

**DEMOCRACY IN NORTH EAST INDIA: A COMPARATIVE
STUDY OF MIZORAM AND MEGHALAYA**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY**

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**DEMOCRACY IN NORTH EAST INDIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
MIZORAM AND MEGHALAYA**

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Submitted

**In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Political Science of Mizoram University, Aizawl**



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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that **Mr. Jerry Lalmuansanga**, a research scholar bearing Ph.D. Registration No. MZU/Ph.D/1160 of 03.10.2018 in the Department of Political Science, Mizoram University has completed his work on *Democracy in North East India: A Comparative Study of Mizoram and Meghalaya* for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Political Science under my supervision. The work carried out by the scholar is original and no part of the thesis has been published in any form, either in a journal or a book.

He has fulfilled all the criteria as prescribed by the UGC Regulation 2018 with mandatory publication. On completion of all the formalities of Mizoram University, I am pleased to forward the thesis for evaluation and further necessary action.

Supervisor

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

This is being submitted to the Mizoram University for the **Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science**.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A/C	: Assembly Constituency
AAP	: Aam Admi Party
AAP	: Annual Action Plan
AD	: Anno Domini
ADB	: Asian Development Bank
ADC	: Autonomous District Council
AGP	: Asom Gana Parishad
AIADMK	: All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
AICC	: All India Congress Committee
AITC	: All India Trinamool Congress
AMC	: Aizawl Municipal Corporation
APHLC	: All Party Hill Leaders' Conference
BC	: Before Christ
BJD	: Biju Janata Dal
BJP	: Bharatiya Janata Party
BNS	: Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita
BoC	: Board of Councillors
BPF	: Bodoland People's Front
BPL	: Below Poverty Line
BRS	: Bharat Rashtriya Samiti
BSP	: Bahujan Samaj Party
CADC	: Chakma Autonomous District Council
CCP	: Chinese Communist Party
CEC	: Central Executive Committee

CEM	: Chief Executive Member
CEO	: Chief Executive Officer
CNF	: Chin National Front
CPI (M)	: Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CPI	: Communist Party of India
CPSU	: Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DCC	: District Congress Committee
DMK	: Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
ECI	: Election Commission of India
EITU	: Eastern India Tribal Union
EM	: Executive Member
EPW	: Economic and Political Weekly
ERPs	: Ethno Regional Parties
ETDB	: Entrepreneurship Program Through Digital Business
EWS	: Economically Weaker Section
FD	: Forfeit Deposit
FOCUS	: Fostering Climate Resilient Upland Farming System.
GAD	: General Administration Department
GDP	: Gross Domestic Product
GHADC	: Garo Hills Autonomous District Council
GNC	: Garo National Conference
GNC	: Garo National Council
HA	: Hmar Association
HPU	: Hill People Union
HSPDP	: Hills State People's Democratic Party

IED	: Improvised Explosive Device
IIHM	: Institute of Hotel Management
IIM	: Indian Institute of Management
ILP	: Inner Line Permit
INC	: Indian National Congress
IPC	: Indian Penal Code
IPFT	: Indigenous Progressive Front of Tripura
JD (S)	: Janata Dal (Secular)
JD U)	: Janata Dal (United)
JD	: Jaintia Durbar
JHADC	: Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council
JMM	: Jharkhand Mukti Morcha
KAD	: Karbi-A-Durbar
KHADC	: Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council
KHNAM	: Khun Hynniewtre National Awakening Movement
KND	: Khasi National Durbar
KND	: Khasi National Durbar
KSU	: Khasi Students Union
KYV	: Know Your Voters
LAD	: Local Area Development
LADC	: Lai Autonomous District Council
LEAP	: Life Skills, Employability, Aspirations and Purpose
LJP	: Lok Janshakti Party
LMC	: Lunglei Municipal Council
LPG	: Liquefied Petroleum Gas

MADC	: Mara Autonomous District Council
MCC	: Model Code of Conduct
MDA	: Meghalaya Democratic Alliance
MDC	: Member of District Council
MDCC	: Mizo District Congress Committee
MEDI	: Mizoram Economic Development Initiative
MeECL	: Meghalaya Electricity Corporation Ltd
MFP	: Mara Freedom Party
MGNREGA	: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MHIS	: Megha Health Insurance Scheme
MIMER	: Mizoram Institute of Medical Education & Research
MJD	: Mizoram Janata Dal
ML	: Muslim League
MLPC	: Mizoram Liquor Prohibition Act
MNF (D)	: Mizo National Front (Democrat)
MNF (N)	: Mizo National Front (Nationalist)
MNF	: Mizo National Front
MP	: Member of Parliament
MPA	: Meghalaya Progressive Alliance
MPC	: Mizoram People's Conference
MPCC	: Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee
MPF	: Mizoram People Forum
MPMCC	: Meghalaya Pradesh Mahila Congress Committee
MPP	: Mizoram People's Party
MPYCC	: Meghalaya Pradesh Youth Congress Committee

MSA	: Mizoram Secular Alliance
MU	: Mizo Union
MUDA	: Meghalaya Urban Development Authority
MZP	: Mizo Zirlai Pawl
NC	: National Conference
NCP	: Nationalist Congress Party
NDPP	: Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party
NEDA	: North-East Democratic Alliance
NEDP	: New Economic Development Programme
NEHU	: North Eastern Hills University
NEIGRIHMS	: North Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences
NEP	: National Education Policy
NER	: North Eastern Region
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organization
NIT	: National Institute of Management
NLUP	: New Land Use Policy
NPF	: Naga Peoples Front
NPP	: National Peoples Party
NPWW	: National People's Women's Wing
NPYF	: National People's Youth Front
NSAP	: National Social Assistance Programme
NSDP	: National Slum Development Programme
NSUI	: National Students Union of India
OB	: Office Bearer
OPS	: Old Pension System

PAC	: Political Affairs Committee
PADC	: Pawi Autonomous District Council
PC	: Peoples Conference
PDF	: People's Democratic Front
PDP	: Peoples Democratic Party
PHED	: Public Health Engineering Department
PLRC	: Pawi-Lakher Regional Council
PLTU	: Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union
PMGSY	: Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana
PMJAY	: Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana
PPA	: People's Party of Arunachal Pradesh
PPP	: Public Private Partnership
PRISM	: Peoples Representation for Identity and Status of Mizoram
PWD	: Public Works Department
RDA	: Regional Democratic Alliance
RJD	: Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)
RPI (A)	: Republican Party of India (Athawale)
SDF	: Sikkim Democratic Front
SDP	: Social Democratic Party
SEDP	: Socio-Economic Development Policy
SJSRY	: Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana
SK	: Sengkrak
SMB	: Shillong Municipal Board
SP	: Samajwadi Party
TDP	: Telegu Desam Party

UAD	: Urban Affairs Department
UDP	: United Democratic Party
UMFO	: United Mizo Freedom Organisation
UTs	: Union Territories
VNO	: Vaiphei National Organization
VPP	: Voice of the People Party
YLA	: Young Lushai Association
YMA	: Young Mizo Association
YSRCP	: Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party
ZDF	: Zoram Democratic Front
ZEM	: Zoram Exodus Movement
ZNP	: Zoram Nationalist Party
ZPM	: Zoram Peoples Movement
ZRF	: Zoram Reformation Front

GLOSSARY

Doloi: It is the name of the head of chieftainship under the Jaintia traditional governance system.

Durbar shnong: It refers to the body that governs at the village level. The headman presided over the *durbar shnong* where every adult participates. The village durbar functions as grassroots court, settles disputes and address various welfare issues.

Hima/Elaka: It refers to the traditional administrative units of the Khasi political system.

Hnatlang: It is a Mizo word and it refers to self-help and co-operation for the fulfilment of social obligations and responsibility by the villagers. It evolves since time immemorial in Mizo society

Hynniew Trep Hynniew Skum: It is a Khasi word which can be translate as ‘Seven Huts and Nine Nests’. It is a foundational myth for the Khasi people’s origin and relationship with the divine.

Lal: It refers to a traditional Mizo chief.

Lushai: The Mizos were known as Lushai by the colonial administrators as majority of the sub-tribe belongs to the Lushei or Lushai clan

Mylliem Syiemship: It refers to a traditional Khasi state or principality that existed before the Indian Constitution.

Mylliem: It refers to a village and is also a block headquarters in East Khasi Hills District.

Myntries: In Khasi Hills, *myntries* means ministers, who serve as advisors and administrators under a traditional Khasi ruler or Syiem.

Nokma: It means the traditional village head or chief in Garo Hills.

Parwana: An official order or warrant issued by a court or authority.

Pi: It is a titled used for Mizo married women and respected person.

Pu: It is a titled used for Mizo married man and respected person.

Rangbah Shnong: It is a Khasi word meaning village headmen.

Sanad: It is a document granted to Khasi chiefs, confirming their position and authority, while imposing obligations in return for British protection. ‘*Sanad*’ is also used as recognition letter by the village headmen from the Hima.

Sardar: It refers to the traditional head of a village or locality under the Khasi-Jaintia traditional system.

Syiem: It refers to the traditional head of a Hima in the erstwhile Khasi state which is now a traditional administrative unit under the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council.

Tang Puihna: Helping or assisting hard work.

Wahadadar: It refers to a traditional chief or head of a specific administrative area known as a Wahadarship. The term is primarily associated with the Shella Confederacy region in the Khasi Hills.

Basan: It means an adult male administrative head or representative in traditional leadership structures like a Syiemship.

Lyngdoh: It refers to the head of a chieftainship in some traditional system and also generally means priest or religious leader in the traditional Khasi social structure.

Raid: It means a commune land comprising of villages that falls within the territorial jurisdiction of Syiemship and recognized as such by the Executive Committee.

Pator: It means a traditional administrative official or headman. It is commonly used in Ri Bhoi areas.

Chapter-I

Introduction

Democracy is the most popular form of government in the world. It is considered as the best form of government, as the people directly or indirectly elect their representative to govern their country. The principle of holding regular and genuine elections through universal suffrage is one of the most important aspects of democracy. Normally, people contest the election as a party candidate. In democracy, the importance of political parties lies in the fact that democracies cannot function without the existence of political parties. Political parties are regarded as ‘lifeblood of democratic politics’.¹ The concept of democracy as a form of government has its roots in the Athenian city-state during the period of Cleisthenes’ reconstruction in 508–507 BC.² Modern democracies took shape over many centuries. Most of the world’s democracies are less than 100 years old.³ Out of many democratic countries, British democracy is considered the “mother of democracies”.⁴ At the same time, India (the world’s largest democracy) also claimed itself as the “mother of democracy”. The phrase was expressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his speech at the United Nations General Assembly (September, 2021) and at the Global Summit for Democracy (March, 2021). India aims to present to the world that democracy has been rooted in Indian culture from ancient times.⁵ India is often credited for its success as the largest democracy in the world. In the above context, the present study—Mizoram and Meghalaya—are the two Indian states from North Eastern region in which democracy has been in practised. Meghalaya attained full statehood in 1972, while

¹ V.M. Sirsikar & L. Fernandes. (1984). *Indian Political Parties*. Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, p. (v).

² Taiwo Justice Olorulana. *The History of Democracy: From Ancient Athens to Present-Day*. Research Gate. August, 2023. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/373140198>. Accessed on 19th May, 2025.

³ Defining Democracy: What is Democracy? <https://www.moadoph.gov.au/explore/democracy/defining-democracy>. Accessed on 19th May, 2025.

⁴ Nick Harvey & Paul Tyler. *How to Save Britain’s Parliamentary Democracy*. Sage Journal. Volume-15, Issue. 1, February, 2024. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/20419058241238189>. Accessed on 19th May, 2025.

⁵ Mother of Democracy: Special Exhibition to Greet World Leaders at G-20 Summit in Delhi. *The Wire*. Dated: 31st August, 2023. <https://m.thewire.in/article/government/mother-of-democracy-special-exhibition-to-greet-world-leaders-at-g20-summit-in-delhi?utm=ampnext>. Accessed on 19th May, 2025.

Mizoram attained full statehood in 1987. As a result, the studies focus on democracy in North East India in general and particularly the states of Mizoram and Meghalaya. It also compares the nature of democracy based on different parameters between the two states.

1.1 Concept of Democracy

The concept of democracy as a form of government originates from the Greek philosophers. Its contemporary usage, however, dates back to the revolutionary upheavals in Western society at the end of the 18th century.⁶ The term ‘democracy’ is derived from two Greek words ‘*demo*’ meaning the people, and ‘*kratien*’ signifying ruling power. Its original meaning was ‘government in which the ruling power resides in the hands of the people’.⁷ The modern notion of democracy evolved through various interactions, including resistance against tyranny, the desire for power sharing, the imperative to delegate authority for administrative efficiency via representation, the need to stabilize institutions, ensuring security of life and property and the desire to satisfy human dignity and well-being. This led to a broadening of the power base, resulting in more people participating in decision-making and ultimately granting the right to vote and adult franchise.⁸

Democracy has been defined as a form of government based on sources of authority, purposes served, and constituting procedures. However, ambiguity and imprecision arise when defined by either a source of authority or purpose, and a procedural definition is used. In contrast, other political systems have chosen their leaders through birth, wealth, violence, co-option, learning, appointment or examination. In democracy, the central procedure is the selection of leaders through competitive elections by the people they govern.⁹ Huntington defines a twentieth-century political system as democratic to the extent that its most powerful collective decision-makers are selected through fair, honest, and periodic elections in which

⁶ Samuel P. Huntington. (2010). *The Third Wave: Democratization in the late Twentieth Century*. New Delhi: Adarsh Books. p.6.

⁷ Padma Charan Dhal. (2002). *Democracy in India: Constraints and Opportunities*. Jaipur: Aavishkar Publishers, Distributors. p.7.

⁸ *Ibid*, p.2.

⁹ Samuel P. Huntington, *op.cit*, p.6.

candidates freely compete for votes and virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote.¹⁰

Robert Dahl argues that undemocratic systems are those that prohibit opposition parties in elections, harass them, censor opposition newspapers, or manipulate votes. The failure of a major opposition party to win office raises questions about the degree of competition allowed by the system.¹¹ In the late 1980s, the free and fair elections criterion of democracy became more useful due to the increasing observation of elections by international groups (The Commonwealth Observer Groups,¹² The Carter Center,¹³ etc.). By 1990, it was decided that elections in a democratizing country would only be generally accepted as legitimate if they were observed by one or more reasonably competent and detached teams of international observers, and if the observers certified that the election meets the minimal standards of honesty and fairness.¹⁴ In short, election is the essence of democracy.

In democracy, people normally contest elections as party candidates. A political party plays a crucial role in the working of democracy. Political parties are essential for the functioning of modern democratic government. The significance of political parties lies in the fact that democracies cannot function without political parties, and they are considered as the 'lifeblood of democratic politics'.¹⁵ A political party is an important organization for achieving an individual's political objectives. It serves as the lifeline of modern politics.¹⁶ Political parties are one of the most important tools in a democratic political system. Political parties link to both the legislative and the executive branches. In a parliamentary system, the party having the maximum numbers of representatives forms the government and tries to execute the policies outlined in their election manifesto.¹⁷

¹⁰ Samuel P. Huntington, *op.cit*, p.7.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p.8.

¹² Election Observation: www.thecommonwealth.org. Accessed on 6th September, 2018.

¹³ Election Standards at the Carter Center: <https://electionstandards.cartercenter.org>. Accessed on 6th September, 2018.

¹⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *op.cit*, p.8.

¹⁵ V.M. Sirsikar and L. Fernandes, *op.cit*, p. (v).

¹⁶ K.N. Kumar. (1990). *Political Parties in India*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications. p.1.

¹⁷ V.M. Sirsikar and L. Fernandes, *op.cit*, p.9.

The democratically elected government is obligated to safeguard civil and political rights, including freedoms of movement, association, assembly, speech, and information, together with the rights to personal security, protection against arbitrary arrest, and access to a fair trial. The countries recognized as democratic are those governments that are elected in free and fair elections, based on universal suffrage. Such governments are also likely to protect and promote the civil and political rights, in contrast to the performance of non-democratic or less democratic political systems.¹⁸ Thus, democracy became one of the most accepted forms of government in the world. Many of the authoritarian and dictatorial forms of government have changed their form of government to democratic norms.

1.2 Working of Democracy in India

Democracy is an age-old concept in India. According to the Indian ethos, democracy encompasses the values of freedom, acceptability, equality, and inclusivity in a society, allowing its citizens to lead a quality and dignified life.¹⁹ Despite being a relatively young nation, India is one of the oldest civilizations and the largest democracy in the world. The completion of India's seventy-eight years of independence (1947-2025) and its 76 years as a democratic republic (1950-2025) offers an in-depth understanding of the shape and strength of Indian democracy as well as its weakness. India's democratic experiment, despite being praised globally, requires closer introspection to assess its performance in a large, multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and multilingual country.²⁰

The study of democracy in India requires examining the historical and institutional experiences, ideological and technological impacts, and unique responses to stimuli to fully understand the country's democratic system. India's democracy is shaped by various factors, including its unique traditions, social and normative

¹⁸ Roland Axtmann. (Ed). (2003). *Understanding Democratic Politics*. London: Sage Publications Ltd. p.22.

¹⁹ Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India. Bharat: Mother of Democracy.

<https://www.indiaculture.gov.in/bharat-mother-democracy#:~:text=Democracy%20is%20an%20age%2Dold,a%20quality%20and%20dignified%20life>. Accessed on 19th May, 2025.

²⁰ Lancy Lobo & Jayesh Shah (Ed). (2017). *Democracy in India: Current Debates and Emerging Challenges*. New Delhi: Primus Books. p.1.

systems, external influences, and historical conditions.²¹ Indian democracy is a unique experiment that incorporates diversity, allows citizens to vote, freedom of speech and expression, and conducts periodic elections to regulate the functioning of the three organs of government. India has established a relatively durable parliamentary democracy, which serves as a platform for dissent.²²

The concept of representative democracy was firmly established in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution.²³ The Constitution explicitly emphasized the principle of representative democracy, highlighting its significant position. The Parliament is the legislative organ of the Union government. It occupies a significant and central position in the Indian democratic political system.²⁴ It enjoys extensive powers and performs various functions to fulfil its constitutional role. The Parliament is the supreme legislative body in India. The basic function of Parliament is to make laws. All bills require the approval of both Houses of Parliament and the President in order to become law.²⁵ Thus, the Indian Parliament is the cornerstone of Indian democracy, as it plays a vital role in the governance and democratic framework of India.

Political parties are essential for the functioning of modern democratic governance.²⁶ Political parties play a crucial role in the functioning of Parliament, especially the Lok Sabha. It can be mentioned here that the Parliament's vitality, growing sobriety, and inclusive capacity are largely attributed to the vibrancy of its party system.²⁷ Elections became an essential component of democracy.²⁸ The primary concern of the framers of the Indian Constitution was to provide representative

²¹ Padma Charan Dhal, *op.cit*, p. 13.

²² *Ibid*, p.1.

²³ Ram Prakash Sharma. (1963). *The Future of Democracy in India*. Ambala Cantt: The Indian Publications. p.9.

²⁴ M. Laxmikanth. (2020). *Indian Polity*. Chennai: McGraw Hill Education (India) Private Limited. p.22.1.

²⁵ Digital Sansad. *Legislation*. <https://sansad.in/ls/legislation/introduction>. Accessed on 22nd May, 2025.

²⁶ V.M. Sirsikar & L. Fernandes, *op.cit*, p. (v)

²⁷ B.L. Shankar & Valerian Rodrigues. (2014). *The Indian Parliament: A Democracy at Work*. New Delhi: Oxford University. p.10.

²⁸ Ram Prakash Sharma, *op.cit*, p.11.

government while preserving national unity.²⁹ India adopted the electoral system, which was based on the British model. As a result, India has adopted universal adult suffrage since it became a Republic nation in 1950.³⁰ The rationale for introducing adult suffrage was to preserve national unity and integrity, to eradicate class distinctions, foster enlightenment, and enhance the welfare and quality of life for the common man.³¹

Nowadays, Indian democracy has fallen into a cycle of formidable challenges. The Indian lacks political awareness, politicians exhibit dishonesty and a lack of commitment to the majority's welfare, the court is occasionally prejudiced, and press freedom is compromised. Indian democracy is in its infantile stage and is yet to establish a solid basis. Indian democracy has several problems and contradictory agendas.³² Indian democracy faces challenges from both internal and external sources. These include education, women's problems, student politics, human rights, leadership, and the architecture of political institutions, which influence both national and local politics. Other factors include caste issues, environmental policies, long-term investment in the economy by foreigners, etc. The democratic governance system is experiencing decay due to increases corruption, dynastic politics, malpractice, petty debates, and criminals being elected as representatives to make laws. Moreover, people face corruption in elections, a decline in public morality, populist welfare schemes at the expense of the nation's economy, biased media, and a bureaucratic system that is distant from the basic concerns of ordinary citizens.³³

Over the past seven decades, Indian democracy has faced numerous challenges, with many viewing its current survival as a remarkable achievement. India's civilizational entity and deep spiritual core may have been overlooked, influencing its people and leaders and motivating them towards higher action. Despite

²⁹ Rajeev Bhargava. (2002). Democratic Vision of a New Republic India, 1950. In Francine R. Frankel, Zoya Hasan, Rajeev Bhargava and Balveer Arora (Ed.), *Transforming India: Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy* (1st ed, pp. 26-59). New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

³⁰ David Butler, Ashok Lahiri and Prannoy Roy. (1997). India Decides: Elections 1952-1995. In Partha Chatterjee (Ed.), *State and Politics in India* (1st ed., pp.125-176). New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

³¹ Anand Ballah Kafaltiya. (2007). *Democracy and Election Laws*. New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd. p.39.

