the estimated potential available area of 4 lakh hectare for horticulture the area put under plantation is around 25,000 hectare only. The main horticulture crops are citrus like oranges, lemon, Kagzi lime, passion fruits, Hatkora, Jamir, pineapple and papaya. Other crops are sugarcane, tapioca and cotton. With the processing unit coming up such as Ginger Dehydration Plant at Sairang and fruit juice concentration plants people have started extensive cultivation of ginger and fruit crops. Out of potential flat land of 50,000

hectare only about 16,000 hectare have been put under cultivation so far. Fertilizer consumption has gone up from 16 kg/hectare in 1989 to 25 kg per hectare in 1992. The ultimate surface irrigation potential is estimated at 70,000 hectare. Of which 45,000 hectare is under flow and 25,000 hectare for river lift irrigation. The irrigated area has now gone up to 7,260 hectare by constructing and completing 30 pucca minor irrigation projects for raising double and tripple crops in a year. Entire Mizoram is a Notified Backward Area and is categorised under 'No Industry District' However, concerted efforts were made to accelerate the growth of industries in Mizoram. For the development of industries in the state, the Mizoram government framed the industrial policy of Mizoram in 1989. In the policy resolution, priority industries have been identified.

The completed projects of Ginger Oil and Oleoresin Plant and Ginger Dehydration Plant at Sairang and Fruit Preservation Factory at Vairengte and the projects under implementation, namely, Maize Processing Unit (renamed Maize Milling Plant) at Khawzawl and Fruit Juice Concentrate Plant at Chhingchhip were transferred to the newly incorporated Mizoram Food and Allied Industries Corporation (MIFCO) for Commercial Operation. Maize Milling Plant also has been completed and commissioned by MIFCO.

Government is giving utmost importance to rural electrification, 517 villages have been electrified and part of its power demand is met through mini and micro-hydel projects. Construction of 132 KV lines have been taken up to connect all the important load, centres in the state so that grid power could be supplied throughout the state. Construction of Serlui V Hydel Projects is being started. The state is making efforts to obtain early clearance for the 60 MW Tuirial Hydro Electric Project and investigation of Tuivai 2 10 MW* Hyde] Project. The

proposed Chhimtuipui Hydel Project is also under active consideration.

Total road length 4,787 km. National highway number 54 links Tuipang the southern most district of Mizoram to Silchar town in Assam in the border of Mizoram. Rail link in the state had been established at Bairabi. Aizawl, the capital town of the state, is airlinked by daily Vayudoot service. Mizoram State Transport, besides, running passenger services in 33 routes including two interstate services to Silchar in Assam and Shillong, also provides goods carriages at hire and also function's as 'Railway Out Agency' for Silchar railway station in Cachar district of Assam.

Mizos are basically agriculturist. All their activities centre round Jhum cultivation and their festivals are with such agricultural operations. KUT is the Mizo word for festival. Mizos have three major festivals called Chapchar Kut, Mimꯀ Kut and Pawl Kut.

Aizawl hilly city located at nearly 4,000 feet above sea level is a religious and cultural centre of Mizo where indigenous handicrafts are also available. Champhai is a beautiful resort on the Burma border. Tamdil is a natural lake with Virgin Forest around 60 kit from Aizawl and ten km from the beautiful tourist resort of Sital where modern picnic facilities are being developed. Vantawng Fall is the highest and most beautiful waterfall in Mizoram. It is five km from the hill station of Thenzawl.