³² Padma Charan Dhal, *op.cit*, p.9.

³³ Lancy Lobo & Jayesh Shah, *op.cit*, p.2.

the dark crisis, rays of hope have suddenly emerged, guiding the country and society forward.³⁴ India's democratic experience is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that defies conventional categorizations of success or failure. India's democratic experience demonstrates the importance of strengthening procedural democracy for substantializing democracy. In the meantime, continual efforts are needed to expand beyond procedural democracy in the realm of ideas and practices.³⁵

1.3 Profile of Mizoram

Mizoram, previously known as the Lushai Hills or Mizo Hills, is located in the southernmost corner of North-East India. It covers an area of 21,081 square kilometres and is bounded on the north by Assam and Manipur on the east, south-east by Myanmar (Burma) and on the west by Tripura and Bangladesh. It shares 404 km and 318 km long international borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh, respectively.³⁶ The state is divided into 11 administrative districts, namely Aizawl, Lunglei, Siahla, Champhai, Kolasib, Serchhip, Lawngtlai, Mamit, Khawzawl, Hnahthial and Saitual. Aizawl is the capital city of Mizoram.³⁷

The Mizos were known as Lushai by the colonial administrators, as the majority of the sub-tribe belong to the Lushei or Lushai clan. The word 'Mizo' simply means 'highlander' or 'Zo people'.³⁸ The origin of the Mizos, like many other tribes in the North Eastern Indian is shrouded in mystery. The Mizos are believed to have originated from a Mongoloid wave that migrated from China and later moved out to their present habitat. It is possible that the Mizos originated from Shinlung or Chhinlungsan, located on the banks of the river Yalung in China. They first settled in the Shan State and moved to the Kabaw Valley, to Khampat and then to the Chin Hills in the middle of the 16th century. The Kukis were the earliest Mizos to migrate to India.

³⁴ C.K. Jain. (Ed). (1993). *Triumph of Democracy: An Overview of World Parliaments*. New Delhi: CBS Publishers & Distributors. p.445

³⁵ Rajendra Vora & Suhas Palshikar. (2004). *Indian Democracy: Meanings and Practices*. New Delhi: Sage Publications. p.29.

³⁶ Directorate of Economics and Statistics. (2016). *Statistical Handbook Mizoram-2022*. Mizoram: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Mizoram. p.(xi).

³⁷ Mizoram NIC. *Aizawl District: Tourism*. <https://aizawl.nic.in/tourism/>. Accessed on 29th August, 2025.

³⁸ Sukdhev Singh Chib. (1984). *North-Eastern India*. New Delhi: Ess Ess Publications. p.300.

The second batch of immigrants were called New Kukis. The Lushais were the last Mizo tribes to migrate to India. The Mizo history in the 18th and 19th centuries was marked by numerous tribal raids and retaliatory security expeditions.³⁹

Prior to the British annexation of the Lushai Hills, chieftainship was the only form of government. Every village was ruled and controlled by the chief. The chiefs were the supreme rulers in their territories. The institution of chieftainship was deeply ingrained in Mizo culture, tradition and customary law. The chief was the head of the village.⁴⁰ The institution of chieftainship in the Lushai Hills was hereditary in nature, and each village was a unit of administration under a chief called '*Lal*'. The British annexed the Lushai Hills in 1890. The British were interested to see that every village was a complete unit of administration independently run by the chief of a village. Therefore, the chiefs continue to hold office under the British supervision and then run an indirect administration.⁴¹

During the period, Christian missionaries entered the Lushai Hills, and they introduced western education. The Lushai Hills district was prohibited from any kind of political activity. Within two to three decades, the introduction of formal education led to significant political awakening in the district. Since the 1920s, educated individuals in the district developed an ethno-political consciousness. From the early 1930s, the Lushai people became aware of the political deprivation caused by the repressive colonial. Besides, the young Mizo graduates emphasized the need for a united front to fight for their rights. As a result, a socio-cultural organization known as the Young Lushai Association (YLA) was established in 1935.⁴² The YLA was later changed to Young Mizo Association (YMA) in 1947. During the period, the YLA actively discussed political issues, as there was no other social or political organization

³⁹ Mizoram NIC. *Mizoram at a Glance*. <https://mizoram.nic.in/about/history.htm>. Accessed on 29th August, 2025.

⁴⁰ K.M. Zakhuma. (2001). *Political Development in Mizoram from 1946 to 1989: A study with special reference to Political Parties in Mizoram*. Aizawl: Zakhuma. p.35.

⁴¹ L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima & Lal Lawmzuali. (2015). *Government and Politics of Mizoram*. Guwahati: Scientific Book Centre. p.14.

⁴² *Ibid*, p.124.

apart from the church.⁴³ During that time, Vanlawma (a matriculate, brilliant and one of the educated Mizo available in those days)⁴⁴ approached the YLA leaders to convert the YLA into a political association, but the YLA did not agree.⁴⁵

Since the conversion of YLA into a political party was not possible, Vanlawma and Dahrawka conceived the idea of forming a political party. As a result, the first political party, i.e., the Mizo Union, was established in the Lushai Hills on 9th April, 1946. The main objective was the abolition of chieftainship in the district. Initially, R. Vanlawma, an educated Mizo, christened the name of the party as the 'Mizo Common People Union', but it was later changed to 'Mizo Commoner's Union'. Finally, it was named as the 'Mizo Union' (MU), by dropping the word 'commoners' as the word 'commoners' was objected by the chief.⁴⁶ Consequently, the second political party i.e., the United Mizo Freedom Organisation (UMFO) was formed on 5th July, 1947. The original objective was to join Burma with maximum possible autonomy for the Mizo. The party also wanted to retain chieftainship, and it became popular among the chiefs and the pro-independence sections of the Mizo society.⁴⁷ Thirdly, the Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU) was formed as a result of the All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) held at Tura, Meghalaya in 1954. The conference resolved to demand for a separate hill state comprising of all the hill districts of Assam.⁴⁸

Later on, different regional political parties as well as national parties came up in the Lushai Hills District (the present Mizoram) with different objectives and visions for the people of Mizoram. Among them, the formation of Congress (I) and the Mizo National Front (MNF) is significant, as they are still relevant in the electoral politics of Mizoram. The Congress (I) was established in the Lushai Hills on 10th August, 1961. The Congress (I) is the oldest existing political party in Mizoram. The

⁴³ Zarzosanga. (2024). *Political Parties in Mizoram: A case study of the Mizo National Front*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. p.42.

⁴⁴ P. Lalnithanga. (2006). *Political Developments in Mizoram*. Aizawl: Author. p.8

⁴⁵ L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima & Lal Lawmzuali, *op.cit*, p.124.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.124.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.135.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.135.

MNF as a political party was formed on 22nd October, 1961 at Aizawl. However, insurgency broke out in the Lushai Hills as the MNF launched an independence movement for Mizoram on 1st March, 1966. As a result, the MNF was declared unlawful under Rule 32 of the Defence of India Rules, 1962.⁴⁹ The Mizo Hills District Council under the Assam government was elevated to the status of Union Territory on 21st January, 1972. During the period, the ‘Memorandum of Settlement’ (popularly known as the Mizoram Peace Accord) was signed between the MNF and the Government of India on 30th June, 1986 which put an end to the 20 years of insurgency.⁵⁰ Mizoram attained statehood status and became the 23rd state of the Indian Union on 20th February, 1987.

The electoral politics of the Lushai Hills began in 1946 with the establishment of the District Conference. It was initiated by A.R.H. Mac Donald, the then-Superintendent of the Lushai Hills. As a result, the Advisory Council was established on 24th January, 1947. Later, the District Advisory Council was upgraded to the status of District Council, and the first Lushai Hills District Council election was held on 4th January, 1952. The Lushai Hills District in Aizawl was inaugurated by Bishnuram Medhi, the Chief Minister of Assam on 26th April, 1952. The Lushai Hills District was changed to the Mizo Hills District under the Lushai Hills District (Change of Name) Act, 1954.⁵¹ It is important to mention that the Mizo Hills District had been allotted three seats in the Assam Legislative Assembly since 1952.⁵²

The Mizo Hills District Council was elevated to the status of Union Territory in 1972. As a result, the first Mizoram Union Territory Assembly Election was held on 18th April, 1972.⁵³ It can be noted here that the Mizo Hills District got their first representation in the Indian Parliament in the 5th Lok Sabha term (1971-1977).⁵⁴ Later on, with the signing of the Memorandum of Settlement in 1986, Mizoram was granted

⁴⁹ L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima & Lal Lawmzuali, *op.cit.*, p.155.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.190.

⁵¹ R. Vanlawma. (1989). *Ka Ram leh Kei (My Country and I)*. Aizawl: M.C. Lalrinthanga. p.238.

⁵² Mizoram Legislative Assembly. *Brief history of Mizoram Legislative Assembly*.

<https://www.mizoramassembly.in/page/history>. Accessed on 23rd October, 2024.

⁵³ V. Venkata Rao, H. Thansanga & Niru Hazarika. (1986). *A Century of Government and Politics in North East India, Volume III-Mizoram*. New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd. p.102.

⁵⁴ Mizoram NIC. About Government. *Member of Parliament*.

<https://mizoram.nic.in/gov/formermploksabha.htm>. Accessed on 23rd October, 2024.

statehood in 1987. The first Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election was held on 16th February, 1987.⁵⁵ The Election Commission of India regularly held the Mizoram State Legislative Assembly elections, with the latest one taking place in 2023. [Details on elections are discussed in Chapter-3].

1.4 Profile of Meghalaya

Meghalaya is one of the seven sisters situated in the North-Eastern region of India, bounded by Assam on the north and east and by Bangladesh in the south and west. It has a total geographical area of 22,429 square kilometres. It shares 496 KM long international boundary with Bangladesh in the south and west.⁵⁶ The state is divided into 12 administrative districts, such as East Khasi Hills District, West Khasi Hills District, South West Khasi Hills District, Ri Bhoi District, West Jaintia Hills District, East Jaintia Hills District, East Garo Hills District, West Garo Hills District, South West Garo Hills District, South Garo Hills District, and Eastern West Khasi Hills District. Shillong in the East Khasi Hills District is the state capital of Meghalaya.⁵⁷

Meghalaya, also known as ‘Abode of Clouds’ is a tribal state primarily inhabited by the three main tribes—Khasis, Jaintias, and Garos which account for 89% of the total population. Other tribes in the state include the Kochs, Hajong, Rabhas, Mikirs, and others who are also the natives of the state. The Khasis, who inhabited the eastern part of Meghalaya, were immigrants from the Cambodian region and the Mekong riverbanks. Their language is an Austro-Asiatic type of the Far East. The Garos inhabiting the western part of Meghalaya are believed to be Tibeto-Burman races. Their language closely resembles that of Tibetans, leading to the belief that they have drifted into Eastern India and Burma through Tibet. The Khasi, Garo, and Jaintia

⁵⁵ P. Lalnithanga, *op.cit.*, p.180.

⁵⁶ Meghalaya Biodiversity Board. *About Meghalaya*. <https://megbiodiversity.nic.in/about-meghalaya>. Accessed on 29th August, 2025.

⁵⁷ Meghalaya Government Portal. *About Meghalaya*. <https://meghalaya.gov.in/about>. Accessed on 29th August, 2025.

communities are matrilineal, consisting of exogamous clans, with women holding property in the state.⁵⁸

Like many of the Indian tribal communities, the tribes of Meghalaya also had the tribal political system before the arrival of the British. The traditional chief of the Khasi Hills is known as *Syiem*, *Doloi* in the Jaintia Hills and *Nokma* in the Garo Hills. In the Khasi Hills, there were 24 Khasi chieftains in 1853, with the Rajas of Cherra, Myllium, Maram, Khyrim, Nusting, and Nishping being the most significant. The British government did not interfere with their administration. Traditions dictate that the Khasi states formed through the voluntary amalgamation of villages or groups of villages. The head of the state was the *syiem* or the chief. The *syiem* had minimal power and was typically held by a single family. They were expected to work in collaboration with the Durbar, made up of *Myntries* (Ministers).⁵⁹

In the Jaintia Hills, there were 23 *Dolois* and *Sardars*. Each *Sardar* held authority over many villages and exercised jurisdiction over minor civil and criminal cases. The *Dolois* were sometimes referred to as *Pattors*. Each *Pattor* was accompanied by priests. The priest first handled all matters, with the possibility of appeal to the *Pattor*, then to the *Doloi*, and finally the Governor General's Agent. In some places, the chief wielded absolute authority, while in others, his powers were limited.⁶⁰ Thus, the powers and functions of the chief in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills were complex. According to V. Venkata Rao, the Khasi chiefs (*syiems*) were neither entirely hereditary nor elective, and it was a mixture of authoritarian and republican systems. In the Garo Hills, the *Nokma* was the earliest political system that existed among the Garos before the annexation of the hills by the British. The *Nokma* occupies an important position in the village but does not exercise absolute powers or superior status. They can be dismissed if they fail to fulfil their duties.⁶¹ Therefore, the powers

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ V. Venkata Rao. (1976). *A Century of Tribal Politics in North East India (1874-1947)*. New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd. p. 113.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.113

⁶¹ V. Venkata Rao, Barrister Pakem & Niru Hazarika. (1984). *A Century of Government and Politics in North East India, Volume II- Meghalaya*. New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd.p.72.

and functions of the chief in the Garo Hills were limited as compared to other chiefs in tribal areas.

Before the arrival of the British, indigenous people in North-East India had unique political systems. As stated above, the Khasi had a three-tier governance system with villages, raids, and *syiemships*, while the Jaintia were ruled by the *Dolois* and had a titular king in Jaintiapur. The Garo's traditional political system appeared immature and not institutionalized beyond village boundaries.⁶² The studies focus mainly on the inhabitant areas of the Khasi Hills, as they are the largest population among the three communities in the state. Traditionally, a Khasi state was governed by an oligarchy headed by a 'syiem' who was elected by a closed group of people.⁶³ Prior to the advent of the British in the Khasi Hills, the Khasi states exercised independent control over their respective territories. The people of Khasi Hills had limited contact with other communities living beyond the boundaries of the district.⁶⁴ However, in 1765, the British acquired Sylhet from the Moguls, becoming next-door neighbours to the Khasis. The Khasis and Sylhet did not have a friendly relation. The Khasi states marked these relations with contact, trade, incursions, resistance to restrictions and impositions, and ultimately, insurrection against the British.⁶⁵

The British classified the twenty-five Khasi states as semi-independent and dependent, with the dependent states being inferior due to their restoration as gifts after conquest. The British subjugated most Khasi principalities by 1834, resulting in new political arrangements for the Khasi Hills. The Agent to the Governor General was placed under political supervision, and a separate Political Agency was established in 1835. The British initially sought indirect rule through subsidiary alliances, and political relations between the Khasi states and the British were documented through

⁶² Gurudas Das. (2023). Social Change and Traditional Tribal Political Systems in Meghalaya. In M.N. Karna, L.S. Gassah & C.J. Thomas (Ed.), *Power to People in Meghalaya: Sixth Schedule and the 73rd Amendment*. (Reprinted 2023, pp.32-49. New Delhi: Regency Publications.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p.3.

⁶⁴ R. Gopalakrishnan. (1995). *Meghalaya: Land and People*. New Delhi: Omsons Publications. p.33.

⁶⁵ V. Venkata Rao, Barrister Pakem & Niru Hazarika, *op.cit*, p.4.

official documents like *sanads*⁶⁶ and *parwanas*⁶⁷. The Khasi Hills territorial contours changed over time and were influenced by British government acts and regulations. Two distinct administration categories emerged in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. The first was the Khasi and Jaintia Hills district, created in 1854. The district was administered by British officers and later by the Deputy Commissioner. The second was the administration of the 25 Khasi states, which had direct relations with the British government. The jurisdiction of the newly created district (Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills) was transferred to the Commissioner of Assam in 1874.⁶⁸ In 1874, Assam became a new province, which was separated from Bengal. Shillong provided sanatoriums to the British and served as capital for both the British and Assam governments.⁶⁹ The Chief Commissionership of Assam included the five districts of Brahmaputra Valley, Naga Hills, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Garo Hills, Goalpara, Cachar, and Sylhet.⁷⁰ Thus, the British suzerainty was established in the Khasi Hills in 1838, followed by the Jaintia Hills in 1862 and the Garo Hills in 1882, resulting in the administration under Assam's Chief Commissioner.⁷¹

The twentieth century further witnessed a realignment of the province of Assam, which in turn resulted in the recategorization of its districts. The appointment of various commissions to assess India's development in the late 1920s sparked interest in the Khasi Hills. The emerging Khasi elite engaged in dialogue with the people and British government when the independence of India was nearby. Political leaders increased their political activity during this period, striving for a unified political destiny for the Khasi and Jaintia Hills.⁷² Under the Government of India Act 1935, both the Khasi-Jaintia Hills and the Garo Hills were notified as the Partially

⁶⁶ A 'sanad' is a document granted to Khasi chiefs, confirming their position and authority, while imposing obligations in return for British protection. 'Sanad' is also used as recognition letter by the village headmen from the Hima.

⁶⁷ An official order or warrant issued by a court or authority is known as 'parwana'.

⁶⁸ Charles Reuben Lyngdoh (Ed). (2016). *Revisiting Traditional Institutions in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. p.8.

⁶⁹ Dhiren Bhagwati. (2007). *Meghalaya: Issues and Legacies of its Early Years*. Guwahati: DVS Publishers. p.107.

⁷⁰ Charles Reuben Lyngdoh (Ed), *op.cit*, p.8.

⁷¹ Venkata Rao, Barrister Pakem & Niru Hazarika, *op.cit*, p.3.

⁷² *Ibid*, p.8.

Excluded Areas,⁷³ which were under limited control of the provincial Legislature. In 1920, James Joy Mohan Nichols Roy was elected as MLA in the Assam Legislative Assembly. He addresses the political and administrative concerns of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills district in the Assam legislature. Over the next two decades, the educated Khasi gentry aimed to plan future progress for the Khasi states. During this period, two significant political developments occurred in the Khasi Hills. Firstly, the Khasi National Durbar (KND) was established on September 4, 1923, as the first socio-cultural organization to unite all Khasi states. It addressed socio-cultural and political issues like land rights, residency rights, and ancestral property rights. Secondly, the Federated Khasi States (FKS) was set up on December 16, 1934. It was established to forge closer relations among the Khasi states and to enhance relations between the Khasi states and the British government.⁷⁴

The origin of political parties in Meghalaya can be traced back to the formation of socio-cultural and political organizations in the state. For instance, the Jaintia Durbar (in the Jaintia Hills region) was founded as a socio-cultural organization in 1900. The organization was the oldest in the hills of North East India. The establishment of the Khasi National Durbar (KND) prompted the Jaintia leaders to utilize the Jaintia Durbar as a political platform. The main object of the Jaintia Durbar was to revive the Sutnga State (historic Jaintia Kingdom) and elevate it to the status of Khasi State. Later on, by engaging in more political activities, it became a component of the Eastern Indian Tribal Union (EITU) in 1957. It contested the general elections to the Assam Legislative Assembly and the Khasi-Jaintia Hills District Council election. In 1960, it became a constituent part of the All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC).⁷⁵

The Khasi National Durbar (KND) [in the Khasi Hills region] was the first political organization to look after the interests of the Khasis. Initially, all the eminent and well-known educated Khasi leaders held a meeting to establish unity and

⁷³ In Partially Excluded Areas, the Provincial Govt. was given full discretion in applying or refusing to apply new enactments. They are represented in the Provincial Legislature and they can send representation in the Assam Legislative Assembly. (V. Venkata Rao, *op.cit*, p.80).

⁷⁴ Charles Reuben Lyngdoh, *op.cit*, p.9.

⁷⁵ V. Venkata Rao, Barrister Pakem & Niru Hazarika, *op.cit*, p.189.

cooperation among the Khasi states and established a common organization for all the Khasi states. The meeting was held on 4th September 1923. It was attended by all the heads of the Khasi states and their *myntries* and they decided to form an organization called the Khasi National Durbar (KND). The objectives of the Durbar were to foster Khasi unity, enhance Khasi administration and safeguard their interests. It also seeks to protect the Khasis customs and traditions and improve their economy. While working for the welfare of the Khasi people and by participating in a greater range of political endeavours, the Khasi National Durbar demanded the formation of a Hill State in 1956. It also set up candidates to contest elections to the Assam Legislative Assembly. In recent times, it has not been involved in any partisan politics.⁷⁶

Prior to 1937, there was no political activity in the Garo Hills. The introduction of constitutional amendments in 1937 required a political organization to organize public opinion in the Garo Hills. Therefore, it was felt that a political organization was necessary for providing social services, but little was done in this direction. After World War-II was over, the Garo elite returned to the Garo Hills with the idea of forming an association for the Garos. In 1945, Singdam Sangma (an employee of the Garo Baptist Mission Centre) and Emonsingh Sangma established an organization and named it as the Garo National Conference to develop strategies for advancing the welfare of the Garos.⁷⁷ In 1948, it was renamed as the Garo National Council (GNC). It was involved in the formation of the All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC).⁷⁸ Later on, different regional political parties were formed as an offshoot or as a factional group of the other political parties. Although strong regional parties dominate the electoral politics in Meghalaya, various national parties also establish their presence and significantly influence the state's electoral landscape. [Details on political parties are discussed in Chapter-2].

It is important to mention that Meghalaya was part of Assam with a single Legislative Council under the Government of India Act, 1919. During the period, the

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p.189.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p.191.

⁷⁸ Esther M. Tariang. (2022). *Glimpses on Political Developments in Meghalaya*. Chennai: Notion Press Media Pvt. Ltd. p.87.

present state (Meghalaya) had one representative known as the ‘Shillong General Urban Constituencies,’ and the first election was held in November 1920.⁷⁹ In the post-independent India, the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India was incorporated, and the District Councils were established in the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills and the Garo Hills in 1952. Later, the Jaintia Hills was separated from the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills, and a separate District Council was established in Jowai in 1964.⁸⁰

Meghalaya became an Autonomous State on 2nd April, 1970 under the Assam Reorganization (Meghalaya) Act 1969, consisting of the former Garo Hills District and the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills District of Assam. Within two years, it was granted full-fledged statehood status and became the 21st state of the Indian Union. At present, there are three Autonomous District Councils in the state of Meghalaya, namely the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council, the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council and the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council.⁸¹ The first Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly was held on 9th March, 1972. [Details on elections are discussed in Chapter-3].

1.5 Review of Literature

Relevant and important literature from books and articles has been collected for the review of literature. The review of literature has been given in chronological order. They are as follows: -

V.Venkata Rao, Barrister Pakem and Niru Hazarika (1984) in their book ‘*A Century of Government and Politics in North East India, Vol.2 (Meghalaya: 1874 to 1983)*’ discuss about the annexation of Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills and their suzerainty in the hill areas. The authors critically examine the demand for a separate hill state by the leaders of the hills area. As a result, Meghalaya was granted Autonomous state and was later upgraded to full-fledged statehood in 1972. The

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p.27.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p.13.

⁸¹ Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council. *Home (About KHADC)*. https://khadc.nic.in/index_more.html. Accessed on 22nd October, 2024.

authors analysed the features of Legislative Assembly, the administration of justice, the local administration and the working and functions of District Councils.

A Century of Government and Politics in North East India, Vol.III (Mizoram) written by V.Venkata Rao, H. Thansanga and Niru Hazarika (1986) studies the constitutional development of the Lushai Hills (the present Mizoram). They point out that the history of the Lushai Hills before the British annexation remains obscure. The authors studied the constitutional development since 1947. They argue that the emergence of political consciousness among the Lushais led to the formation of the first political party (Mizo Union) in 1946. The book discusses the evolution, growth and nature of political parties in Mizoram, the functioning of District Council in the Mizo Hills District, the administration of justice, etc. They also analyse the outbreak of insurgency in the Mizo Hills District which was later attributed to the creation of the state of Mizoram.

‘Regional Political Parties in North East India’ written by L.S. Gassah (1992) points out that India is one of the largest democracies in the world. In a democracy, political parties are allowed to exist and operate as legal and legitimate organizations, both at the national and regional levels. The author argues that political parties have become indispensable in the working of a representative form of government. He asserted that the establishment of many regional political parties in Northeast India began solely as pressure groups. According to him, few regional parties were formed in the North East India before independence. He found that ethnic politics is one of the major concerns of any regional political party in North East India.

Surinder K. Shukla (1994) in his article ‘Democracy in India: Issues and Challenges’ argued that India, the largest democracy in the world, has historically little background of democracy. He stated that the social peculiarities of India include factors such as caste, regionalism, language differences and religious pluralism. Social conflict, sometimes violent and at other times dormant, largely formed the background for the transition of democratic institutions in India. The transitory phase is a phase of turmoil, largely a by-product of the attempts at modernization. Despite the numerous trials and tribulations, India has proved to be a shining example of democracy.

Autonomous Councils in North-East India: Theory and Practice written by David Stuligross (1999) divides the Autonomous Councils in North-East India into three sections. The first section studies how a tribal community 'ought' to be incorporated into a unified Indian state: assimilation of individual tribe's people into a common community and integration of tribal communities into a multicultural Indian nation. The second section focuses on the Autonomous District Councils under the Sixth Schedule, through which elected members administer justice, revenue, education, and economic development over substantial portions of North East India. The book also evaluates the developmental effects of the councils from the economic, social, and political criteria.

'Political Development in Mizoram from 1946 to 1989: A study with special reference to Political Parties in Mizoram' written by K.M. Zakhuma (2001) argues that from the early 1930s, Mizos became politically conscious. The Mizos were inflicted by the repressive system of colonial rule and the educated youth keenly felt the need to form a united front to fight for their rights. As a result, the first political party (the Mizo Union) in Lushai Hills (the present Mizoram) was formed on 9th April, 1946. The author analyses the formation of the United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO), Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU), Mizo National Front (MNF), Congress Party, People's Conference, etc., which play a significant role in the political development of Mizoram.

Padma Charan Dhal (2002) in his book *Democracy in India: Constraints and Opportunities* study the evolution of democracy in India. He argues that democracy in India is a product of a combination of contexts and processes. According to him, the growth and sustenance of democracy in India owes its origin to British imperialism, and American democracy too has an effect on the working of democracy in India. The author analyses the structure and working of democracy in India by highlighting its constraints and projecting its opportunities.

Sujit Kumar Dutta (2002) in his book *'Functioning of Autonomous District Councils in Meghalaya'* argues that the existence of Autonomous District Councils was not the first choice of the Khasi people in Meghalaya. The author discusses the

evolution and history of the Autonomous District Councils in Meghalaya. The author points out that the District Councils have been functioning as an important institution in promoting and protecting the tribal people. It also discusses various recommendations and suggestions to make the District Council a true representative local government at the grassroots level.

Javeed Alam (2004) in his book '*Who Wants Democracy*' discusses the nature of democracy in India. He explores the peculiarities, its constitutive characteristics and its difference with the West. He stresses that the inauguration of democracy in India was the result of a covenant. The author analyses the struggles of oppressed communities, Muslims and women who have critically shaped the nature of democracy, redefined its meaning and structured the peculiar political culture of the operation.

H. Srikanth (2005) in his article '*Prospects of Liberal Democracy in Meghalaya: A Study of Civil Society's Response to KSU-Led Agitation*' examines the Khasi Students' Union (KSU) movement to uphold the Khasi identity by promoting Khasi language, culture and tradition. The KSU promised to fight against infiltration by outsiders and ensure that the children of the soil control the economy, polity and land in Meghalaya. The author argues that the aspirations and the struggles of the Khasis, Jaintias and Garos to have a separate state for the hill communities bore fruit with the formation of Meghalaya in the year 1972. He concludes that the press in Shillong played a commendable role in reporting to the public the day-to-day developments during the KSU agitation.

David Held (2006) in his book '*Models of Democracy*' analyses the regimes of all kinds. He writes that the authorities describe themselves as democracies, but they are substantially different from one to another throughout the world. The book can be classified into two parts. The first part sets out four classic models of democracy—classical democracy in ancient Athens, republican conception of a self-governing community, liberal democracy and the Marxist conception of direct democracy. The second part explores more recent models like elitist democracy, pluralism, legal

democracy, participatory democracy and deliberative democracy. The author argues that the development of democracy encompasses a long and much contested history.

‘District Councils in the Mizo Hills’ written by H.C. Thanhanga (2007) argues that before the Lushai Hills were taken over by the British in 1890, each village was administered by a chief. He claims that chieftainship was an ancient political institution set up among the Mizo. The institution of the chief was more than 200 years old and it was abolished in 1954. The author examines the history of the District Councils and its unique features. It is an organized system of democratic traditions of the Mizo in the district of Mizo Hills. The author also analyses the administration of justice under the chieftainship and the District Councils at the village, sub-divisional and District Council levels.

‘The Concept of Democracy’ written by Han Shuifa and Hu Jinglei (2008) argues that no political community can be held together without government. Among the various types of government that have existed in history, democracy is one of the most essential. The authors mentioned that the people are integrated with the power of and right to governing and cannot be comprehended without reference to this power and right. Citizens are the cornerstone of democracy, as power ultimately rests with the people. Voting and public participation are crucial in shaping policies and providing legitimacy to governments. He argues that democracy flourishes when citizens are knowledgeable, accountable, and actively engaged in the political process.

‘Evolution of District Council Autonomy in Mizoram’ written by Jangkhongam Dunglei (2010) argues that the status of Autonomous District Council under the provision of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India is a unique feature of Indian democracy. The author mentions that the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (PLRC) was created under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India as a result of the demand for political autonomy by the Pawis and Lakher, who inhabit the southern part of Lushai Hills. The book discusses the upgradation of Lushai Hills into a Union Territory and the trifurcation of the PLRC into three Regional Councils. Later on, the three Regional Councils were upgraded to the status of Autonomous District Councils on 29th April, 1972. As a result, there are three Autonomous District

Councils in Mizoram, namely the Lai Autonomous District Council, the Mara Autonomous District Council and the Chakma Autonomous District Council.

R.K. Satapathy's (2014) 'Meghalaya's Fluid Party Alignments' in Suhas Palshikar, K.C. Suri and Yogendra Yadav's edited book *'Party Competition in Indian States: Electoral Politics in Post-Congress Polity'* argues that Meghalaya has been beset by political instability and frequent changes of government from the time of its formation as a separate state in 1972. This is true from the fact that the state has seen twenty-two governments and Chief Ministership rotating among eleven leaders in the last forty years (1972-2012). According to the book, Meghalaya is one of the few states in India where coalition and instability have been the norm rather than exception since 1972. Except for the first state election, all other elections have resulted in coalition governments, and only one coalition government has completed the full term.

Kailash Chandra Das (2015) in his article *'Assembly Elections in Meghalaya: A Historical Insight'* discusses the electoral history of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly from its very first State Legislative Assembly elections in 1972 until 2013. The author argued that instability has been the norm in the electoral politics of the hill state since its creation from Assam. He stated that the electoral politics of Meghalaya have been characterized by instability and fractured verdicts, except for a clear verdict in the first Assembly election, 1972. Moreover, the fractured verdict has led to a coalition government since the second Assembly election till date. It also focuses on the post-election development and government formation. It also examines the performance of various political parties in assembly elections, evaluating their seat and vote share, and drawing inferences from the results of all elections marked by fractured mandates.

Lalrintluanga's (2016) 'The Genesis and Functioning of the Mizo District Council' in Jangkhongam Doungel's edited book *'Autonomy Movement and the Sixth Schedule in North East India'* stated that the Mizo District Council came into existence because of the political consciousness among the Mizo during the pre-independent and post-independent eras. The author argues that the inclusion of the Sixth Schedule in the Constitution of India marked a significant milestone in establishing a democratic

institution for the Mizo, who were a minority group in the state of Assam. At the same time, the Mizo District Council could not function smoothly to fulfil the aspiration of the people due to famine, MNF's armed revolt, internal conflict, defections of the Members of the Council, etc. However, the Mizo District Council established grassroots democracy in Mizoram and it safeguards the Mizo customs and traditions through legislation.

'Revisiting Traditional Institutions in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills' by Charles Reuben Lyngdoh (2016) is an edited book related to traditional institutions. It discusses the fact that the traditional institutions in the Khasi-Jaintia society are 'living entities' that have exists for centuries. The book argues that traditional institutions were operated within a specific territory and were managed by the traditional head or chief independently. They performed legislative, executive, judicial, and religious functions in accordance with local traditions, customs, and customary laws and usages. The book focuses on the structure, functions, and relevance of traditional institutions, which are currently in conflict with other constitutionally mandated administration systems. It also explores the dynamics of power and functions between state government, Autonomous District Councils, and traditional institutions in Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

J.K. Patnaik (2017) in his article *'Autonomous District Councils and the Governor's Role in the Northeast India'* argued that with the adoption of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution, the office of the Governor in the North Eastern Region (NER) figures prominently in the working of the ADCs in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram under Articles 244 (2) and 275 (1). The article describes the historical as well as constitutional origin of the ADCs in North East India. It also analyses the relevant constitutional provisions per se vis-à-vis the discretionary powers of the Governor under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution. He argues that one of the important dimensions of the Sixth Schedule areas is the relationship between the state government and the ADCs. The Governor is obviously a key player and his discretionary power of the Governor provides salience to the whole architecture of the ADC.

Lallianchhunga (2018) in his article '*A Comparative Study of Village Councils in Mizoram and Panchayati Raj Institutions: A Critical Appraisal*' discusses the comparative analysis of Village Councils in Mizoram along with the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI). The author argues that the traditional chieftainship was replaced in 1954 by the Village Councils in Mizoram, serving as the lowest administrative units at the village level. He stated that the functioning of village councils including administrative systems, planning, local development implementation and administration of justice is comparable to systems adopted by most civilized societies. The author stated that since the late 1990s, there have been persistent demands to introduce the Panchayati Raj System in Mizoram, as the state was exempt from the implementation of PRI. However, supporters and opponents of the PRI system agree on the necessity of implementing a dynamic democratic local self-government for the realization of local development. The author argues that the Village Councils along with Panchayati Raj Institutions must be transformed while maintaining their traditional uniqueness to receive financial grants to improve the social, economic, and political conditions of the villages in Mizoram.

Samuel Issacharoff (2018) in his article '*Democracy's Deficits*' argues that the era of democratic euphoria has ended with the rise of Islamic terrorism and the failure of the Arab Spring. While they served as cautionary tales, they did not pose a threat to the fundamental principles of democratic governance. The author examines the current moment of democratic uncertainty drawing from four central institutional challenges over the past few centuries. The four challenges include the accelerated decline of political parties and other institutional forms of popular engagement, the paralysis of the legislative branches, the loss of a sense of social cohesion and the decline in state competence. The author argues that the picture of democracy presented here is certainly somber, but it need not be funereal. The identified deficits in democratic governance are serious, but the advanced industrial democracies are sophisticated societies with great internal resources and they are significant sources of resilience.

'Indian Democracy: Contradictions and Reconciliations' by Arvind Sivaramakrishnan & Sudarsan Padmanabhan (2020) is an edited book contributed by

former Election Commissioners, campaigners for electoral reforms, academic analysts, and others with experience in Indian democracy systems and processes. The book provides a comprehensive overview of India's democracy, examining its theoretical foundations, institutional mechanisms, and political practices. It also provides a detailed analysis of the Constitution of India, which serves as a theoretical validation for democratic politics and a reflective and regulative ideal. It also talks about India's strong institutions and democratic values, which deal with problems like caste discrimination, language and ethnic identities, the divide between the majority and minority, gender bias, and different ideas about what democracy is. The book highlights improvements in electoral register maintenance, model code of conduct enforcement, electronic voting machines, and reduced violence and intimidation in recent decades. It also discusses that it strengthened Indian voter confidence in democratic processes.

Debasish Roy Chowdhury and John Keane (2021) in their book *'To Kill a Democracy: India's Passage to Despotism'* argued that India, renowned as the world's largest democracy is facing increasing concerns about its democratic health. The authors stated that India was once a shining example of democracy but is currently being tarnished by the destructive forces of populism. The authors emphasize that democracy encompasses more than elections and power separation, and they highlight the need to address the declining social foundations of Indian democracy. The authors study the dire consequences of power abuse and neglect in India while also serving as a global reflection. They pointed out that democracies that damage social foundations not only harm the spirit and substance of democracy but also lay the groundwork for despotism.

'The Shortest History of Democracy' by John Keane (2023) is a book dealing with historical forms of democracy—Assembly, Electoral, and Monitory. The author explores the history of democracy from Athens' assembly democracy to European-inspired electoral democracy, representative government, and current monitory democracy. The author provides a comprehensive overview of the history of democracy, including its origins in ancient Mesopotamia and its current challenges. It also links different types of government, asserting democracy as the constant provision

for a more equal world of well-being, openness, and diversity. The author argued that governments now face daily public scrutiny, making them the most complex and vibrant form of democracy yet, but they are not invulnerable. It also highlights the importance of democracy as a global ideal and its impact on shaping the world.

Susmita Sengupta (2023) in her article '*Meghalaya Assembly Elections 2023: Issues and Trends*' preview the Assembly Elections 2023. The author argued that Meghalaya, despite being a small state has continuously displayed political vibrancy. It analysed the dynamics of electoral politics in Meghalaya. The election manifestos of regional parties in Meghalaya reveal the ethnocentric aspects of regionalism and their political and economic programs. The author also mentioned that defections are increasing during election periods and ideology has not significantly influenced electoral dynamics in Meghalaya. She also argues that ethnicity has superseded development in the political landscape of Meghalaya.

Roluahpuia & Joseph K. Lalfakzuala (2024) in their article '*Beyond Anti-incumbency: Winds of Change in Mizoram*' discuss the trends in Mizoram State Assembly Elections in which the MNF and Congress dominated the political landscape, with the two parties typically rotating through a two-term cycle. The authors analyse the Assembly elections of 2023 and identify factors contributing to the rise of the ZPM party. They argued that the ZPM defeated the incumbent MNF with the slogan '*kalphung thar, mipui sawrkar*' (new system, people's government), and several voters saw the party as a catalyst for change. Meanwhile, the authors also point out that the MNF vote share declined by only 2.6%. They stated that the five-year term of the MNF was disruptive and the Mizo public sentiment, also known as the 'ZPM wave' was too strong to overcome. The authors analysed the decline of the Congress party, which ruled the state for the longest period, as it retained only one seat. The article discusses the impact of national politics on Mizoram, where the BJP won two seats, despite the unique context of the state. Furthermore, the Mizo's long history of political assertion is reaffirmed through the strong regional politics that inform the state's politics.

The above review of literature shows that there are many relevant literatures on democracy in India. However, there is no specific literature on the working of democracy in North East India. Further, there are literatures on elections but these literatures mainly focus on the electoral politics. They did not discuss about the process of elections in the sense that it excludes the issues of open, free and fair elections in these states. Similarly, the literatures on Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) deals mainly about the working and functions of the Autonomous District Councils. The writers on the subject did not deliberate on the issue of the distinct culture of the minority on which the ADCs are established. Therefore, the scholar studies the working of democracy in North East India with reference to Mizoram and Meghalaya so that it can contribute a new idea to the body of knowledge.

1.6 Statement of the Problem

Today, democracy is the most popular concept of government and is a way of life.⁸² One of the essential elements of democracy is that the decision makers are elected through periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and virtually every adult population is eligible to vote. There are supporters and critics on the working of democracy in India. Some argued that elections in India witness malpractices such as rigging, booth capturing, buying and selling of votes. The elections in India also experienced involvement and campaigning of unlawful organizations or personnel for a particular candidate or party in which they can influence the masses, manipulate the votes, etc.

In democracy, the rights of weaker sections of the society including the minorities are given prime importance. The majority population in the society, instead of promoting and protecting the minority rights, ignored the rights and privileges of the weaker section of the society. Some people claim that the rights of the weaker section of the society are suppressed and they do not enjoy their rights and status as provided by the constitution. At the same time, fundamental rights like the freedom of speech and expression and the freedom of press are questioned in the country. People expressing and sharing their views and opinions, which sometimes contrasted to the

⁸² Padma Charan Dhal, *op.cit*, p.2.

ruling party, leading to charges against them and making them victims. Sometimes, the controversial socio-political issues are not covered by the press as there are some forms of warnings, restrictions and limitations from the government agencies. That is why some of the political scientists believe that the essence of democracy is in decline and also face many challenges in the contemporary world.

Nowadays, Indian democracy has fallen into the trap of a vicious circle of challenges. Many people are not politically conscious, some leaders are dishonest and they are not committed to the welfare of the people, judiciary is sometimes biased, freedom of the press is jeopardized. In short, Indian democracy is passing through an infantile stage and it has not been able to stand on the foundation of democracy firmly. Besides, there are other challenges before Indian democracy. Political parties are one of the most essential institutions in democracy. However, it faces several challenges such as lack of inner democracy, corrupt party leaders, dynastic control, ideological weakness and less participation of women. Election is the essence of democracy and India face challenges in conducting elections. Some of the major issues include use of money and muscle power, fake voting, booth capturing, criminalization of politics, influence of caste and religion in politics, misuse of government machinery and biased media reports. Moreover, local democracy which is considered the foundation of democracy faces several challenges. Among them include inadequate financial resources, irregular elections, political interference, bureaucratic control and low public participation.

Mizoram and Meghalaya are not exception from the above challenges faced by the Indian democracy. The elections in Mizoram and Meghalaya were marked by buying and selling of votes, the influence of civil societies supporting specific candidates or parties, and the use of unlawful organizations to benefit individual candidates or parties in sensitive areas. Therefore, the scholar studies the working of democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya and compare them to understand the nature of democracy in these states.