Mizoram Legislature

Mizoram, situated in the Northeastern corner of India, is sandwiched between Burma in the east and south and Bangladesh in the west. It has a total area of 21,081 sq. km. with half a million population. Mizoram, earlier known as the Mizo Hills District, was excluded from the Government of India Reforms Act, 1919 and the Act of 1935. As a result, the Mizo people remained under the

personal rule of the British superintendents and the hereditary Mizo Chiefs. It was only after India's Independence that the district had representation in the Assam Legislative Assembly and was allotted three seats in 1952. The Government of the Union Territory (Amendment) Act 1971 made provision for the creation of a legislature in 1972 and the first election to the Mizoram Legislative Assembly with 33 members (3 nominated) was held on 18 April, 1972 on the basis of adult franchise. There was a Lt. Governor as its administrative head with a Council of Ministers. When Mizoram attained full-fledged Statehood on 20 February, 1987 a Mizo National Front Ministry; headed by Shri Laldenga was sworn in by the Governor Shri Hiteshwar Saikia. Election to the Legislative Assembly for the fullfledged State of Mizoram was held in March, 1987. At present the Assembly consists of 40 members.

No academic attempt to evaluate the dynamics of Indian politics today can be valid if it ignores what may be described as the regional perspective and fails to take adequate account of the increasingly critical role played by regional political parties. Some regional political parties, such as the D.M.K. (Dravida Munnetra Kazagham), Shiromani Akali Dal (Punjab) and National Conference (Jammu and Kashmir) came into existence soon after the Independence of the country. Other like Telugu Desam, A.G.P. (Asom Gana Parishad), APHLC (All Party Hill Leaders' Conference) Meghalaya, People's Conference and Mizo National Front (Mizoram) are recent arrivals on the political scene. Currently in four of India's twenty-five states, Assam, Sikkim, Jammu and Kashmir and Andhra Pradesh, regional parties are in power. But, for the imposition of President's rule in September 1988, the Mizo National Front may well have been running the government in Mizoram toady.

In 1959, there was a great famine all over Mizoram, due to the widespread acute shortage of food and other things, therefore, there were cases of starvation deaths. The government of Assam could not take up adequate measure to meet the situation. As a result of this misery, a non-political organisation called the Mizo Cultural Society was formed in the same year by John F. Manliana to help the starving people. But this society did not last long as it could not be an effective media to help the famine-stricken people.

At the same time, the Mizo Union leaders, staunch supporters of the Congress government in the beginning, who were running the administration of the District Council were unhappy either. They realised that government of Assam neither paid much attention to famine relief measures nor attached so much importance to the District Council as expected. As consequence, the relationship between the Chaliha government of Assam and the Mizo Union led District Council reached at bitter stage. So Mizo Union drifted away from the Congress and became more and more critical in their public utterances mainly because of sharp differences on the famine relief and the state official language issues in 1960. In the same year the rift between the Congress and All Party Hill Leaders Conference on the Assamese Language issue also appeared. Laldenga exploited this situation fully as well as took the advantage of relief works done for the distressed people. At the same time he received special patronage of the Chaliha government. So Laldenga and other leaders of the M.N.F. decided unanimously to convert this social service organisation into political party.

Consequently, the Mizo National Front was formed on 22 October, 1961 with the objectives of attaining independence for greater Mizoram, reuniting all the Mizo

people living in the contiguous areas? improving the social, economic and political conditions of the Mizos, safeguarding/promoting Christianity, planning a long-term strategy for violent movement to achieve its aims and acquiring dependable source of support of some foreign countries.

The MNF carried on hostile activities yet the government of Assam did not realise the gravity of the situation. The law and order was fast deteriorating. The situation was ripe for a conflict. The MNF insurgency broke out on the midnight of 28 February, 1966. The party resorted to acts of lawlessness, violence, attacks and killings at many important places in the district. The MNF 'declared independence on 1 March, 1966. The declaration of independence appeared to be similar in style and content that of the American Declaration of Independence. Laldenga appealed for external help. The government of India adopted military measures to counter the menace of the grave anti-national activity. The Army troops were despatched to the territory in aid of the civil power. On 2 March, 1966 the whole district was declared as a disturbed area under the Assam Disturbed Areas Act, 1955 by the Government of Assam. This Act of 1955 alongwith the Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Power Act, 1958 was also in force in the area. Not only but the Government of India on 6 March, 1966 declared the MNF as an unlawful organisation and also banned it under the Defence of India Rules. Though, there was no declaration of martial law at all, yet the government entrusted the responsibility of law and order in the district to the army and issued strict instructions that the army was not to fight with an enemy power.