1.7 Delimitation of Research

Democracy is a very vast subject. So, the present study focuses only on the role of political parties, elections and local democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya. The scholar analyses the role and contribution of the political parties in strengthening the workings of democracy in both the states. It also discusses the nature and process of elections in the states. The study also examines the working of local democracy in both the states as it constitutes the key ingredients of democracy. It analyses the functioning of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs), Municipalities, Village Councils and Local Council in the state of Mizoram. In the case of Meghalaya, it studies the working of Autonomous District Council, Municipalities and traditional institutions, namely *durbar* system and *syiemship*.

The rationale for selecting the two states—Mizoram and Meghalaya are: Firstly, these are the two most peaceful small states in the North Eastern region. Secondly, these states are dominated by Christianity and were also parts of the undivided Assam. Thirdly, both the states have three Autonomous District Councils each. It can be mentioned here that the scholar examines the working of democracy from the lens of comparative approach. It also analyses which states (Mizoram or Meghalaya) functions better in terms of democracy, as well as the similarities and differences between their systems. The study focuses on the period from 2018 to 2025.

1.8 Objectives of the Study

1. To study the working of democracy in North East India.
2. To analyse the working of political parties in Mizoram and Meghalaya.
3. To evaluate the nature and process of elections in these two states.
4. To examine the roles and functions of local government in both the states.
5. To compare the working of democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya.

1.9 Research Questions

1. What is the nature of democracy in North East India?
2. How political parties are working in Mizoram and Meghalaya?
3. How elections are conducted in Mizoram and Meghalaya?

4. What are the roles and functions of local government towards the working of democracy in both the states?
5. What are the similarities and differences between the functioning of democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya?

1.10 Methodology

The present study is qualitative in nature. It employed historical and descriptive methods. The study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data are collected through personal and telephonic interviews (details of interviewees are given in the bibliography). The scholar used unstructured and open-ended questions. Leaders of different political parties in Mizoram and Meghalaya are interviewed to understand the nature of the election and the role of political parties in strengthening democracy. The scholar interviewed 37 political leaders (29 from Mizoram and 18 from Meghalaya). Interviews are also conducted with different sections of the society in Mizoram and Meghalaya. Leaders of civil society organizations like Young Mizo Association (YMA), Young Lai Association, Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), Khasi Students Union (KSU) and local citizens and local body leaders are interviewed to know their views and perspectives on the working of democracy in these states. A total of 22 (13 from Mizoram and 9 from Meghalaya) civil society leaders, local body leaders and common citizens are interviewed for the study. Academicians, government officials, journalists and church leaders are also interviewed to seek their opinions about the process of elections, the working of political parties and the functioning of grassroots democracy. A total of 24 (12 each from Mizoram and Meghalaya) academicians, government officials, journalists and church leaders are interviewed. Furthermore, case study method is employed to analyse the working of Autonomous District Councils (Lai Autonomous District Council and Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council), urban local bodies (Tuikual South Local Council and Shillong Municipal Board), rural local bodies (Reiek Village Council, Mampui Village Council under LADC) and traditional institutions (Cleve Colony village durbar and Hima Myllem Syiemship) to have insight into the working of grassroots democracy. Altogether, the scholar interviewed 95 key informants from different sections of the society. They were selected purposively to represent their eminence and expertise in the area of

study. Secondary data includes government records (gazettes), books, newspapers, magazines, journals, party manifestos, party constitutions, party records and other online sources. The scholar used descriptive and content analysis to analyze the collected literatures to have an insight into the study.

1.11 Chapterizations

Chapter-I: Introduction

The first chapter introduces the study. It incorporates the concept of democracy, profile of Mizoram and Meghalaya, review of literature, statement of the problem, delimitation of research, objectives of the study, research questions, methodology and chapterizations.

Chapter-II: Political Parties in Mizoram and Meghalaya

The second chapter studies the roles and contributions of different political parties towards the working of democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya. It also examines the functioning of different political parties and tries to understand the inner party democracy.

Chapter-III: Elections in Mizoram and Meghalaya

The third chapter discusses the process of elections in both the states. It also examines whether the elections in Mizoram and Meghalaya are conducted in free and fair manner. Other issues such as money and muscle power or even the role of church is also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter-IV: Local Democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya

The fourth chapter studies the working of local democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya. It also analysed the working and functioning of grass-root democracy such as Autonomous District Council's, Municipalities, Village Council's and Local Council's in both the states. It also examines the traditional institutions in Meghalaya namely—durbar system and *syiemship* that are still prevalent in the state.

Chapter-V: Working of Democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya: A Comparative Study

The fifth chapter compared the working of democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya. It discusses the similarities and differences between the working of democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya.

Chapter-VI: Conclusion

The last chapter summarizes the study and findings.

Chapter-II

Political Parties in Mizoram and Meghalaya

Political parties are one of the most essential institutions in democracy. Ram Prakash Sharma argues that democracy like other systems, work through its different institutions including political parties.¹ Therefore, political parties are inevitable for the proper and effective functioning of parliamentary political system.² The chapter studies the political parties in Mizoram and Meghalaya. The origin of political parties in Mizoram can be traced back with the primary motives of better political status for the Mizo people. Whereas in Meghalaya, the origin of political parties can be traced back to the village durbar system.³

2.1 Concept of Political Parties

Political parties are indispensable for the working of modern democratic government. The importance of political parties lies in the fact that democracies cannot function without the existence of political parties. Political parties are regarded as the 'life blood of democratic politics'.⁴ Political party is one of the most important organisations for the attainment of man's political aims. It constitutes the lifeline of modern politics.⁵ It is one of the most significant mechanisms in a democratic political system. In parliamentary system, the party having majority of seats in the Parliament/ Legislature forms a government and tries to implement the policies outlined in its election manifesto.⁶

Political parties have become one of the most important institutions of modern politics. Political parties are the vital link between the state and civil society, between the institutions of government and the interest groups and common people

¹ Ram Prakash Sharma. (1963). *The Future of Democracy in India*. Ambala Cantt: The Indian Publications. p.10.

² Rajdeo Prasad Sinha. (1989). *Indian Democracy and Opposition Parties*. New Delhi: Classical Publishing Company. p.4.

³ A village has a village-durbar presided over by the headman, where every adult participates. In the village durbar, the people settled disputes and addresses various welfare for the people. Kamaleshwar Sinha. (1970). *Meghalaya: Triumph of the Tribal Genius*. Delhi: Indian School Supply Depot (Publication Division). p.255.

⁴ V.M. Sirsikar & L. Fernandes. (1984). *Indian Political Parties*. Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, p. (v).

⁵ K.N. Kumar. (1990). *Political Parties in India*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications. p.1.

⁶ V.M. Sirsikar & L. Fernandes, *op.cit*, p.9.

that operate within society. However, parties are by no means all alike. They not only differ in terms of organizational structure and ideological orientation, but also carry out different roles within the political system. Political parties have been described both as the great tools of democracy and criticized as a source of tyranny and repression.⁷ Political parties are commonly regarded as intermediary institutions that bridge the gap between citizens and the state. They are regarded as having an important place in democracy. Political parties carry the weight of expectation and aspiration upwards from citizen to state, and the burden of policy downwards, from state to citizen. As a result, they perform a variety of functions and develop distinct characteristics.⁸

Political parties exist in all forms of government in modern times. The primary goal of a political party is to control political power. A political party frequently aims to achieve its objectives through specific programs and policies that embody the demands and interests of the represented socio- economic groups. It signifies a close association between social groups and political parties. Political parties express and consolidate various societal interests. They are based on ideological affiliations, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and regional identities, economic classes, and organized interests of diverse perspectives.⁹

Political parties have been defined as “a group of people having more or less the same approach to the local, national and international issues and well organised under an agreed leader to capture political power through elections. In other words, a political party is a group of more or less likeminded people working together unitedly on a certain ideology with a view to secure political power”.¹⁰ Different scholars define political party differently in the way they understand it. For Burke, “Party is a body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavors the national interest, upon some

⁷ Andrew Heywood. (2013). *Politics*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. p.221.

⁸ Peter Ronald de Souza & E. Sridharan. (Ed.). (2006). *India's Political Parties*. New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd. p.15.

⁹ B.C. Bhuyan. (1989). *Political Development of the North East*. New Delhi: Omsons Publications. p.45.

¹⁰ Ayangbam Shyamkishor. (2012). *Party System in Manipur*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House. p.2.

particular principle in which they are all agreed”.¹¹ In the view of Mc Kean, “a party may be defined as an organized group of the electorate that seeks to direct some policies and furnish the personnel of the government”.¹² Duverger maintains that “a party is not a community but a collection of communities, a union of small groups dispersed throughout the country (branches, caucuses, local associations, etc.) and linked by coordinating institutions”.¹³

2.2 Origin of Political Parties

Political parties are of recent development in the world political history in the sense that they are two-three centuries old. Political parties were not present in ancient times. However, the powerful interest groups wielded power directly or indirectly. For example, the priestly clans enjoyed power in the ancient Egypt and Babylon. While political activity was not prevalent among the general population, traditional forms of patriarchal systems remained influential in many centuries. Whether it was a tribal chief, a King, an Emperor or a feudal lord, the pattern remained the same. In this system, political power was seen as exerting control over subjects, not as something that the majority of citizens were treated as equals with and as sovereigns over those in power. Political power was exercised as a sort of divine right by a chosen few and the issue of mass politicization did not arise. Thus, there was no need for groups and parties to strive for the political mobilization of the people.¹⁴

The advent of rationalism and the technological advancements of the industrial revolution have precipitated significant societal transformations over the past two centuries, profoundly impacting political power and organization. The emergence of industrial capitalism, which marked the end of the traditional feudal system, signalled the inception of the modern political party. The bourgeoisie in urban areas constituted the primary challenge to the political dominance of the hereditary nobility and the monarchy. The latter were compelled to either surrender power to the former or to share it, therefore significantly expanding the scope of political activity.

¹¹ Giovanni Sartori. (1976). *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for its Analysis*. New York: Cambridge University Press. p.9.

¹² *Ibid*, p.9.

¹³ *Ibid*, p.9.

¹⁴ V.M. Sirsikar & L. Fernandes, *op.cit*, p.1.

Modern political parties emerged within the bourgeoisie. The growth of industrialization and urbanization resulted in the emergence of a substantial labour force while simultaneously fostering greater diversification among the bourgeoisie and the ascendance of the middle classes. The new classes needed to be included into the decision-making processes of the political economy. With the emergence of new industrial, technological, service, and labour interests in the political scene, new groups and parties formed to express their demands and advocate for their causes. Thus, the modern political parties originated from these organized groups.¹⁵

The formation of political parties has been a continuous process. The establishment of political parties is a significant institutional idea that aligns with the advancement of political development and is linked to the process of modernization. Different scholars hold varying perspectives regarding the origin of political parties. La Palombara and Weiner propose three categories of party origins—institutional theories, historical circumstances, and developmental theories. Whereas, M. Duverger believes in two origins of political parties, such as the electoral and parliamentary origin, and the extra-parliamentary origin.¹⁶ Maurice Duverger argued that there were no political parties in the contemporary sense of the term in any country before 1850 except the USA. The transition to nation-states and the expansion of universal suffrage and parliamentary dominance in Europe ultimately facilitated the emergence of political parties. These are the phenomena of the late 19th century and early 20th century. Undoubtedly, the 20th century witnessed the proliferation of political parties globally.¹⁷ According to Lexicon Universal Encyclopaedia (1983), modern political parties are of “recent development and it existed in one form or other, since men first became political animals.”¹⁸

In the meantime, Edmund Burke initially acknowledged and admired political parties in 1769. Some analysts attribute the emergence of political parties to the Whig and Tory factions in the late seventeenth century, or to the incorporation of organized

¹⁵ V.M. Sirsika & L. Fernandes, *op.cit*, p.1.

¹⁶ Ayangbam Shyamkishor (2012), *op.cit*, p. 6.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 5.

¹⁸ As cited in Ayangbam Shyamkishor, *Theoretical Perspective of the Origin of Political Parties in Mizoram*. Journal of North East Region. Vol-1, Issue-004, Jan-June, 2016, p.101-107.

political opposition within the political framework. According to Ostogorski and Weber, the origin of party legitimacy can be attributed to the repercussions of the 1832 and 1867 Reform Acts, alongside the rise of non-parliamentary mass groups inside political parties. The expansion of a more democratic political system was crucial in legitimizing and establishing political parties as vital electoral entities. Modern political parties originated in the 19th century in Europe and the United States. It was established in England following the reform of 1832. In France and other parts of Europe, the emergence of mass based political organizations were associated with the revolutionary year of 1848. Political parties in the United States emerged in the late 1820's, however, there were already two factions known as the 'Federalists' led by Hamilton and the 'Anti-Federalists' led by Jefferson in the 1790's. In India, there were several socio-economic organizations and associations like Zamindari Association (1837), later known as Land Holders' Society, Bengal British India Society (1843), British India Association (1851), etc. which were formed to challenge the British administration in India. However, it was only with the founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885 in Bombay that modern political parties began to emerge in India.¹⁹

2.3 Emergence of Political Parties in India

The emergence of political parties in India can be traced back to the period of freedom movement. In the late nineteenth century, there were different socio-economic organizations in India which were established to challenge against the British administration.²⁰ The introduction of the Western education by the British administration in India gave rise to socio-religious reform movements in the nineteenth century. Modern political ideas like democracy, liberty and justice gradually acquired acceptability among the elite Indians and they started to view the British policies critically. The emergence of the political groups in India in the second half of the nineteenth century was, truly, a major happening in the Indian history.²¹

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 8.

²⁰ Political Parties in India. e-Adhyayan: <https://ebooks.inflibnet.ac.in/psp01/chapter/political-parties-in-india/>. Accessed on 8th March, 2024.

²¹ Sushil Kumar. (2004). *Parties and Coalition Politics: A Comparative Study*. New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House. p.29.

In the late 19th century, different socio-economic and political groups emerged to fight against the western domination and cultural confrontation in the context of social, economic, cultural, religious and political life. For example, the Zamindari Association was formed by the Bengali landholders in 1837 to protect their rights from encroachment. Later on, it was renamed as the Land Holders' Society.²² After a few years, Bengal British India Society was formed on 20th April, 1843. The goal of this organization was to ensure the welfare and advancement of all classes while remaining loyal to the reigning sovereign of the British colonies.²³ Later on, the Land Holders' Society and the Bengal British India Society merged into one group and formed the British India Association on 31st October, 1851 with wider objectives. The British India Association aimed to secure improvements in the local administration of the country while maintaining allegiance to the British dominion.²⁴ Likewise, similar groups were formed in different parts of the country. However, majority of them were controlled by the upper classes and the methods that they used to win political concession were not only ineffective but also inadequate.²⁵

As the British rule became more repressive, the Indian elite gradually realized its exploitative nature. On the other hand, the existing socio-economic associations were seen to be serving the interests of their respective classes. Therefore, Dadabhai Naoroji established the East India Association on 1866 in London. Its branches quickly spread throughout the major cities of India. Few years later, Justice M.G. Ranade, G.V. Joshi and others established the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, which provides active political education to the people for the next thirty years.²⁶ The exploitative nature of the British rule in India during the 1870's greatly stimulated political action which also led to the introduction of the idea of Swadeshi for the first time. Calcutta, which was the administrative capital of the British as well as the centre of Hindu revival emerged as a major centre for political activities. Anand Mohan Bose and S.N. Banerjee

²² V.M. Sirsikar & L. Fernandes, *op.cit*, p.40.

²³ Soumitra Das. Englishmen and Zamindars. *Telegraph India*. Dated: 31st August, 2008. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/englishmen-and-zamindars/cid/1260560> . Accessed on 9th March, 2024.

²⁴ V.M. Sirsikar & L. Fernandes, *op.cit*, p.40.

²⁵ Sushil Kumar, *op.cit*, p.29.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p.30.

established the Indian Association in 1876 with the aim of bringing people together under a common political agenda. The Madras Mahajan Sabha and the Bombay Presidency Association were established on 1884 and 1885 respectively in a similar manner. Nevertheless, there was a persistent requirement for a nationwide organization to serve as a representative body for the entire nation and propagate the contemporary political ideas on a large scale.²⁷

Consequently, the Indian National Congress (INC) was formed in 1885 as the first political party in India. The establishment of the INC encouraged and promoted political socialization of the public, and attracted political participants from local to national levels. The expression of interests and the dissemination of common ideals among the people resulted in the establishment of a national consensus for the first time. A new political culture emerged, leading to widespread engagement in the movement for political liberation.²⁸ The first Conference of the Indian National Congress (INC) took place in Bombay on 27th December, 1885 with W.C. Banerjee serving as the Chairman. The INC initiated a nationwide campaign which aimed at achieving political reform.²⁹

The INC dominated, guided and initiated the freedom struggle as a mass movement rather than a political party.³⁰ The umbrella nature of the INC has evolved into an umbrella organization, with various breakaway organizations representing a wide range of ideological and policy perceptions. Thus, at one point, parties such as—the Communist party, the Socialist party and the Hindu Mahasabha were all part of the Congress. As a result, it is accurately defined as a diverse alliance of centrist, leftist and rightist elements. Furthermore, other political parties such as the Bharatiya Jan Sangh developed and gained importance in the subsequent years. Thus, different political parties in India had their origins in the Congress party.³¹

²⁷ *Ibid*, p.30.

²⁸ V.M. Sirsikar & L. Fernandes, *op.cit*, p. 39.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 42.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p.39.

³¹ Sushil Kumar, *op.cit.*, p.31.

Coming to North East India, it is home to a number of regional political parties. Majority of them are Ethno Regional Parties (ERPs) based on ethnic identities. The political agenda of these parties is limited only to single ethnic community in a specific region.³² The objective for regional political parties is evident in public sentiment within the North-East area due to the political awareness of the people. The awakening is attributed to the awareness of uneven socio-economic progress, exploitation and neglect by the Government of India. Due to stagnant socio-economic conditions, significant discontent emerged among students, educated individuals, and professionals. As a result, a new socio-political and economic consciousness emerged among the people of the North-East. The enhanced consciousness of the people is manifested by the rise of protests and demonstrations. The people demanded socio-economic upliftment which have created a distinct political syndrome in recent years. The reorganization of states in the 1960's and 1970's and the establishment of regional political parties are outcomes of public opinion which were shaped by pressure groups.³³

People have the desire to form the regional political parties in the region. At the same time, the INC (the oldest surviving political party) spread its wings to every nook and corner of India without exception. It can be mentioned here that the INC as the national political party gained ascendancy in the region just after India's independence. The establishment of Assam Association in 1903 is considered as the pioneer for the formation of the Indian National Congress in the North-Eastern region. The Assam Association later merged with the Indian National Congress in 1921.³⁴ The other national political party like the Communist Party of India (CPI) was pushed into the background except in Tripura and the Muslim League (ML) became almost defunct.³⁵

³² V. Bijukumar. (2019). *Parties and Electoral Politics in North East India (Contention of Ethno-Regionalism and Hindu Nationalism)*. Delhi: Kalpaz Publications. p.28.

³³ L.S. Gassah. (1992). *Regional Political Parties in North East India*. New Delhi: Omsons Publications. p.3.

³⁴ Assam Pradesh Congress Committee. *History of Assam Pradesh Congress Committee*. <https://apcc.assam.org/organisation/apcc-brief-history>. Accessed on 16th July, 2025.

³⁵ B.C. Bhuyan, *op.cit*, p.29.

The regional interest groups had gradually evolved into regional political parties. The goals were to establish separate political and administrative groups to safeguard and maintain their unique identity.³⁶ Commencing with the establishment of community-oriented groups like the Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU) in 1957 in the then Lushai Hills, Garo National Council (GNC) in 1945 in the Garo Hills, and in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills, parties such as—Jaintia Durbar (JD) in 1900, Khasi National Durbar (KND) in 1923. Other groups such as Karbi-A-Durbar (KAD) in 1946, Vaiphei National Organization (VNO) in 1974, People's Party of Arunachal Pradesh (PPA) in 1977, the Sengkrak (SK) of Tripura in the mid 1960's and so on. The proliferation of regional political parties in the region came to the zenith with the formation of the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference (APHLC) in 1960 and the Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) in 1985.³⁷

2.4 Emergence of Political Parties in Mizoram

The formation of political organizations came only in the mid 1940's in the Lushai Hills. Actually, the British did not allow any kind of political activities in the Lushai Hills during the time. At the same time, some Lushai leaders were interested to participate in politics. For instance, the first kind of political activity was in 1925 when some residents of Kulikawn locality at Aizawl, namely Telela Ralte and his five other friends (Thuama Ralte, V.Z. Biaka Hmar, Suakkunga Chawhte, Saikunga Vangchhia and Liansiama Chhangte)³⁸ met the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills. They requested the Superintendent to initiate change in the administration of the Lushai Hills to allow the Lushai people to join politics. The Superintendent however rejected the suggestion. But Telela and his friends convened a public meeting and delivered speeches without the approval of the British, leading to their arrest and later release after being given a strict warning. The main argument of the British was that they did not allow any political activities in the Excluded Area. As a result, political participation in any form was not permitted until the dawn of Indian Independence.³⁹

³⁶ *Ibid*, p.30.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.30.

³⁸ P. Lalnithanga. (2006). *Political Development in Mizoram*. Aizawl: Author. p.6.

³⁹ Chawngsailova. (2012). *Mizoram During 20 Dark Years*. Guwahati: EBH Publishers. p.13.

Another instance was that during the First and Second World Wars, some young Lushai were sent to Europe as war personnel assistants. When they returned home, they realized that the traditional chief rule was outdated. Due to their influence, the Lushai commoners viewed the chiefs as despotic, but their position was protected by the British Government. However, a significant development took place in 1946, when a meeting was convened by the Superintendent of Lushai Hills and declared that the hills belonged to the people, not the chiefs. This declaration caused consternation among the chiefs, who felt it contradicted the government's policy in the district since its annexation.⁴⁰

Furthermore, during World War II, the threat posed by Japanese troops in Burma led to political consciousness among the Lushais. Subsequently, A. R. H. Mac Donald, the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills established a District Conference in 1946, consisting of 40 members— 20 chiefs and 20 commoners to represent the people's will. The provision regulating the election of chiefs and commoners to the Circle Representative Committee further fueled this sentiment. The commoners felt dissatisfied with their larger population comparing to the chiefs. As a result, they felt the need for a political party. Thus, the Mizo people experienced uncertainty and apprehension about their political future on the eve of India's independence. This led to the formation of the first political party, i.e. the Mizo Common People Union (later on named Mizo Union) on April 9, 1946 with the permission of the then Superintendent of the Lushai Hills.⁴¹ The origin of the Mizo Union (MU) can be traced back to the formation of Young Lushai Association (later renamed the Young Mizo Association) on 1935. The leaders of YMA rejected the idea of converting YMA (non-political body, concerning only social services) into a political party. Therefore, Vanlawma and Dahrawka conceived the idea of forming a political party. As a result, the MU emerged as the first political party in the Lushai Hills.⁴² Pachhunga and R. Vanlawma were the first President and General Secretary of the MU. The main objectives of the party include—abolition of chieftainship, representation of the Lushai

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p.14.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.14.

⁴² L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima & Lal Lawmzuali. (2015). *Government and Politics of Mizoram*. Guwahati: Scientific Book Centre. p.125.

Hills in the Assam Legislative Assembly, and improvement in the economic and social conditions of the people.⁴³

It was remarkable that the MU dominated the electoral scene of the Mizo Hills district from its inception in 1948. The MU formed the Executive Committee (government) in the Lushai Hills District Council without a break from 1952 to 1970. The Mizo Union won the first Mizoram Union Territory Assembly Elections in 1972 (winning 21 out of 30 seats) and formed the first UT government under the leadership of Ch. Chhunga. Later, the MU merged with the Congress Party in January 1974. Thus, the history of the first political party in Mizoram came to an end after being in power for about 20 years in Mizo District Council and in the Union Territory period.⁴⁴

The second political party formed in the Lushai Hills was the United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO). It was established on 5th July, 1947 with Lalbiakthanga as its President, Rev. Zairema as Vice President and LH Kisua as its Secretary.⁴⁵ But, Lalmawia (an ex-army officer in Burma) was the man behind the establishment of the new party. The party was also known as Zalen Pawl (Freedom Party).⁴⁶ The UMFO initially aimed to join the Lushai Hills with Burma, ensuring maximum Mizo autonomy and retaining chieftainship to achieve the objectives of the party. The UMFO was primarily supported by chiefs and pro-independence sections of the Mizo society. However, the UMFO hope for assistance from Burma did not materialize and changed its strategy since 1953 as they decided to form a separate hill state out of Assam.⁴⁷ During the brief existence of the UMFO party, it neither accomplished any remarkable achievement nor formed a government in the District Council. However, the UMFO party was the first opposition party in the Mizo Hills district and served as a strong opposition to the Mizo Union, which prevented party dictatorship in politics and administration.⁴⁸

⁴³ V. Venkata Rao, H. Thansanga & Niru Hazarika. (1987). *A Century of Government and Politics in North East India, Volume III-Mizoram*. New Delhi: S. Chand & Company (Pvt) Ltd. p.137.

⁴⁴ L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima & Lal Lawmzuali, *op.cit*, p.128.

⁴⁵ V. Venkata Rao, H. Thansanga & Niru Hazarika, *op.cit*, p.139.

⁴⁶ Zarzosanga. (2024). *Political Parties in Mizoram: A case study of the Mizo National Front*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. p.50.

⁴⁷ L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima & Lal Lawmzuali, *op.cit*, p.135.

⁴⁸ Zarzosanga, *op.cit*, p.52.

The third political party formed in the Lushai Hills was the Eastern Indian Tribal Union (EITU). The origin can be traced back to a meeting convened by Capt. Williamson Sangma, the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Garo Hills District Council to form the Tribal Union. The Tribal Union aims to create North-East Tribal state encompassing Manipur, Nagaland, tribal areas of Assam and Tripura. The first President of the Tribal Union was B.M. Roy.⁴⁹ As the State Reorganization Commission denied the demand for a hill state, the CEM and prominent political leaders of the Khasi-Jaintia Hills, Garo Hills, Mikir Hills, and Mizo Hills held meeting in Aizawl in 1957 and formed the Eastern Indian Tribal Union.⁵⁰ During the time, the Assam government decided that the official language of Assam will be Assamese. The decision of the Assam government was opposed by the leaders of the hill districts and it also strengthened the idea to create a separate hill state.⁵¹ After the passing of the Assamese language bill in 1960, the EITU joined the All Party Hills Leader Conference (APHLC) and it gradually ceased to exist.⁵² The significance of the party was that EITU marked the first formal political relationship between the Mizo leaders and leaders from other states for a common goal. It is worth mentioning that the EITU party was the first and the only political party at the regional level (North East) that was launched from Mizoram till date.⁵³

Besides the above political parties, different political parties were established in the Mizo Hills District. Some of them exist for a short period of time while some political parties also made significant contribution in the electoral politics of Mizoram. Among them, the formation of the All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) unit in Mizoram was noteworthy. The influential Mizo political leader Pu⁵⁴ A. Thanglura (former Vice President of the Mizo Union) was the first Chairman of the APHLC.⁵⁵ In addition, different political parties were also established in different regions of the state. This include the Pawi-Lakher Tribal Union (PLTU) which was formed by the

⁴⁹ V. Venkata Rao, H. Thansanga & Niru Hazarika, *op.cit*, p.517.

⁵⁰ K.M. Zakhuma. (2001). Political Development in Mizoram from 1946 to 1989: A study with special reference to Political Parties in Mizoram. Aizawl: Zakhuma. p.81.

⁵¹ Zarzosanga, *op.cit*, p.53.

⁵² L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima & Lal Lawmzuali, *op.cit*, p.137.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p.137

⁵⁴ 'Pu' is a titled used for Mizo married man and respected person.

⁵⁵ L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima & Lal Lawmzuali, *op.cit*, p.138.

Pawi (now, they are known as Lai) and Lakher (now, they are known as Mara) in the southern part of Mizo Hills on October, 1949 with its headquarters at Lawngtlai. The Mara left the PLTU and formed their own political party known as Mara Freedom Party (MFP) at Zawngling (Siaha District) on September, 1963 with its headquarters at Saiha (now Siaha). After the Lakher (Mara's) left the PLTU in 1963, the Pawi (Lai) members of the PLTU simply renamed the party as Chin National Front (CNF) in 1964.⁵⁶ The ethnic based parties were formed to promote and developed their areas and also to promote and safeguard the ethnic interest of the 'Lai' and 'Mara'.

2.4.1 Present Political Parties

There are different political parties in Mizoram but the present study focuses on four political parties, namely—the Indian National Congress (INC), the Mizo National Front (MNF), the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The rationale for selecting these parties is that the INC and the MNF had been ruling Mizoram since statehood era and the ZPM have been ruling the state since December, 2023. And the BJP is another national party that had been consistently contesting the election since 1993. They opened their account for the first time in Assembly Election 2018 and also won two seats in Assembly Election 2023. Besides, the BJP has been ruling the Union government since 2014 and they had directly or indirectly effected the politics of Mizoram. Above all, these four political parties are active in the electoral politics of the state.

2.4.1 (i) The Indian National Congress (INC)

The Indian National Congress (INC) is the oldest existing political party in Mizoram. It was established in the Mizo District of Assam⁵⁷ (now Mizoram) on August 10, 1961, in Aizawl. In other words, the Congress party existed in Mizoram for around 64 years. A. Thanglura was the first President of the party. At that time, the Mizo District was a revenue district of Assam and the Congress unit in Mizo District was designated as the Mizo District Congress Committee (MDCC). The first office bearers

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 139.

⁵⁷ Mizo Hills was a revenue district of Assam until the upliftment of Mizo Hills into Union Territory on 21st January, 1972.

of the MDCC were: President–A. Thanglura, Vice-President– Lalsawia, and Treasurer– Hrangchhuana.⁵⁸ The Mizo District Congress Committee (MDCC) was governed by the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee from its establishment in 1961 until the elevation of the Mizo District Council to Union Territory status in 1972. On 16th March 1972, the MDCC was established as a full-fledged territorial unit of the Indian National Congress and came to be known as the Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC)⁵⁹. As a result, the MPCC has been directly under the control of the All India Congress Committee (AICC).

The aims and objectives of Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee comprise sixteen objectives. Some of the important aims and objectives of the MPCC are as follows: -

1. The core objective of Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee are-

- a) Democracy (*Vantlang rorelna*)
- b) Secularism (*Sakhaw zalenna*)
- c) Socialism (*Hnufual, changhai leh retheite chawikan*)
- d) Non-alignment (*Zawlbik nei lova ram dangte nena inlai-chinna tha neih*)

2. Safeguarding and loyalty to the Indian constitution (*India danpui laka rinawm leh danpui vawnhim*).

3. To work for India's independence and integrity (*India zalenna leh hnam impumkhatna atana thawh*).

4. To work for the re-unification of Mizo who reside in different places and seeking one administrative umbrella for those separated by geographical boundaries and promoting autonomy (including financial autonomy) by safeguarding the Indian Constitution (*Kan duh vang ni lova Mizo hnathlak chi hrang hrangte rorelna hrang hrang hnuaia thendarha awmte India ram chhunga rorelna pakhat hnuaia dah leh*

⁵⁸ L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima & Lal Lawmzuali, *op.cit*, p. 173.

⁵⁹ MPCC is a territorial unit of the Indian National Congress in Mizoram. The MPCC is the highest committee of the Congress party in Mizoram.

danpuin a phal theih sang ber zel rorelna [autonomy with special safeguards] neih. Hei hian financial autonomy a huam).

5. Safeguarding and promoting the customs and traditions of different Mizo tribes (*Mizo hnahthlak chi tinte nunphung leh ziarangte humhalh leh chawisan*).

6. To work for the benefits of the son of the soil or indigenous people (*Kawng tinrenga ram leilung fate duhsak*).⁶⁰

The core objective of the MPCC (democracy, secularism, socialism and non-alignment) are all reflected under the core values of the Indian National Congress or the All India Congress Committee.⁶¹ However, the party also had the authority to framed their own constitution to suit the interest of the people. The MPCC had been given functional autonomy by the AICC President Smt. Indira Gandhi since 1978.⁶² For instance, the MPCC in its constitution emphasised the re-unification of the Mizo residing in different places. It can be argued that the Mizo reside in different states like Assam, Manipur and Tripura. In addition, the different Mizo tribes reside in different countries like Myanmar and Bangladesh. It is important to mention here that the re-unification of Mizo under one administrative umbrella became vague and is impossible to achieve in reality. However, it is remarkable to argue that the MPCC is the only national party in Mizoram with emphasis on the re-unification of the Mizo.

Organizational Structure

According to the constitution of the party, the following are the structure of the party organization which have the jurisdiction through the entire state of Mizoram, such as: -

- 1) General Assembly
- 2) Elected Office Bearers
- 3) MPCC Executive Committee

⁶⁰ Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee. (2016). *Constitution of the Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee (as Amended in 2016)*. Aizawl: Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee. p.6

⁶¹ Indian National Congress. *About: Our Values*. <https://inc.in/our-values>. Accessed on 18th April, 2025.

⁶² Constitution of the Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee (as Amended in 2016), *op.cit*, p.1.

- 4) Mizoram Congress Committee (MCC)
- 4) District Congress Committee (DCC)
- 5) City Congress Committee
- 6) Block Congress Committee
- 7) Unit Committee⁶³

Besides the party main organizational structure, the MPCC have four frontal organizations, namely—Mizoram Pradesh Youth Congress Committee, Mizoram Mahila Congress Committee, National Students' Union of India (Mizoram) and *Upa Wing* (Senior Front) to strengthen the organization.⁶⁴ In addition to these, the party has different Departments, Cells and Sub-Committees within the MPCC. But the number of Committees, Cells and Sub-Committees are not permanent as the party constitution authorized the MPCC President to create Department, Cells and Sub-Committee on need basis.⁶⁵ According to C. Lalpianthanga⁶⁶ and F. Lalmangaiha,⁶⁷ the party has Departments, Cells and Sub-Committees which can be regarded as a permanent because the party constitution empowered the party President to form different Departments, Cells and Sub-Committees on the need basis of the state and for strengthening the party organization. At present (2025), there are around 25 Departments, Cells and Sub-Committees functioning under the MPCC. The organizational structure of the Congress party in Mizoram or the MPCC is given under the figure below: -

⁶³ Constitution of the Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee (as Amended in 2016), *op.cit*, p.7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.14.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.15.

⁶⁶ The scholar interviewed C. Lalpianthanga (General Secretary, Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee) on 23rd September, 2024 at Congress Bhavan, Aizawl.

⁶⁷ The scholar interviewed F. Lalmangaiha (General Secretary, Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee) on 23rd September, 2024 at Congress Bhavan, Aizawl.

Fig. 2.1 Organizational Structure of INC in Mizoram

Sl. No	Party Structure	Organizational Structure
1.	Headquarters	General Assembly ↓ Elected Office Bearers ↓ Executive Committee ↓ Mizoram Congress Committee ↓ District Congress Committee ↓ Block Congress Committee ↓ City Congress Committee ↓ Unit Committee
2.	Other Administrative Office	1. District Congress Committee (in Administrative District / Autonomous District Council) 2. Block 3. Group 4. Unit
3.	Frontal Organizations	1. Mizoram Pradesh Youth Congress Committee 2. Mizoram Mahila Congress Committee 3. National Students' Union of India (MZ) 4. <i>Upa</i> (Elder) Wing
4.	Cells / Committees/ Departments	<i>Effective Cells/Committees/Departments include—</i> Election, Media, Communication, Kisan (Farmer), Legal, Human Right, Education, Gorkha, Medical, Sports, etc.

Source: Prepared by the scholar

Coming to the organizational structure of the MPCC, Pu Zodintluanga Ralte remarked that the Congress party has practiced democracy under the leadership of Pu Lal Thanhawla since 1973. He argued that the Congress used to conduct elections at

the unit level, block level, district level and in the headquarters level. He is of the opinion that electing party leaders at various level is the best for maintaining internal democracy within the party.⁶⁸ Pu Lal Thanzara (President, MPCC) also supported his view. He said that the Congress party follows the democratic principles as it laid down in its objectives. He also believed that elected leaders are best for the party's functioning. On the other hand, if the party election is ahead of Assembly election or other important elections or if there is a strong infighting for the leadership, etc. sometimes the party may appoint leaders from the headquarters.⁶⁹

The Congress party in Mizoram (since its formation) plays an important role in the socio-economic and political development of the state. Nevertheless, it is important to mention here that out of all the existing political parties in the state, the Congress ruled for the longest period of time in Mizoram. In the Union Territory era, the INC ruled for two years and 3 months (May, 1984—August, 1986). In the post-statehood period, the INC ruled the state for 20 years which can be divided into two phases—the first phase (Jan, 1989—Dec, 1998) and the second phase (Dec, 2008—Dec, 2018). In fact, the INC ruled Mizoram for 22 years and three months in the post-Union Territory era. Here, it may be noted that it is always Pu Lal Thanhawla who was the Chief Minister of Mizoram whenever the Congress ruled the state. In other words, the ex-Chief Minister of Mizoram Pu Lal Thanhawla controlled Mizoram for 22 years and three months in the last 35 years or so.

The Congress party had a number of remarkable achievements for the state of Mizoram. First and foremost, the greatest achievement of the party is the establishment of peace. Lal Thanhawla demitted his Chief Minister chair for MNF leader Laldenga in order to end 20 years of insurgency in Mizoram. Another achievement is the implementation of their flagship programme—Land Use Policy or New Land Use Policy (NLUP) whenever they came into power. Even though there

⁶⁸ The scholar interviewed Zodintluanga Ralte (ex-Congress Minister who represent Thorang A/C from 2003-2023) on 18th April, 2023 in his residence at Durtlang, Aizawl.

⁶⁹ The scholar interviewed Lal Thanzara (President, Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee) on 28th June, 2024 at his residence in Zarkawt, Aizawl.

were challenges in its implementation, it also has significant socio-economic impact for the state. Besides, the Congress achievement in construction of Lengpui Airport, inauguration of Medical College, promotion of sports infrastructure, etc. were noteworthy.⁷⁰

2.4.1 (ii) The Mizo National Front (MNF)

The Mizo National Front (MNF) is a regional political party of Mizoram. The origin or formation of the MNF party can be traced with the idea of independence of the Mizo people. The idea of independence comprises the erstwhile Lushai Hills, Chittagong Hills (Now Bangladesh), Tripura, Cachar District of Assam, Manipur and Chin Hills of Burma which aim to bring them under one political entity. This idea was originated before the independence of India. The leader of the Mizo Union, R. Vanlawma and his associates formed a new forum known as Mizo Cultural Society in 1959 at Aizawl. The primary objective of the Cultural Society was the preservation of Mizo identity. They realized that political independence is the only means to safeguard cultural identity. However, this Cultural Society was unable to fulfill its objective.⁷¹

During the time, another organization, namely, the Mizo National Famine Front was formed in the Lushai Hills. The Mizo National Famine Front was formed in 1960 when the famine called '*Mautam*' occurred in the Lushai Hills. The Lushai appealed to the Government of Assam for financial assistance. However, the Government of Assam neglected the request of the Lushai people. While the Famine Front mostly drew the attention of the Mizo youth and got public support to a great extent, it received public sympathy because of the services rendered to the famine affected people.⁷² After famine was over, a new political party known as Mizo National Front was formed on 22nd October, 1961 at Aizawl. The leaders of the Mizo Famine Front were the forerunner in the formation of the MNF. Laldenga became the

⁷⁰ L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima, Lal Lawmzuali, *op.cit*, p.197.

⁷¹ L.S. Gassah, *op.cit*, p.140.

⁷² *Ibid*, p.141.

first President of the newly established party, with Vanlawma serving as the first Secretary and A. Rohnuna as the Joint Secretary.⁷³

In the Preamble of the MNF Constitution, it stated that the slogan of the party is ‘*Pathian leh kan ram tan*’ (For God and for our country). The election symbol of the party is a star. The ideals and principles of the party include—

1. Democracy (*mipui rorelna*)
2. Secularism (*sakhaw zalenna*) and
3. Socialism (*rethei chhanchhuah leh intluktlanna*).⁷⁴

The aims and objectives of the party include the following—

1. To preserve the land God gifted to us from our ancestors and protecting its indigenous people (*kan thlahtute atanga Pathian min pek Mizoram leh a leilung fate humhalha venhim*).

2. To place all the Mizo tribes under one administrative umbrella (*Mizo hnahthlakte luah chin ram rorelna pakhat hnuaia dah*).

3. To safeguard and promote the indigenous Mizo religion (*Mizote sakhaw humhim leh chawisan*).

4. To safeguard and promote Mizo customary law, customs and language (*Mizo hnam dan tha, nunphung leh tawngte humhima chawisan*).

5. To protect the identity and rights of ethnic Mizo minorities (*Mizorama hnam tlem zawkte nihna leh chanvo humhalh*).

6. To work for the betterment of Mizoram and its people (*Mizoram tihhmasawn leh mipui dinhmun chawikan*).

7. To establish and deliver equal and impartial justice in judiciary (*Rorelna dik, fel leh thianghlim dina kenkawh*).⁷⁵

The MNF is a strong regional political party in Mizoram. They hold a self-claimed title of the party which stands for the Mizo tribes. As a result, the aims and

⁷³ R. Vanlawma. (2022). *Ka Ram leh Kei (My Country and I)*. Aizawl: MCL Publications. p. 279.

⁷⁴ Mizo National Front. *Mizo National Front ‘Danbul’ (Constitution)*. (2022). (Diamond Jubilee Edition). Aizawl: Mizo National Front General Headquarters, Mizoram. p.7.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*.

objectives of the party focus on the welfare and benefits of the Mizo people. For example, the party promises to preserve the land and its people and work for the betterment of the people. The party stresses the reunification of Mizo tribes under one administrative umbrella. It can be mentioned here that the party aspires for integration of Mizo tribes who were separated by geographical boundaries. The Mizo tribes reside in different places—Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The MNF also emphasises on safeguarding the Mizo customary law, customs, language and religion (here it specifically refers to Christianity).