Despite the MNF leaders remained adamant. They did not resile from the demands of independence. They also persisted in subversive and violent activities and continued all sorts of atrocities in Mizoram. The MNF

parallel government also continued functioning. The Mizo ' Hills District was elevated to the status of Union Territory on 21 January, 1972 and popular government was formed. The MNF was later split into two groups moderate/intellectuals and extremists which confused the rank and file of the MNF. Not only but most intellectuals also surrendered. Both the split in the MNF and the creation/provision of social welfare services by the counter ins urgency forces caused mass surrenders occasionally.

The continued political consciousness and a realisation about the MNF movement's futility among the MIZO's were also at work in discouraging the anti-nationalist force of the MNF's. F's rebels and thereby contributed to the MNF's frustration at its waning influence in Mizoram. Thus the surrenders gave crippling blows to the MNF, kept them in complete dissaray and shattered their morale. Simultaneously, the concentrated efforts on development activities and social Welfare measures were going to create in the minds of the Mizo people a stake in peaceful conditions. There has been a considerable progress in political, economic, social and cultural aspects of the Mizo people since 1972, inspite of the territory being disturbed by the Mizo National Front insurgency. Both the first and the second ministries led by the Congress and the People's Conference tried to bring the Central Government and the MNF leaders to peace dialogue in order to settle the vexed political problem of Mizoram. So there had been frequent peace talks/meetings between the Govt. of India and the MNF, Leaders. But the talks could not yield any tangible results, The MNF insurgency and the security operations continued. Later the Home Secretary, Government of India and the MNF Chief Laldenga signed the 'Peace Accord' on 1st July, 1976 closing the bitter chapters of hardship and sufferings caused by the MNF hostilities

since March 1966. Unfortunately, the July peace accord could not be translated into practice inspite of the best efforts of both the sides. The Janata Party came to power in the centre in the polls of 1977. Talks regarding implementation of the July agreement were resumed on 18th May between the representatives of Central Government and the MNF Chief Laldenga. But it was not materialised probably due to rift, internal squabbles and contradictions within the MNF organisation. As a result, the talks were called off in March 1978. After the MNF stepped up their hostile activities all over the territory, the attacks were mostly on the security forces, civil officials and non-Mizos. The Central Government viewed fresh spurt of violence and killings seriously. So the MNF and its allied organisation were declared unlawful. Laldenga was taken into police custody on 8th July, 1979.

With the return of the Congress (I) party to power in the 1980 polls at the Centre the Mizo Pradesh Congress (I) Leaders requested the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to resume the peace talk with' the MNF. The talks were resumed. The central government withdrew all the pending cases and charges against Laldenga on 30th July, 1980. But the talks between the government and Laldenga failed because of sharp differences on some of the demands, such as, constitution of a state with safeguards on Jammu and Kashmir type and constitution of greater Mizoram including Mizo inhabited areas as submitted by him.

The central government, however, agreed to elevate the Union Territoryhood to the Statehood of Mizoram with certain constitutional safeguards. The Central government also made clear to the MNF that issues, which were possible without their repercussion on the other groups, would be met in the course of discussion. Still the peace, talks broke off. The MNF and its armed wing Mizo National Army were banned on 20th January,

1982. The central government, thus honoured the commitment of 'safe conduct' given to him when he came to India from West Germany on 24th January, 1976, for settling the political problem through peaceful talks. But peace and progress for which the Mizo people had been longing for a long time, became casualty in the atmosphere of revived violence, killings and indiscriminate harassment.