Organizational Structure

According to the constitution of the MNF, the organizational structure of the MNF General Headquarters is as follows: -

1. General Assembly
2. National Council
3. National Executive Committee (High Command)
4. Elected Office Bearer
5. National Core Committee
6. Political Affairs Committee⁷⁶

In addition, the party has administrative office at different parts of the state such as—Sub-Headquarters (for Lunglei district), District Headquarters (for Autonomous District Council), Block, Group and Unit. Moreover, the MNF party has three frontal organizations which function independently from the party's main organizational structure. The three frontal organizations of the MNF are—Mizo National Senior Front, Mizo National Women Front and Mizo National Youth Front. The frontal organizations are established to strengthen the party and to support the party activities.⁷⁷ According to L.T. Kima Fanai, there are 30 General Secretaries who

⁷⁶ Mizo National Front *Danbul (Constitution) Diamond Jubilee Edition*, op.cit, p.18.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p.54.

look after different committees and departments within the party.⁷⁸ The organizational structure of the MNF party is given below: -

Fig: 2.2 Organizational Structure of MNF

Sl.No	Structure	Mizo National Front (MNF)
1.	General Headquarters	General Assembly ↓ National Council ↓ National Executive Committee (High Command) ↓ Elected Office Bearer ↓ National Core Committee ↓ Political Affairs Committee
2.	Other administrative office	1. Sub Headquarters (Lunglei) 2. District Headquarters (for Autonomous District Council & Administrative District) 3. Block 4. Group 5. Unit
3.	Frontal Organizations	1. Mizo National Senior Front 2. Mizo National Women Front 3. Mizo National Youth Front
4.	Cells/ Committees/ Departments	Effective Cell/Committee/Department include: Finance, GAD & Detailment, Election, Legal Affairs, Publicity & Media, Policy & Research, Vigilance, Intellectuals Relations, Farmers Welfare, etc.

Source: Prepared by the scholar

⁷⁸ The scholar interviewed L.T. Kima Fanai (General Secretary, MNF) on 19th September, 2024 at MNF Gen. Hqrs. Office, Aizawl.

The MNF party is different from other political parties since its establishment. According to Pu Tawnluia, the MNF party differs from other political party in the sense that it is formed on the foundation of '*Pathian leh kan ram tan*' (For God and for our country). As a result, the MNF survives and serves the people, as evidenced from its celebration of its Diamond Jubilee on 22nd October, 2021. The MNF became one of the oldest and well-established state party in India. The party faced many issues and challenges during freedom movement (MNF movement) and even today. He stated that God is always listening to the desires and aspirations of the party as they strongly believe in their ideals and principles.⁷⁹ In addition, L.T. Kima Fanai argued that MNF party is very unique as it represents the Mizo people. It is the only party who fought for the independence of Mizoram. He also stated that any Mizo who believes in the slogan of '*Pathian leh kan ram tan*' (For God and for our country) can become a member of the party. He added that even if they are also from outside the territory of Mizoram, they can become a member of the MNF. For instance, there was a time when the MNF unit was also established in the state of Manipur. As a result, the MNF party is inclusive for those who subscribe the ideals and principles of the party.⁸⁰

The MNF leaders realized that the Government of India would not concede to their demand for independence. As a result, the members of the MNF initiated operations on 28th February, 1966, targeting the treasuries in Aizawl and Lunglei. They cut telephone lines and blocked roads and attacked military posts, etc. At the outset, the Government of India implemented a coercive strategy to eliminate the MNF insurgency.⁸¹ The Government of India declared MNF as an unlawful organization under Rule 32 of the Defence of India Rules, 1962. As a consequence, the MNF went underground to fight for the Independence of Mizoram.⁸² After a series of negotiation for around 20 years, finally an agreement was clinched between the Government of India and MNF known as the Memorandum of Settlement popularly referred to as the 'Mizo Accord'. The Memorandum of Settlement was signed on 30th June 1986 which

⁷⁹ The scholar interviewed Tawnluia (Sr. Vice President, MNF & Dy. Chief Minister during the interviewed period) on 24th May, 2024 in his office chamber at New Secretariat Complex, Aizawl.

⁸⁰ L.T. Kima Fanai, *op.cit.*

⁸¹ L.S. Gassah, *op.cit.*, p.143.

⁸² L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima & Lal Lawmzuali, *op.cit.*, p.155.

is also known as ‘*Remna Ni*’ (Peace Day). It was signed by the MNF President Laldenga, the Home Secretary R.D. Pradhan and the Mizoram Chief Secretary Lalkhama in New Delhi. The Memorandum of Settlement provides for the increase of Member of Legislative Assembly from 30 to 40. Thus, a full-fledged statehood of Mizoram was declared on 20th February, 1987. Accordingly, a new Ministry was sworn-in on 20th February, 1987 by the new Governor. Another agreement at the party level between the MNF and Congress (I) party was also reached on 25th June, 1986. The negotiation between the MNF leader Laldenga and the Vice President of the Congress (I) Arjun Singh paved the way to a formal signing of the agreement at the official level. It was decided that the Congress (I) Chief Minister, Lal Thanhawla would step down in favour of Laldenga who would head the coalition Government. According to the agreement, a new government was installed in Mizoram.⁸³ Thereafter, the MNF party continued to exist till date and they have been ruling the state for more than 16 years. The period can be divided into three phases—the first phase (February, 1987—September, 1988) led by Laldenga, the second phase (December, 1998—December, 2008) and the third phase (December, 2018—December, 2023) led by Zoramthanga. They have become one of the strongest and main political party in the state of Mizoram.

During the period, the MNF party also attained a notable achievement for the state of Mizoram. One of the most significant achievements was the construction of complexes in the capital city. It includes—a new Secretariat Complex, Ch. Chhunga Bus Terminal, Ch. Saprawnga Truck Terminal, shopping complex called Millenium Centre, etc. The MNF government also perform well in road construction especially the creation of World Bank funded Aizawl-Lunglei Road. Moreover, the establishment of Mizoram Youth Commission was remarkable as it was the first to constitute a commission for youths in India.⁸⁴

⁸³ L.S. Gassah, *op.cit*, p.145.

⁸⁴ L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima & Lal Lawmzuali, *op.cit*, p.160.

2.4.1 (iii) The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM)

The Zoram Peoples Movement (ZPM) is a new political alliance formed on 15th August, 2017 by various political and social organization. Initially, two regional parties—the Mizoram People's Conference (MPC) and the Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP)—along with a new political organization known as the Zoram Exodus Movement (ZEM) formed by a retired pastor, former government servant, and social activist were the original members. Then, other minor political parties and social organizations like—the Mizoram People's Party (MPP), Zoram Democratic Front (ZDF), and Zoram Reformation Front (ZRF), also became part of the political alliance. The alliance contested the election as independent candidates as they are not a recognized and registered party to the Election Commission of India. According to Pu K. Sapdanga, talks were held informally since 2015 to form a new organization for the betterment of the Mizo society. As a result, Zoram Exodus Movement (ZEM) was established in the year 2017 prior to the Assembly election 2018. The ZEM were the forerunner in the formation of the new political alliance known as Zoram Peoples Movement.⁸⁵

In the Preamble of the ZPM, it is stated that the party was formed for the welfare of the land, the people and the religion (here, it refers to Christianity) of the Mizo society by abiding by the principles of '*Kalphung Thar, Mipui Sawrkar*' (New system, People's Government) so that developmental works can be initiated with the principle of integrity and trustworthy. The party believes in safeguarding the Constitution of India by incorporating the principle of socialism, secularism, sovereignty, harmony, unity and integrity.⁸⁶ The election symbol of ZPM is a hat. The aims and objectives of the Zoram People's Movement can be outlined as under: -

1. To establish God's kingdom through governance (*Ram rorelnaa Pathian ram tun din*).

⁸⁵ The scholar interviewed K. Sapdanga (Working President, ZPM during the interviewed period & present Home Minister) on 3rd February, 2023 at his residence in Aizawl Venglai, Aizawl.

⁸⁶ Constitution of Zoram People's Movement, 2024. *ZPM Danpui 2024*. Aizawl: Zoram People's Movement Hqrs, Mizoram. p.2.

2. To establish a new system through people's government (*Sorkar kalphung thar-mipui sorkar siam*).

3. To work for the protection of our land, communities and religion (*Ram, hnam leh sakhaw himna tura beih*).

4. To exhibit clean and healthy politics in Mizoram (*Zoram-ah politics khelh dan thianghlim lantir*).

5. To work for ensuring good governance (*Ro relna dik a awm theihna tura thawh*).

6. To provide collective leadership in governance and in party (*Sorkar leh party-ah a huhova ro relna lantir*).

7. To work for the unity of all the Mizo tribes under one administrative umbrella (*Zofate ro relna pakhat hnuai dah tura beih*)-⁸⁷

The ZPM is another regional political party in Mizoram. Therefore, the preamble and the objectives of the party focus on the interest of the Mizo people. For instance, the party outlined that it tries to establish God's kingdom through governance. The party tries to rule the state as per the Christian teaching and ethics. The reason is that Mizoram is a Christian dominated state. The people are also greatly influenced by prioritizing the principles of Christianity in governance. The party emphasises establishing a 'new system, people's government' in the state. This slogan became a popular catch-phrase as the party promises to set up a new system in governance which will be inclusive and can be referred to as the people's government. They label the earlier governments in Mizoram in the post-statehood period (led by INC and MNF) as a party's government, exclusively for the party workers. They also argue that the INC and the MNF had ruled the state with an old system and the people need change with a new system of administration in the state. It is important to mention here that the ZPM also outlines the re-unification of Mizo tribes under one administrative umbrella. This idea is also advocated by other political parties in

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p.2

Mizoram (INC and MNF). As stated above, it has become a dream which will be very difficult to achieve in reality.

Organizational Structure

According to the constitution, the ZPM General Headquarters will look after the entire party and its headquarters will be in Aizawl (the state capital). The organizational structure of the ZPM General Headquarter are as follows:

1. General Assembly
2. National Council Committee
3. Executive Committee
4. Office Bearer (Elected OB, Consultant, PAC, Adviser, MLA, MP, Corporator, Board Chairman, Secretary General, General Secretary, Secretary, Chief Organizer, Chief Receptionist, Frontal President, Board/Cell/Wing Chairman and Special Invitees)
5. Political Affairs Committee (PAC)
6. Elected Office Bearer⁸⁸

In addition, the party has administrative office at different parts of the state such as—Southern Headquarters (for Lunglei and Hnahthial district), District (for Autonomous District Council), Block, Group and Unit. Besides the party main organizational structure, the ZPM has three frontal organizations to strengthen the party. The three frontal organizations are—ZPM *Upa* Committee (senior wing), ZPM *Zonu* (women wing) and ZPM *Thalai* (youth wing).⁸⁹ In addition to these, the party has different 16 Departments functioning within the party.⁹⁰ The organizational structure of the ZPM party are as follows: -

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p.4.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p.15.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p.7.

Fig. 2.3 Organizational Structure of ZPM

Sl.No	Party Structure	Organizational Structure
1.	General Headquarters	General Assembly ↓ National Council Committee ↓ Executive Committee ↓ Office Bearer ↓ Political Affairs Committee ↓ Elected Office Bearer
2.	Other administrative office	1. Southern Hqrs. (for Lunglei & Hnahthial District) 2. District (for Autonomous District Council) 3. Block 4. Group 5. Unit
3.	Frontal Organizations	1. ZPM <i>Upa</i> Committee (senior wing) 2. ZPM <i>Zonu</i> (women wing) 3. ZPM <i>Thalai</i> (youth wing).
4.	Cells/ Committees/ Departments	<i>Effective Cell/Committee/Department include:</i> Election, Legal, Media & Publicity, Policy & Research, Minorities, Public Grievances, Vigilance, etc.

Source: Prepared by the Scholar

The main slogan of the ZPM party is ‘*Kalphung Thar, Mipui Sawrkar*’ (New system, People’s Government). Besides these, the main focuses of the ZPM are upliftment of the agricultural workers and a reasonable market of agricultural product

(particularly ginger).⁹¹ The neutral voters particularly the educated youth mainly from the urban areas are more influenced by the policies and visions of the ZPM. The majority of the neutral voters and educated youth want a new government that is neither Congress nor MNF, as the people had already experienced both the parties. These factors significantly contributed to the ZPM's electoral performance, resulting in securing eight seats in its first elections they contested. The ZPM party emerged as one of the most successful political parties within a short span of time. They emerged as the strong rival party to both the MNF party and the Congress party. In the ninth Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election 2023, the ZPM won a landslide majority (26 out of 40 seats) and formed the first non-MNF and non-Congress government in the state.⁹²

According to Vanlalneiha (Secretary General, ZPM), the party as of today is much well established as compared to its formation stage in 2017. He argued that they worked hard and put endless efforts in strengthening the party organization after the Assembly election in 2018. They have been conducting grassroot level training regularly since the end of election in 2018. They also provided Trainers Training as they believed that strengthening party organization at different level will help in the Assembly election 2023. Hence, they believed that strengthening party organization was one of the important factors of the party for the good performance in the last Assembly elections.⁹³ K. Sapdanga also reiterated the problems of the party in the initial stage. According to him, the party is a combination of different social and political organizations having their own culture or practices as well as aims and objectives. Therefore, the party leaders sensitively and carefully address the party workers so that they can be integrated and united together as a party.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Zoram People's Movement. *Kalphung Thar (New System): The Manifesto of the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) 2018*. Aizawl: ZPM General Headquarters.

⁹² ZPM win big in Mizoram, gears up to form new government in state. *Business Standard*. Dated: 4th December, 2024. https://www.business-standard.com/elections/mizoram-elections/zpm-wins-big-in-mizoram-gears-up-to-form-new-government-in-state-123120401139_1.html. Accessed on 18th April, 2025.

⁹³ The scholar interviewed Vanlalneiha (Secretary General, ZPM) on 19th September, 2024 at ZPM Office, Republic, Aizawl.

⁹⁴ K. Sapdanga, *op.cit.*

With regard to inner democracy, Vanlalneiha said that conducting elections for various position in the party is very important. As a result, the party conducted elections for party leaders at all the levels including General Headquarters. But, sometimes, it is necessary to appoint party leaders if Assembly elections or other elections are due within a limited period of time. Besides, sometimes conducting election within the party can have negative consequences as the losing side is prone to anti-party activities within the party. Nevertheless, as a democratic society, conducting election within the party as far as possible will be the best practice for the party.⁹⁵ The achievement of the ZPM party cannot be analysed as they are a new party (set up in 2017) and they formed government for the first time in 2023. They are running the government for about two years (December 2023—October, 2025) only.

2.4.1 (iv) The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has made a late and gradual entry into Mizoram political arena. After its establishment at the national level in 1980, the party tried to expand its influence in different parts of India, including Mizoram. During the period, the state is mainly dominated by the national party, namely—the Indian National Congress (INC) and a strong regional party such as the Mizoram People's Conference (MPC), the Mizo National Front (MNF), etc. According to Pi⁹⁶ C. Lalneihkimi, (Office Assistant, BJP Mizoram, who held the post since the establishment of the party in Mizoram) the BJP had tried to set up their foothold since the early 1990's. During that period, Mizoram did not have a complete organizational set up in Mizoram. As a result, Pu Lalrawna and Pu Chawngzika were placed as Organizer(s) of the state. Later on, the Central BJP appointed Pu PL Chhuma, IPS (Rtd) as the Adhoc President in 1996.⁹⁷ She further stated that the BJP did not have specific objectives or constitution for the state of Mizoram. They followed and adopted the objectives, philosophy and constitution of the BJP National Headquarters.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Vanlalneiha, *op.cit.*

⁹⁶ 'Pi' is a titled used for Mizo married women and respected person.

⁹⁷ The scholar interviewed C. Lalneihkimi (Office Assistant in Mizoram BJP Office since 1993) on 19th September, 2024 at State BJP Headquarters, Aizawl.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

Therefore, in its first convention, the BJP declared five guiding principles that would guide the BJP political path, which includes: -

- (i) Commitment to nationalism and national integration
- (ii) Commitment to democracy
- (iii) Commitment to Gandhian Socialism (Gandhian approach to socio-economic issues leading to the establishment of a samaras samaj free from exploitation).
- (iv) Commitment to positive secularism
- (v) Commitment to value-based politics.⁹⁹

Besides, the party in its National Council in 1985 accepted 'Integral Humanism' as its foundational principle.¹⁰⁰ In addition to the party commitment towards the nation, Mr. Delson Notlia said that the BJP party had a strong philosophy and teaching within the party 'Nation first, Party second and Self third'. These principles and teaching have guided the party members to serve the nation and to put nation first in their life. He further stated that the BJP focused on good governance and inclusive development for the nation.¹⁰¹ According to K. Beichhua, BJP is a unique party. It is well disciplined, has good administrative system and proper management in party organization. He argued that within the BJP, the party is very powerful even the MLAs and Ministers had to abide by the rule and regulations of the party administration.¹⁰²

The BJP in Mizoram did not have a separate constitution and party objectives for the state. Unlike the Congress party (who have separate constitution for Mizoram), as a national party, it follows and adopts the constitution and objectives of the BJP National headquarters. The objectives and visions of the BJP for the state of Mizoram are however reflected in the election manifestos and pamphlets distributed during

⁹⁹ Bharatiya Janata Party. *About the Party: Our Philosophy*. <https://www.bjp.org>. Accessed on 23rd September, 2024.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*.

¹⁰¹ The scholar interviewed Delson Notlia (Member, Mara Autonomous District Council and National Secretary i/c Minorities, BJP) on 23rd September, 2024 at Legislator Home, Tuikhuahtlang, Aizawl, Mizoram.

¹⁰² The scholar interviewed K. Beichhua (State BJP President & MLA, Mizoram) on 23rd September, 2024 at Legislators Home, Aizawl.

election period. For example, the party in its ‘Hmathlir Document 2023’ (Vision Document 2023) which was issued during the Assembly Election 2023 highlights various developmental schemes for the state. The schemes include—Mizoram Agri-Infra Mission (comprises of Rs.1000 crore), Mizoram Sports Talent Development Program (includes Rs.25 crores), Mizoram Health Infrastructure Fund (contains Rs.500 crores), Mizoram Rural (comprises of Rs. 950 crores) and Urban (comprises of Rs.400 crores) Infrastructure Development Mission, etc.¹⁰³

Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of the party are as follows: -

1. National level:
 - a) The Plenary or Special Session of the party
 - b) The National Council, and
 - c) The National Executive
2. State level:
 - a) State Council, and
 - b) State Executive
3. Regional Committees
4. District Committees
5. Mandal Committees
6. Gram / Shahari Kendra
7. Local/ Booth Committees¹⁰⁴

The organizational structure of the BJP in Mizoram are—State Office Bearer, Core Member and Executive Committee. The same organization structure is followed at the District level, Mandal (Block) level and Booth (Unit) level.¹⁰⁵ In addition, Pu V. L. Awia argues that the BJP constitution allow the formation of various frontal organization (Morcha) in the national headquarters and in different state. As a result,

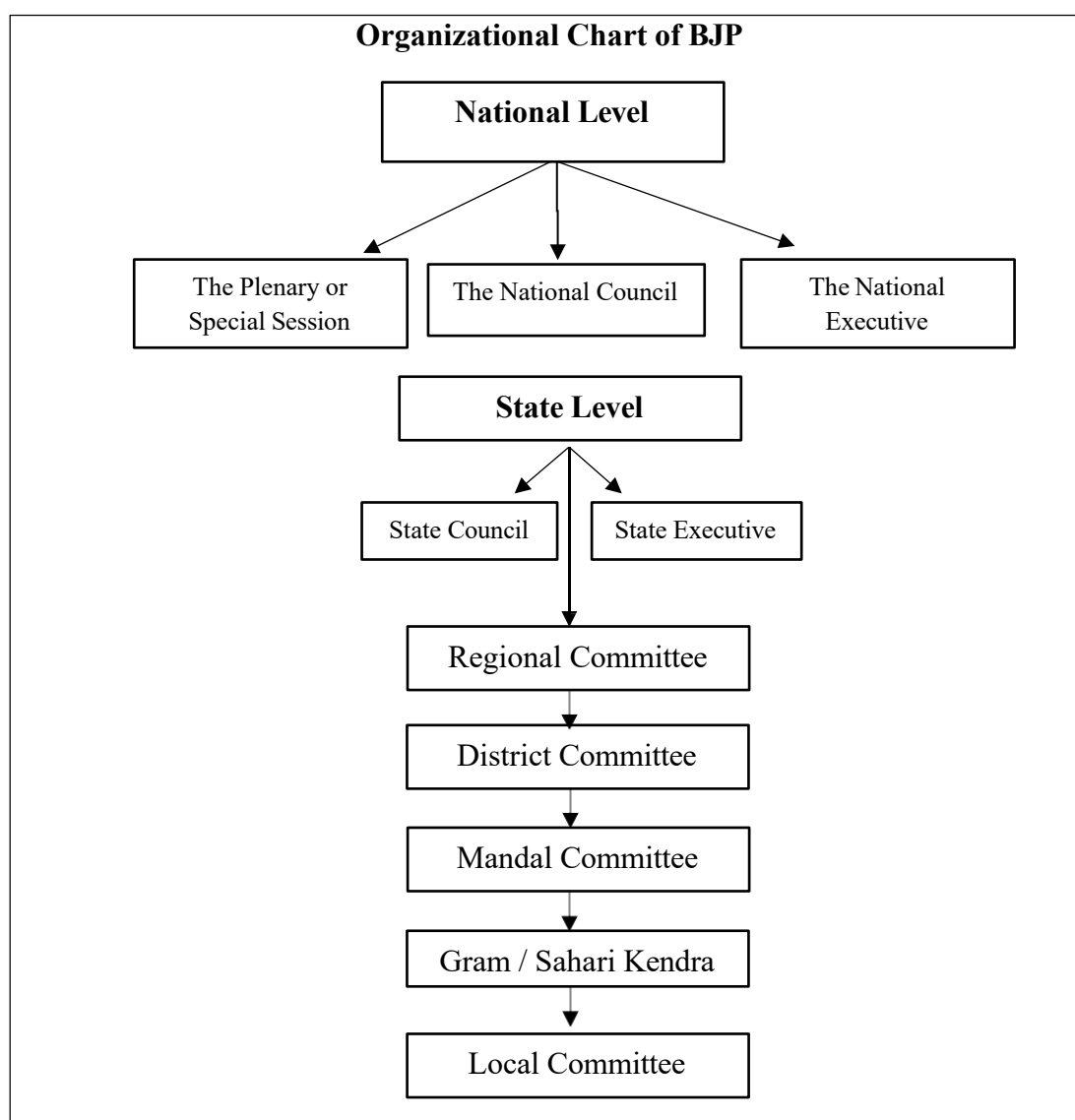
¹⁰³ Bharatiya Janata Party. *Hmathlir Document 2023 (Vision Document 2023)*. Aizawl: Bharatiya Janata Party.

¹⁰⁴ Bharatiya Janata Party. *Constitution and Rules (September, 2012)*. Bharatiya Janata Party.

¹⁰⁵ The scholar interviewed Vanlalhmuaka (BJP President, Mizoram during the interviewed period) on 5th July, 2024 at State BJP Headquarters, Aizawl.

the BJP in Mizoram also established Yuva (Youth) Morcha, Mahila (Women) Morcha, Kisan (Farmers) Morcha, Scheduled Tribe Morcha, OBC Morcha and Minority Morcha.¹⁰⁶ Besides, the party can also form different Cells and Departments (Legal Cell, Ex-Servicemen Cell, etc) for the welfare of the people. The organizational structure of the BJP is given below: -

Fig: 2.4 Organizational Structure of BJP



Source: Prepared by the scholar

¹⁰⁶ The scholar interviewed V.L. Awia (State Secretary i/c Election, BJP Mizoram) on 19th September, 2024 at State BJP Headquarters, Aizawl, Mizoram.

In its initial years in Mizoram, the BJP did not have significant influence or political presence in the state. The main reason was a lack of a strong organizational structure and ideological difference between the BJP's Hindutva agenda and the Christian-majority population of Mizoram. However, Pu Vanlalhmuaka argued that the BJP in Mizoram formally and systematically started functioning since the Presidentship of Prof. J.V. Hluna even though the BJP was already established in 1993.¹⁰⁷ Pu V.L. Awia added that there has been a dissemination of false teaching by the opposition parties in order to apprehend the BJP in Mizoram.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, Pu Vanlalhmuaka said that it was the Congress party who alleged the BJP as Hindu party, but in reality, the Christian people suffer heavily during the period of the Congress rule in India. He further stated that the BJP party did not believe in appeasement policy as they stood for the agenda of 'development for all' irrespective of caste, religion, race, etc. He argued that development ('Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas', meaning 'together with all, development for all') is the number one agenda of the BJP party throughout the country.¹⁰⁹

Talking about the organizational structure, Pu V.L. Awia informed that the BJP is not different from other political party in terms of organizational structure, functioning and how it operates in the country. He argued that the BJP can be called as the most democratic party as one person cannot hold the office of President consecutively for more than one term. Besides these, the party wants election of party leaders from the headquarters level to unit level instead of appointing party leaders. As a result, the party makes arrangements and preparations for electing leaders at various level. It is very interesting to mention that the BJP in Mizoram practice electing leaders through consensus (by raising hands) instead of electing through secret ballot. However, this system has been practiced at the unit, block and district level party election and secret ballot have been practiced in the election of state President. Another unique feature of the party is that the elected President at different levels is very

¹⁰⁷ Vanlalhmuaka, *op.cit.*

¹⁰⁸ V.L. Awia, *op.cit.*

¹⁰⁹ Vanlalhmuaka, *op.cit.*

powerful as he can appoint the other party office bearers and secretaries for the party functioning.¹¹⁰

As stated above, the BJP does not have a meaningful impact and significance presence in Mizoram even though the party came into existence since the early part of 1990's. The party continuously contested the Mizoram State Legislative Assembly elections since 1993. However, the party's vote share did not increase and fail to open their account in Mizoram. The party gained prominence in Mizoram only in recent years particularly after it formed government at the center (General Election 2014) and ruled in six states of the North Eastern region (the BJP ruled all six states on or before early part of 2018).¹¹¹ As a result, the party had great hope and expectation in the Mizoram State Assembly elections 2018. Dr. B.D. Chakma retained his constituency (Tuichawng A/C) as a BJP candidate, marking the BJP's first presence in Mizoram. It is a notable achievement for the party to secure representation after contesting five consecutive Assembly elections in Mizoram. With the party in power at the Centre and in majority of the Indian states, the BJP sought to extend its influence in the state of Mizoram, trying to expand its single seat victory in 2018. However, the BJP managed to secure two seats, its best performance ever in the 40 MLA Mizoram seats. Dr. K. Beichhua retained his constituency and Mr. K. Hrahmo won from Palak constituency in Siahia district. The BJP's seat share had increased from one seat in 2018 to two seats in 2023 which was a notable achievement for the party. Even though the BJP fought the elections since 1993, the achievement of the party cannot be analysed as they were not part of the government till date.

The above studies show the similarities as well as the difference between political parties in Mizoram. The INC even though a national party have separate constitution as they had been given functional autonomy from the All India Congress Committee since 1978. While another national party such as the BJP cannot have separate constitution for individual state. However, there are many common features

¹¹⁰ V.L. Awia, *op.cit.*

¹¹¹ Utpal Bhaskar & Elizabeth Roche. BJP's debut in Mizoram. *Livemint*. Dated: 11th December, 2018. <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/y6D38Y7zVbwaGBvdsLWuEJ/BJP-making-serious-inroads-in-Mizoram-vote-share.html>. Accessed on 23rd September, 2024.

in the functioning of political parties in Mizoram. Among them, the principles of democracy, secularism and socialism are common. It is important to mention that the political parties in Mizoram (except BJP) promises to safeguard and promote the customs and tradition of different Mizo tribes and to work for the benefits of the son of the soil. The BJP in its election manifesto '*Huapzo Mizoram: Hmathlir Document*' (Inclusive Mizoram: Vision Document) 2023 promises to work for the people. In addition, the political parties in Mizoram attempts to work for the re-unification of Mizo who resides in different places under one administrative umbrella. Furthermore, the MNF and ZPM used God (here Christianity) as the foundational basis of their party (details are discussed in Chapter-V).

2.5 Emergence of Political Parties in Meghalaya

The origin of political parties in Meghalaya can be traced back to the formation of socio-cultural institutions in the state. These institutions were not established as political party in its initial stage as they were formed as socio-political and cultural organizations. They played a significant role in promoting and protecting the interests of the people in their region. For instance, the Jaintia Durbar (in Jaintia Hills region) was first established as a socio-cultural organization in 1900.¹¹² The establishment of Jaintia Durbar was remarkable as the solidarity movement started in the most advanced part of the hills, i.e. the Jaintia.¹¹³ The Jaintia Durbar was the oldest organization in the hills of North East India. Later, the Khasi National Durbar was established in 1923 following the significance of Jaintia Durbar. The Jaintia leaders also realized the importance of Jaintia Durbar being utilized as a political platform as did the Khasi National Durbar. The main objective of the Jaintia Durbar was the revival of the Sutnga State and raise it to the status occupied by any Khasi State.¹¹⁴ Later on, the Jaintia Durbar engaged in more political activities. In 1952, the Jaintia Durbar became a partner of the Khasi-Jaintia Durbar and participated in the elections

¹¹² V. Venkata Rao, Barrister Pakem & Niru Hazarika. (1984). *A Century of Government and Politics in North East India, Volume II- Meghalaya*. New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd. p.188.

¹¹³ S.K. Chaube. (2017). *Hill Politics in Northeast India*. Kolkata: Orient Blackswan Private Limited. p.66.

¹¹⁴ V. Venkata Rao, Barrister Pakem & Niru Hazarika, *op.cit*, p.189.

of the District Council and the State Assembly.¹¹⁵ Subsequently, it became a component part of the Eastern Indian Tribal Union (EITU). In 1957, it even fought the elections to the Assam Legislative Assembly and the Khasi-Jaintia Hills District Council election. In 1960, it became a constituent part of the APHLC.¹¹⁶ However, the party split into two in 1961.¹¹⁷

The Khasi National Durbar (KND) was set up in 1923. In the beginning, it was formed to look after the interests of the Khasi. On 27th July, 1923, eminent and well-known educated Khasi leaders, namely—Kmuin Manik, the Syiem of Myllium Bidor Singh, the Syiem of Nongkhlaw, Rev. Nichols Roy and Wilson Read—convened a meeting to explore methods for fostering unity and collaboration among the former Khasi states and to establish a unified structure for all the Khasi states. As a result, meeting was held on 4th September, 1923. All the leaders of the former Khasi states and their *myntries* attended the event. The meeting decided to establish an organization and named it as the Khasi National Durbar (KND). It adopted its constitution on 5th September, 1923.¹¹⁸ The aims and aspirations of the Durbar include—bringing unity among the Khasis, improving the system of administration in the Khasi states, safeguarding the interests of the Khasis, protecting and preserving their well-established customs and conventions and finally improving the economic condition of the Khasis. On 6th September, 1923, Join Manik, the *Syiem* of Sohra was elected as the first President and Rev. JJM Nichols Roy as the first Secretary.¹¹⁹ The KND was responsible for codifying laws in the Khasi Hills states, including citizenship, land system, and succession. The Durbar formed a committee to investigate the possibility of forming a federation of all Khasi states. As a result, a federation known as Federation of Khasi States¹²⁰ was formed in 1933. While working for the welfare of the Khasi people and by participating in a greater range of political endeavours, the KND demanded the formation of a Hill State in 1956. It contested the

¹¹⁵ H. Joshi. (2021). *Meghalaya: Past and Present*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications. p.250.

¹¹⁶ V. Venkata Rao, Barrister Pakem & Niru Hazarika, *op.cit*, p.189

¹¹⁷ H. Joshi, *op.cit*, p.250.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.188.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.189.

¹²⁰ John F. Kharshiing & Bodhi S. Ranee. (2019). *The Federation of Khasi States: History, Epistemology and Politics*. Maharashtra: Tribal Intellectual Collective India. p.198.

elections to the Assam Legislative Assembly. Of late it did not involve itself in active politics.¹²¹

In the Garo Hills, the Garo National Conference (GNC) was established in 1945. Prior to 1937, political activity in the Garo Hills was not permitted. The introduction of constitutional reforms in 1937 necessitated the establishment of political organization to mobilize public sentiment. However, virtually no action was taken in this regard. During World War-II, a Garo Corps was formed for the Burma Front involving Garos from various Garo Hills regions. After the war was over, the Garos from different regions met and exchanged ideas with the intention of establishing an association for the Garos. In 1945, Singdam Sangma, an employee of the Garo Baptist Mission Centre and Emonsingh Sangma established an organization and named it as the Garo National Conference (GNC). It aimed to develop strategies for the welfare of the Garo people. Before its official formation, the Garo National Conference was headed by Mody K. Marak prior to the arrival of the Bordoloi Committee. During the time, MacDonald Kongor visited the Garo Hills and persuaded the Garo people to seek autonomy from Assam. However, the response was disheartening.¹²² In 1948, it was renamed as the Garo National Council (GNC).¹²³ The GNC demands that all regions inhabited by the Garos should be incorporated into the Garo Hills district. The GNC aimed to enhance the welfare of the Garos in undivided Assam. They emphasised the protection of political, social, economic interests by preserving the traditions and practices of the Garos. In 1957, it became a constituent member of the EITU party and a member of the APHLC party.¹²⁴ The GNC ensured political stability in the Garo Hills, both within the District Council and in the state government. The GNC were active in the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council since 1952. In 1960, it resolved to advocate for a separate hill state. Subsequently, the party lost its popularity and never won any election in the past.

¹²¹ V. Venkata Rao, Barrister Pakem & Niru Hazarika, *op.cit*, p.189.

¹²² *Ibid*, p.191.

¹²³ Esther M. Tariang, *op.cit*. p.87

¹²⁴ V. Venkata Rao, Barrister Pakem & Niru Hazarika, *op.cit*, p.192.

The All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) was another important political party established in 1960. It was formed against the declaration of Assamese as an official language of the state by the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) on 22nd April, 1960. The APCC's decision was strongly opposed by the leaders of the hill areas of Assam. They convened a meeting immediately at Tura on 28th April, 1960. However, B.P. Chaliha, the Chief Minister of Assam accepted the decision of the APCC, and declared that Assamese will be the state language and will be passed in the next Legislative Assembly session.¹²⁵ Captain Sangma, who was the Cabinet Minister in Chaliha government was not happy with the decision. As a result, the Chief Minister tried to persuade Captain Sangma. On the request of the Chief Minister, Captain Sangma convened a meeting of political party leaders from Autonomous Districts on 6th July, 1960 at Shillong.¹²⁶ However, the Naga Hills were not represented in the meeting.¹²⁷ The leaders decided to form the All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC). Their immediate aim was to resist the imposition of Assamese on them. They also met Prime Minister Nehru and requested him to intervene in the Assam government's decision. They threatened to separate from Assam if the bill was passed and the language was imposed on them.¹²⁸ However, the bill was passed on 24th October, 1960. In the meantime, the Scottish Plan was announced which led to disunity among the leaders and withdrawal from the APHLC.¹²⁹ However, only leaders from Khasi-Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills were in the APHLC. As a result, they started demanding a separate state for Meghalaya. Thus, after ten years of struggle, Meghalaya was declared as autonomous state on 10th October, 1970.¹³⁰ In 1972, Meghalaya achieved statehood and the APHLC contested the election. In the first Assembly election 1972, the APHLC won the election and Capt. Williamson Sangma was elected as the first Chief Minister of Meghalaya. After three years (1975), the party faced internal conflict within the party due to political opportunists. Gradually,

¹²⁵ V. Venkata Rao. (1976). *A Century of Government and Politics in North-East India (1874-1974)*. New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd. p.518.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p.194.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, p.518.

¹²⁸ Kamleshwar Sinha. (1970). *Meghalaya: Triumph of the Tribal Genius*. Delhi: Indian School Supply Depot, Publication Division. *op.cit*, p.38.

¹²⁹ V. Venkata Rao, *op.cit*, p.519.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, p.196.

the APHLC lost its popularity and relevance in the electoral politics of Meghalaya. Later on, the APHLC was re-activated in the state of Assam particularly in the Karbi Anglong District.¹³¹

2.5.1 Present Political Parties

There are various political parties in Meghalaya but the present study focuses on four political parties, namely—the Indian National Congress (INC), the United Democratic Party (UDP), the National People’s Party (NPP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The rationale for selecting these political parties is that the Congress party had been ruling the state for 34 years. The Congress (I) party either lead the government or joined the government as a junior party of the government. It is worth mentioning here that Congress (I) was a part of the government except in the last two governments. Secondly, the United Democratic Party (UDP) is one of the strongest regional parties in Meghalaya since its inception in 1997. The party joined all the coalition government in Meghalaya except the Congress government headed by Dr. Mukul Sangma (2013-2018). Thus, they had been one of the most successful political parties that dominated the electoral politics of Meghalaya. Thirdly, the National Peoples Party (NPP) had become one of the most successful political parties in the North Eastern state. Within a short period of its inception, they managed to form a government consecutively in Meghalaya. It also made a meaningful impact in the politics of the North Eastern states. After its formation, they became the first and the only party who attained the status of national parties from the region. Last but not the least, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) consistently contest the election since 1993 and they had been in the coalition government in Meghalaya. Meghalaya did not experience the single party government except after the first Assembly election held in 1972. Even though the BJP won only few seats in the State Assembly elections, the BJP as a national party play a crucial role in the formation of government. The BJP

¹³¹ APHLC opposes mini-secretariat in Silchar, condemns Tuliram Ronghang’s statement. *The Shillong Times*. Dated: 3rd December, 2022. <https://theshillongtimes.com/2022/12/03/aphlc-opposes-mini-secretariat-in-silchar-condemns-tuliram-ronghangs-statement/>. Accessed on 10th April, 2024.

continues to dominate and influence the region by forming alliance with different regional political parties in the state.

2.5.1 (i) The Indian National Congress (INC)

The Indian National Congress (INC) emerged as the dominant national party in the North Eastern region right after the independence of India.¹³² The Congress party in Meghalaya was established in the late 1960's, soon after Meghalaya demanded statehood from Assam. However, the party had their first President only in 1970.¹³³ The INC in Meghalaya or the Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) did not have separate constitution. According to Mr. Sanjay Das, the INC is a national party and they cannot have separate constitution (while in Mizoram, the AICC permit to have separate constitution). As a result, they followed and adopted the constitution and rules of the Indian National Congress.¹³⁴ The important objectives and principles of the Indian National Congress include: -

1. Article-I of the party constitution states that the object of the INC is the well-being and advancement of the people of India. The party also tries to establish a socialist state based on parliamentary democracy through peaceful and constitutional means. The socialist state is necessary for equality of opportunity in political, economic and social rights.¹³⁵

2. Article-II outlines that the party commits to uphold the Constitution of India and the principles of socialism, secularism and democracy. The party promises to uphold the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.¹³⁶

The Congress party in Meghalaya as a national party tries to implement and achieve the objectives and principles of the Indian National Congress. The INC plays a significant role in the political development of Meghalaya. The Congress party had

¹³² B.C. Bhuyan, *op.cit*, p.29.

¹³³ Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee. *About Us*. <https://meghpcc.com/about-us>. Accessed on 10th May, 2025.

¹³⁴ The scholar interviewed Sanjay Das (General Secretary, Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee) on 19th December, 2022 in Congress Bhava, Shillong.

¹³⁵ Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee. *Constitution*. <https://meghpcc.com/constitution>. Accessed on 10th May, 2025.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*.

played a crucial role in Meghalaya's political and developmental history, especially during the early years of its formation. The Congress party has been a prominent political force in Meghalaya, though its dominance has declined in recent years. The INC has historically been instrumental in defining the political landscape of the state, establishing administrations and occupying significant leadership roles.

Organizational Structure

Coming to the organization of the party, the Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee functions and operates according to the INC constitution. According to Mr. Sanjay Das, the hierarchical structure of the Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) is under: -

- i) Elected Office Bearer
- ii) MPCC Executive Committee
- iii) District Congress Committee
- iv) Block Congress Committee
- v) Unit Congress Committee¹³⁷

In addition, the party had four frontal organizations, namely—Meghalaya Pradesh Youth Congress Committee (MPYCC), Meghalaya Pradesh Mahila Congress Committee (MPMCC), National Students Union of India (NSUI) Meghalaya Unit and Meghalaya Seva Dal Congress.¹³⁸ The frontal organizations under the MPCC follow the organizational structure of their parent organizations in the Indian National Congress. According to Mr. Sanjay, the President of each frontal organization was appointed from the Indian National Congress.¹³⁹ Besides, the party constitution provides that the Congress President can create Cells/Departments to discharge various responsibilities for strengthening the functioning of the party.¹⁴⁰ As a result, different Cells and Departments including—Legal Cell, Kisan (Farmer) Cell,

¹³⁷ Sanjay Das, *op.cit.*

¹³⁸ Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee. *Frontal Organization*. <https://meghpcc.com/frontal-organisation/9/mpcc>. Accessed on 10th May, 2025.

¹³⁹ Sanjay Das, *op.cit.*

¹⁴⁰ Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee, Constitution, *op.cit.*, p.64.

Communication Department, Research Department, etc—operate under the MPCC¹⁴¹ (organizational structure of INC in Mizoram and Meghalaya are more or less the same, therefore, organizational structure of INC in Meghalaya is not given).