The MNF leaders also wanted to mediate through the Mizoram Pradesh Congress leaders. Laldenga from London was called back to Delhi on 29th October, 1984. The peace talks were resumed between the Central Government and the MNF Chief Laldenga on 17th December, 1984, operations by the MNF insurgents and the security forces in order to facilitate settlement remained suspended. Laldenga had a series of discussions on various issues With the central officials, leaders and finally the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. As a consequence, the historic memorandum of settlement was signed by the Home Secretary, R.D. Pradhan, Govt. of India, and Laldenga on behalf of the Mizo National Front and the Chief Secretary Lalkhama, Government of Mizoram on 30th June, 1986 to ensure permanent peace and harmony in Mizoram, The peace accord was clinched both at the official (Govt. level) and the non-official and political (Party level). The memorandum of settlement incorporates some of the important issues. The MNF party agreed to end all underground activities, bring out all underground MNF personnel with their arms to civil life and abjure violence within the stipulated time frame. 'Me MNF further agreed to delete objectives of "Independence and secession of Mizoram from the Union of India" from its constitution to ensure its working within the constitutional framework of India. The Government of India, on the other hand resettled and rehabilitated the Mizos. The government also agreed to

confer statehood on the Union territory of Mizoram with certain safeguards to satisfy the desires and aspirations of the Mizo people. After the memorandum of settlement was signed, the government of India and the MNF took steps to implement the historic peace accord peacefully.

The underground MNF and MNA personnel surrendered with arms and ammunition. The MNF party amended its constitution by deleting the party's main objective for a struggle of 'Independent Mizoram' and other objectionable provisions to conform to the laws of land' The Government of India, thereafter lifted the ban on the MNF party. The Central Government with a view to elevating the Union territoryhood to the statehood of Mizoram introduced the Mizoram Statehood Bill, 1986 with special safeguards and provision of forty elective seats in the Legislative Assembly and the 53rd Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 1986 in the Parliament and got the bill passed by an absolute majority of votes. The President also assented to the Mizoram statehood Bill, 1986 on 14th August, 1986. The state bill became an act but was not brought in force with immediate effect. Because it was politically agreed upon between the, Central Government and the MNF Chief Laldenga to form the Interim Congress (1) and MNF coalition government, comprising nine ministers of Cabinet rank (5-Congress, 4-MNF) led by LaIdenga as the Chief Minister and Lalthanhawla as the Deputy Chief Minister. The MNF party on its part completed laying down of arms and ammunition within July 1986. The Congress Legislature party in its meeting resolved to accept Laldenga as the leader of the Congress (I)-MNF coalition in the Legislative Assembly. So the Chief Minister Lalthanhawla resigned his Chief Ministership to facilitate the formation of the Congress(1)-MNF coalition government to ensure permanent peace and harmony in Mizoram. The Congress-MNF coalition government

headed by LaIdenga as the Chief Minister and Lalthanhawla as the Deputy Chief Minister was sworn in on 21st August, 1986. After the formation of Congress-MNF coalition government, the Chief Minister LaIdenga described the vacation of seats of Chief Minister and ministers by Lalthanhawla and his colleagues as significant contribution towards the implementation of Mizoram Peace Accord. However, the coalition could not function well.

After twenty years of insurgency, the MNF leaders have taken the constitutional path by accepting statehood for Mizoram as a components unit of the Indian federation. The party in its constitution pledges to achieve its objectives through democracy, secularism and nonviolence.

It further aims at promoting and safeguarding Mizo culture and language. The constitution also talks of uniting all Mizos and integrating the contiguous areas predominantly inhabited by the Mizos into a homogeneous political unit. But the party in its constitution does not make any reference to the socioeconomic condition of the Mizos nor to any religion. The party thus, does not follow any political philosophy but it represents the local grievances of its areas. This is local in character and centres around influential personalities.

The MNF has a pyramidal structure starting at bottom with the village units upto the apex called the headquarters in the state of capital of Mizoram and at the districts/divisions and blocks. A general headquarters of the state comprises general Assembly/Special Assembly, National Council, National Executive Committee, office bearers, National Woman Front and National Senior Front. The headquarters has many office bearers—President, Vice-President, Treasurer, General Secretary,

seven secretaries appointed by the President for three years. The divisional headquarters, has elected/appointed office bearers—President, Treasurer, Divisional Secretary and five joint Secretaries appointed by the Divisional President for two years. President, Vice-President, Treasurer, one Secretary and Financial Secretary and two Joint Secretaries appointed by the Block President are the office-bearers of the Block Headquarters.

The office bearers of the group and unit committee remain in their offices for one year. The President, Vice-Presidents and Treasurers of the state Headquarters, Divisional Headquarters, Block Headquarters and group/unit committee are elected by the general assembly and conferences as provided in the election rules for the office-bearers.

The state headquarters/divisional headquarters may create group committee comprising more than one unit. All headquarters in order to execute the party's aims, objectives/policies have their executive committee such as National Executive Committee, Divisional Executive Committee, Block Executive Committee, Group Executive Committee and unit executive organ of the party exercise a large measure of influence and power in deciding party's policies and programmes. It has to carry out the policies adopted by the General assembly. This body also supervises and coordinates the activities of the divisional/block headquarters/committees. The party within a short period has made a significant dent in the urban and rural segments and established its units in all urban areas and villages. The party owing to its hierarchical structure has been to carry out the programmes of the party to the lowest level.

The MNF was also a partner in the Congress (1) coalition ministry of August, 1986, so the party has

become a very important force in the Mizo politics. As regards the membership of the party, it is open to all citizens. One who believes in the party's aims/objectives, can become a member of the party without paying membership fee. As the dominant party, it has made steady progress in enrolling a large number of people of various walks of life. The MNF in the beginning consisted of mostly non-propertied persons. After memorandum of settlement, the party has brought the urban rich, the urban proletariat, the educated petty bourgeoisie, the upstart contractor and business ' men to its fold, who may have their specific needs and demands. The party has enrolled many people belonging to urban rural middle class. As regards the social and geographical support base of the party; it has tried strenuously to broaden its base in the state except the inhabited tribes such as Lakhers and Chakmas. But the party has certainly extended its support base to the areas of the Pawi district council inhabited by the Pawi tribes. As the fact remains true, mostly the party derives its support from the mizo clans found scattered only in the Aizawl and Lunglei districts.

Laldenga is the founder President of the Mizo National Front. He turned the party into an effective organisation and carried its message of independence of Mizoram into every corner of Mizoram. As a powerful speaker, he could be able to win the hearts of a large section of the Mizos. He, in fact, enjoyed wide appeal. But the Mizo National Front encouraged a trend towards personality cult, and helped in furthering centralisation of power structure and also prevented the practice of intra-party democracy or democratic functioning of the party organisation at all level. Besides, there were also other elements which encouraged the tendency towards autocratic leadership. There were two elements, the system of intraparty communication and the instrument

of indoctrination (education of the party members) which ran vertically from top to the bottom of the party. As a consequence, leadership always remained with the extremist and had not emerged from the moderate or intellectual groups of the new cadres who joined much later. There were almost the same persons from extremist groups at the higher level, representing more or less the extremist ideas till memorandum of settlement was signed. It may be also mentioned that the party in its basic structure was rather ultraconservative whereas its leadership elite was modern in outlook, realistic in belief and meticulous in actions. But the MNF Chief could not skilfully bridge the gap between antagonistic currents within the MNF. The MNF Chief simply kept together the different wings, groups and factions by his unchallenged leadership/authority. This is true no doubt but the party had a devoted band of worker's and was guided by leaders.

After memorandum of settlement, the MNF no doubt, has amended its constitution and also deleted some objectionable provisions. It has, also built up a mass base. It has further acquired political maturity insofar. "as it has accepted the discipline of a parliamentary party and the values of democratic government. The MNF has emerged as' a secular, democratic and constitutional party. The party leadership has also claimed to be legitimate being based on elections. It is interesting to note that the MNF has not yet prevented its trend towards personality cult or strengthened the democratic functioning of the party organisation at all levels. There is a reason. behind it that the leadership of the party before and after memorandum of settlement has remained unchanged. The MNF Chief and some of his devoted and trusted colleagues have been still guiding the party and i also playing a very dominant role in its organisational setup and policy formulation. When the

MNF party led by Laldenga split into two MNF and MNF (Democratic), spokesman for the new party said about leadership. We expected a new era and Mizoram under Laldenga where corruption would be rooted out and moral value upheld. However, he suppressed democracy and introduced a totalitarian type of functioning in the party and the government." Mr. Lallerliana said: "instead of collective leadership, Mr. Laldenga turned himself into a supremo." He said the dissidents had several attempts to persuade Mr. Laldenga to change his style of functioning. Instead, he became worse and practised nepotism openly." As Maurice Durverger rightly observes, leadership of political parties presents dual characteristics: it is democratic in appearance and oligarchic in character.

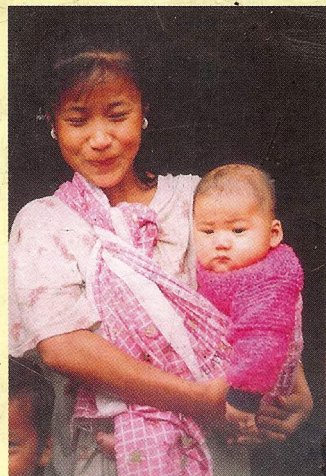
This was the first general election to the Legislative Assembly held on 16th Feb. 1987 after Mizoram was accorded statehood. For the purpose of election, Mizoram was divided into 40 single member constituencies. Of them, 28 were in Aizawl district, 7 in Lunglei district and 5 in Chhimtuipui district. Of 40 constituencies, 38 were reserved for scheduled tribes and 2 for Lunglei south in Lunglei district and Lokicherra in Aizawl district) unreserved. Briefly, Mizoram is entirely a tribal area. Even the candidates who contested from the two unreserved constituencies, were also from scheduled tribes. The National Regional political parties which contested the Assembly election were: the Indian National Congress (I), the People's Conference (reorganised), the Mizo National Front and the Mizo National Union (unrecognised). The Congress set up 40 candidates for 40 seats. The Mizo National Front had 37 candidates. The People's Conference fielded 36 candidates. The Mizo National Union nominated 21 candidates, but 11 Independents were also in, the election fray. But there was no electoral adjustment among the

parties because each of the party wanted to have a majority of its own in the Assembly. Undoubtedly the contest in almost all the constituencies was very keen and though all the parties fought the election battle on their own. While four parties and independents were in the election fray, the actual contest was between the Congress and the MNF. The MNF for the first time entered the Assembly polls of 1987 after Mizoram became state. The I overall percentage of poll in 1987 was 72.63%. The Mizo National Front secured an overwhelming majority with 24 seats out of 37, it contested. The party had 36.62% of the total votes polled. The Chief Minister Laldehga and his former colleagues of the coalition ministry also got elected. Laldenga was elected from two constituencies.

The female candidate fielded by the MNF also won the seat. Congress, a National Party, however, out of 40 contested seats, managed to get only 13 seats, securing 32.98% of the total votes polled. The Congress suffered despite being the ruling party in the territory since 1984. The People's Conference bagged only 3 seats out of 36 seats, it contested and secured 23.70% of the votes cast. This recognised regional party had a complete setback at the polls suffering a further loss of 5 seats. 'Me Mizo National Union which came out with 21 candidates drew a blank completely, obtaining only 3.33% of the total votes polled.

The Mizo National Front fought the election mostly on the local issues. The party pledged to implement all terms and conditions and other stipulations contained in The memorandum of settlement, ensure peace/normalcy, bring about all round progress making Mizoram a 'model state', bridge widening gap between the rich and the poor, eradicate corruption of all sorts, combat different social evils in the society and improve the deplorable conditions of the general masses caused by inequality in

various spheres. Besides the party had 15 point election manifesto concerning political, social, administrative, economic development problems of the territory. Lastly, the party came out with slogan 'Mizoram is for the Mizos. It appears from the party's manifesto that the party did nothing to have reasonable or equitable distribution of the planned development among the average Mizo people. Party's manifesto lacked land reforms measures. The party in its constitution/manifesto vaguely talked a great deal about integration of the contiguous areas inhabited by the Mizos with Mizoram.



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