The Congress party stands on the principles of secularism, equality, justice and freedom. The Congress party follows the democratic principles as their guiding philosophies. As a result, the Congress party conducts elections at different level—unit, block, district and state level. Ms. Lakyntiew Sokhlet said that as a democratic country, electing leaders within the party is best for the functioning of the party.¹⁴² While Mr. Sanjay Das said that electing leaders within the party can have the merit as well as the demerit for the party. He stated that there is no doubt that election within the party is the practice of democracy into reality. Besides, the elected leaders have credibility within the party as they have the mandate of the people. On the other hand, sometimes election cannot take place within the party depending upon the party circumstance. For instance, if there was a strong infighting group within the organization for party leadership, conducting elections can worsen the party environment leading to a possibility of division and split within the party. Therefore, if such kind of situation broke out in the party, the party has no other options rather than appointing leaders. In addition, the party sometimes appointed leaders as a reward for the loyal leaders to prevent internal rift inside the party. At the same time, the Congress party tries to maintain inner democracy in the party. The party frequently conducts elections at unit level, block level, district level and at state level as per the direction from the All India Congress Committee (AICC).¹⁴³

The Indian National Congress in Meghalaya is one of the successful political parties in Meghalaya. There have been eleven elections to Meghalaya Legislative Assembly since statehood in 1972. The party ruled the state (sometimes as major and minor party in coalition) around 34 years in 53 years (1972-2025). Meghalaya has been experiencing coalition politics except the first government formed after the first

¹⁴¹ Sanjay Das, *op.cit.*

¹⁴² The scholar interviewed Ms. Lakyntiew Sokhlet (General Secretary, Meghalaya Pradesh Youth Congress) on 19th December, 2022 at Congress Bhavan, Shillong.

¹⁴³ Sanjay Das, *op.cit.*

Assembly elections in 1972. In other words, the APHLC is the only political party who formed government by its own. As a result, coalition government is the only option in the state. Of all the coalition government, Congress party had been in power for maximum period of time. In fact, 24 governments have been formed in Meghalaya since 1972. Out of which, Congress party either lead the government or coalition partner of the government in 24 government. Mr. Sanjay Das claims that whenever the Congress was is in power or as part of the government, Meghalaya used to witness a stable government in the state.¹⁴⁴ Thus, the Congress party in Meghalaya is one of the most successful political parties in terms of forming government in the state.

The Congress party in Meghalaya accomplished a number of remarkable achievements for the state. According to Ms. Lakyntiew Sokhlet, it was the Congress party who work tirelessly for attaining statehood. She argues that with the support of the Congress government in the Centre, many of the major infrastructural development in the state were developed during the Congress regime. For instance, the establishment of North Eastern Hills University (NEHU), the creation of North Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (NEIGRIHMS), the formation of Indian Institute of Management (IIM), the establishment of National Institute of Technology (NIT), creation of Institute of Hotel Management (IHM), etc. were all done during the Congress government in the Centre as well as in the state.¹⁴⁵

2.5.1 (ii) The United Democratic Party (UDP)

The origin of the United Democratic Party (UDP) can be traced back to the three regional parties in Meghalaya, namely—Hill State People Democratic Party (HSPDP),¹⁴⁶ the Public Distribution Demands Implementation Convention (PDIC)¹⁴⁷ and the Hill People Union (HPU).¹⁴⁸ In 1997, the leaders of these parties decided to

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Lakyntiew Sokhlet, *op.cit.*

¹⁴⁶ HSPDP was founded in 1968 with H.S. Lyngdoh as its founding President. (Esther M. Tariang, *op.cit.*, p.86).

¹⁴⁷ PDIC was founded in 1977 under the leadership of Prof. GG Swell. (Esther M. Tariang, *op.cit.*, p.86).

¹⁴⁸ HPU was founded in 1985. (Esther M. Tariang, *op.cit.*, p.85).

come together under the banner of the United Democratic Party (UDP) with Mr. E.K. Mawlong as its President.¹⁴⁹ In the Preamble of the UDP, it is written as,

*“Whereas the people yearn for the return of the early years of formation of Meghalaya when there was a sense of purpose, direction and hope. Hereby, in the year one thousand nine hundred and ninety seven declare and pledge upon themselves that they shall restore the prestige glory of the state when by an act of wisdom and foresight the three regional parties. Namely, the Hill People Union, the Hill State People’s Democratic Party and the Public Demand Implementation Convention resolved to amalgamate into a unified party to be known as the United Democratic Party to fulfil the aspirations of the people for a clean and effective government”.*¹⁵⁰

According to Mr. Metbah Lyngdoh, it was very difficult for political parties to have a strong and stable government as there are a number of regional political parties in the state. It is difficult for the people to give clear mandate in the election as different political parties are fighting against each other in every election. Meanwhile, the aims and objectives of different regional parties are more or less the same. Therefore, to have a strong regional party and for the development of the state, the three regional parties decided to unite under one umbrella and form the United Democratic Party under the leadership of EK Mawlong.¹⁵¹

The election symbol of the UDP is a drum. The party has seven aims and objectives. They are as follows:

(i) To secure the rights, justice, liberties and progress of the tribal people and for their all-round development according to their own genius.

¹⁴⁹ Esther M. Tariang. (2022). *Glimpses on Political Developments in Meghalaya*. Chennai: Notion Press Media Pvt. Ltd. p.86.

¹⁵⁰ Constitution of the United Democratic Party Meghalaya. p.1.

¹⁵¹ The scholar interviewed Metbah Lyngdoh (UDP President & Assembly Speaker during the interviewed period) on 14th December, 2022 at Speaker’s Chamber, Shillong.

(ii) To build up the state for the development and benefit of the people and justice to all as guaranteed by the Constitution of India.

(iii) To strive for speedy attainment of universal education and rigorous advanced learning in modern technologies and skills of the tribal people, in particular, and of the State, in general.

(iv) To safeguard and preserve the identity of the tribal people and in particular to protect their interest, especially in respect of their inalienable rights to land, forest, minerals and such other resources germane to their economic development.

(v) To endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife.

(vi) To ensure the territorial integrity of Meghalaya and to restore the state the rightful areas and those contiguous areas predominantly inhabited by the tribal people ethnically related to those of Meghalaya.

(vii) To promote character, probity, transparency, accountability, discipline and fairness in the conduct of public affairs. ¹⁵²

The UDP in its objective's emphasis on the rights and development of the tribal people. It can be argued that the party focus on the tribal population of the state. The reason is that Meghalaya is a state where majority of the population belongs to the tribal community. As a result, the entire state is covered under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. The Sixth Schedule protects the tribal areas and its forests, land resources, wildlife, minerals, culture, customs, etc. Therefore, the UDP as a regional party stress on the protection and promotion of the tribal community. Consequently, the UDP became one of the most important political parties in Meghalaya. The party is very influential in the Khasi-Jaintia region. It advocates for the rights of the Khasi and Jaintia tribes.

¹⁵² Constitution of the United Democratic Party, *op.cit.* p.4.

Organizational structure

The organizational structure of the party is given below: -¹⁵³

- i) General Council
- ii) General Executive Committee
- iii) District General Council
- iv) District Executive Committee
- v) Circle Unit
- vi) Primary Unit

The UDP has frontal organizations such as Young Wing, Women's Wing and Farmer's Wing. Besides, the party has the power to constitute various sub-committee at every level for the purpose of carrying out any specific works.¹⁵⁴ The organizational structure of the UDP is given in the below figure: -¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, p.7.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p.16.

¹⁵⁵ The scholar conducts telephonic interviewed to Robertjune Kharjahrin (Vice President, UDP) on 16th August, 2025.

Fig: 2.5 Organizational Structure of UDP

Sl.No	Party Structure	Organizational Structure
1.	National Headquarters/ Headquarters	General Council ↓ Central Executive Comt. ↓ District General Council ↓ District Executive Comt. ↓ Circle Unit (MLA constituency level) ↓ Primary Unit
2.	Frontal Organizations	1. State Youth Wing 2. State Women's Wing
3.	Cells/ Committees/ Departments	Effective cells/committees/departments include: Farmers Wings, Media Cell, Manifesto Committee, Election Committee, etc.

Source: Prepared by the Scholar

According to Mr. Paul Lyngdoh, the UDP is a well democratic set-up party in Meghalaya. He argued that leaders are elected in his party. The party trusts the inner democracy as the party workers participate in the party elections. He further stated that the UDP is different from other political parties as the objectives and the priority of the party is based on the interest of the people. Unlike the national parties which are based on Delhi centric, the UDP prioritizes the interest of the people and the state.¹⁵⁶ However, there are different political parties in Meghalaya who claims that they represent the regional interest of the state. The emergence of various regional parties' results in fractured mandate in elections leading to unstable government.

However, within a short span of time, the UDP became prominent in the electoral politics of Meghalaya. The UDP in their electoral debut in the Assembly

¹⁵⁶ The scholar interviewed Paul Lyngdoh (Working President, UDP and Minister during the interviewed period) on 5th June, 2024 at Minister's Chamber, Shillong.

Election 1998 managed to win 20 seats. It was the second largest political party in Assembly (next only to INC who secure 25 seats).¹⁵⁷ It is remarkable to mention that barely within five months of its formation (formed in September, 1997), it contested the Assembly election (February, 1998) and led the coalition government. During the period, the coalition governments were headed by two UDP Chief Ministers—B.B. Lyngdoh and E.K. Mawlong. Later, Dr. Donkumar Roy, an influential leader in the state led the UDP. Dr. Donkumar Roy served as the Chief Minister of Meghalaya (March 2008—March 2009).¹⁵⁸ With the demise of Dr. Donkumar Roy on 2019, the UDP elected Metbah Lyndoh as the President of the party¹⁵⁹ and continued to serve as party President till date.

The UDP contested the Assembly elections for six times since their formation. During the period, they are part of coalition government as a major and junior partner. They are the constituent member in all coalition government except in the ninth Meghalaya Legislative Assembly (2013-2018). They had been in coalition government for 18 years (till date they are part of the government).¹⁶⁰ As the state always experienced fracture mandate, single party cannot initiate major infrastructural development as coalition government is inevitable in the state. Therefore, political parties in the coalition government work together for the development of the state. However, during the tenure of Donkumar Roy as Chief Minister, a number of positive developments took place in the state, including infrastructural development, economic and educational prosperity and better living conditions in the state.¹⁶¹

2.5.1 (iii) The National People's Party (NPP)

The National People's Party (NPP) was established in 2013 by Shri P.A. Sangma. It can be mentioned here that the former Speaker of Lok Sabha intended to

¹⁵⁷ AC: Meghalaya 1998. *India Votes*. <https://www.indiavotes.com/vidhan-sabha/1998/meghalaya/141/44>. Accessed on 14th April, 2025.

¹⁵⁸ Esther M. Tariang, *op.cit*, p.95.

¹⁵⁹ Metbah Lyndoh elected President of United Democratic Party. *Business Standard*. Dated: 11th September, 2019. https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/metbah-lyngdoh-elected-president-of-united-democratic-party-119091101189_1.html. Accessed on 27th September, 2024.

¹⁶⁰ Esther M. Tariang, *op.cit*, p.86.

¹⁶¹ Elections.in. *United Democratic Party*. <https://www.elections.in/political-parties-in-india/united-democratic-party.html>. Accessed on 7th September, 2025.

contest the Presidential Election, 2012 against the then ruling (United Progressive Alliance) candidate Shri Pranab Mukherjee. His party (Nationalist Congress Party) however was reluctant to support his candidature. He argued that his candidature had been projected by the Tribal Forum of India. He further added that he could not disregard the sentiment of the tribals that “*Raisina Hill should not remain an unattainable aspiration for them*”. As a consequence, he resigned from the Nationalist Congress Party without any personal intention to embarrass the party and its leadership [Shri PA Sangma was one of the founding leaders of the NCP in 1999].¹⁶² Shri PA Sangma lost the Presidential election 2012 against Shri Pranab Mukherjee. However, PA Sangma decided to form a political party for the indigenous people of India, particularly the North East India. Consequently, the National People’s Party (NPP) was set up on January, 2013. The party argues that,

*“In its endeavour to champion the cause of the indigenous people of India, particularly Northeast and to voice the concerns of the ethnic communities, minorities and the voiceless, the National People’s Party (NPP) was founded in January 2013 by Late Purno Agitok Sangma”.*¹⁶³

According to Conrad Sangma, Shri P.A. Sangma always wanted to serve the people of the region. So, when he lost the Presidential election in 2012, he still wanted to fulfil the aspiration and objectives of the indigenous people of India, particularly the tribal people and the people of the Northeastern region. He believed that his ambition and desire for the people can be materialized by forming a political party. He argued that by forming a political party it will bring together the interest and development of the North East and as a result of it, the National People’s Party came into being.¹⁶⁴ According to Mr. Timothy D. Shira (the incumbent Deputy Speaker) Shri PA Sangma was a visionary leader (next to Capt. Williamson Sangma) in the North Eastern region. He argued that during Shri PA Sangma’s tenure as a Member of

¹⁶² To force contest, Sangma quits NCP. *The Indian Express*. Dated: 20th June, 2012. <https://indianexpress.com/article/political-pulse/to-force-contest-sangma-quits-ncp/> . Accessed on 28th September, 2024.

¹⁶³ National People’s Party. *History and Philosophy*. <http://nppindia.in/> . Accessed on 28th September, 2024.

¹⁶⁴ The scholar interviewed Conrad Sangma (National President, NPP and Chief Minister of Meghalaya) on 6th June, 2024 at Chief Minister’s Bungalow, Shillong.

Parliament (MP), they formed the North East MP Forum (25 MP in Lok Sabha) which become an important forum till date. Consequently, major infrastructural developments such as—Look East Policy, construction of bridges, national highways, railways line, etc. were initiated. He further stated that Shri PA Sangma candidature for the Presidential Election 2012 truly reflected his commitment for the welfare of the North East and the tribals. Thus, he formed a political party for the welfare of the North East and for the tribals people in India.¹⁶⁵

The election symbol of the NPP is a book. The party adopt the principles of socialism, secularism, democracy and upholds the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India. The core philosophy of the party is to provide: -

i) Education to all, employment to all and empowerment of all sections through affirmative actions in favour of the disadvantaged sections of the society including STs, SCs, women and other backward classes.

ii) Maintaining unity and integrity of India by building up the concept of unity in diversity.

iii) Promoting the spirit of nationalism.¹⁶⁶

The NPP like other national parties advocates the principles of socialism, secularism, democracy, sovereignty, etc. The party stresses on education and employment issues and promises to work for the disadvantaged sections of the society. It also believes in the unity and integrity of India by promoting the spirit of nationalism. This shows that NPP is different from other parties as it is a national party with regional outlook. According to Conrad Sangma, the NPP as a political party wishes to bring all the people of the Northeastern region into one banner. As a result, the NPP raised the slogan of ‘One Voice, One North East’.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ The scholar interviewed Timothy D. Shira (MLA since 1978 & Dy. Speaker during the interviewed period) on 15th December, 2022 at Dy. Speaker’s Chamber, Shillong.

¹⁶⁶ National People’s Party. History and Philosophy, *op.cit.*

¹⁶⁷ Conrad Sangma, *op.cit.*

Organizational Structure

Coming to the party organization, the National People's Party (NPP) have six hierarchical structures within the party: -

- i) The General Body (largest body in the party to ratify the policy decisions of the National Committee)
- ii) The National Committee (highest executive body of the party)
- iii) The Central Executive Committee (the CEC guide and regulate all the organizational units below the CEC)
- iv) The State Executive Committee (can be established in each state of India)
- v) The District Executive Committee (usually covers one District or area as prescribed by the SEC)
- vi) The Block Executive Committee (functions at Assembly constituency level)
- vii) The Polling Station Committee (also called as unit in other parties)¹⁶⁸

The NPP have frontal organizations such as National People's Youth Front (NPYF) and National People's Women's Wing (NPWW). The party also formed different cells/wings/departments and these organizations functions in pursuit of the aims and objectives of the party. These includes—National People's Kisan Cell, Labour Cell, Tribal Welfare Cell, Minorities Committee, etc.¹⁶⁹ The organizational structure of NPP is as follows: -

¹⁶⁸ National People's Party. Constitution, *op.cit.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Fig: 2.6 Organizational Structure of NPP

Sl.No	Party Structure	Organizational Structure
1.	National Headquarters/ Headquarters	General Body ↓ National Committee/General Body ↓ Central Executive Comt. ↓ State Executive Committee ↓ District Executive Comt ↓ Block Executive Committee ↓ Polling Station Committee
2.	Frontal Organizations	1. National People's Youth Front (NPYF) 2. National People's Women's Wing (NPWW). 3. National People's Kisan Cell (NPKC)
3.	Cells/ Committees/ Departments	<i>Effective Cell/Committee/Department includes</i> —Labour Cell, Tribal Welfare Cell, Minorities Committee, Media Cell, etc.

Prepared by the Scholar

Conrad Sangma argues that the party functions as per the directives of its constitution. In the constitution, the tenure for party leaders is three years. He stated the NPP follows its rules and constitution. However, the party amends the constitution periodically to address with the changing time. According to Conrad Sangma, the NPP believes in the democratic principles and tries to follow the democratic principles as far as possible. He argued that electing party leaders is better for the party in a democratic country. He also admits that internal challenges within the party is common in every political party.¹⁷⁰ According to Mr. Nicky Nongkhlaw, electing party leaders

¹⁷⁰ Conrad Sangma, *op.cit.*

is better as it strengthens the functioning of the party. He argued that the NPP follows the democratic principles within the party. He stated that election in the party was conducted peacefully and democratically. He mentioned that there is no big issue or problem in the party election which hamper the functioning of the organization.¹⁷¹

The National People's Party became one of the most successful political parties not only in Meghalaya, but in the entire North East India. Within a short period of time, they have influenced the North Eastern regions. In the initial stage, the party did not perform well in its first election debut in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly election 2013.¹⁷² After four years, the party witnessed a major achievement in the Manipur Legislative Assembly elections 2017. The party won four seats and they formed a coalition government with BJP and other parties in Manipur. The NPP got the Deputy CM and three Cabinet Ministers.¹⁷³ Later on, they influenced the electoral politics in Meghalaya and form its first coalition government (Meghalaya Democratic Alliance-1) in 2018 under the leadership of Conrad Sangma.¹⁷⁴ The party again led the coalition government (Meghalaya Democratic Alliance-2) in 2023 with Conrad Sangma as the Chief Minister.¹⁷⁵ The party had a significant impact in the politics of the North Eastern region as it is the only party from the Northeast which achieved the recognition of a 'national party' status.¹⁷⁶ The NPP had been recognized as the eighth national party by the Election Commission of India in 2019. This marks the NPP as the first party from the North East to be recognized as national party.¹⁷⁷ Thus, the NPP

¹⁷¹ The scholar interviewed Nicky Nongkhaw (Working President in National Peoples Youth, NPP) on 15th December, 2022 at NPP Office, Shillong.

¹⁷² Esther M Tairang, *op.cit.* p.85.

¹⁷³ Manipur Election Results 2017: BJP well-placed to form next Manipur government. *The Indian Express*. Dated: 12th March, 2017. <https://indianexpress.com/elections/manipur-assembly-elections-2017/manipur-election-results-2017-bjp-well-placed-to-form-next-manipur-government-4567014/>. Accessed on 28th September, 2024.

¹⁷⁴ Anuja. Meghalaya assembly elections 2018: NPP-led alliance all set to form govt. *Livemint*. Dated: 5th March, 2018. <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/HENVCUo4AYfgfwqu27XNhJ/Meghalaya-assembly-elections-2018-NPP-led-alliance-all-set.html>. Accessed on 28th September, 2024.

¹⁷⁵ Prabin Kalita. NPP's Conrad stakes claim to form Meghalaya government with list of 32 MLAs. *The Times of India*. Dated: 4th March, 2023. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/elections/assembly-elections/meghalaya/news/npps-conrad-stakes-claim-to-form-meghalaya-government-with-list-of-32-mlas/articleshow/98399548.cms>. Accessed on 28th September, 2024.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Amrita Madhukalya. NPP becomes the 1st national party from North-East. *Hindustan Times*. Dated: 8th June, 2019. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/npp-becomes-the-1st-national-party-from-north-east/story-ZYmpYcMJfMQv3XNcVSxiGI.html>. Accessed on 28th September, 2024.

became one of the most dominating and the successful political parties in the North Eastern region.

Even though the NPP did not have majority government by its own, the party attained a remarkable achievement as they led the coalition government. The party released its report card titled 'Promises delivered' outline different achievement by the NPP led government. For instance, new schemes and policies launched to improve the living standard of the people including the youth policy, Farmers Collectivization for Upscaling Production and Marketing System (FOCUS) & FOCUS +, Youth Engagement through Empowered Youth Organisations (YESS) Meghalaya, Promotion and Incubation of Market Driven Enterprises (PRIME), Skills Meghalaya, Green Meghalaya and others. The party also highlights its achievement in health sector such as formulation of State Health Policy, MOTHER programme, CM Safe Motherhood Scheme, etc. It also claims that it constructs 2234 kms of rural road in five years, which is more than the total construction of roads by all the previous governments in the last 20 years.¹⁷⁸

2.5.1 (iv) The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was set up in Meghalaya in 1991, after 11 of its formation at the national level. It was introduced into the state by Shri P.B. Acharya. Mr. Acharya was given the task of overseeing party affairs and organizational strategy in North Eastern India. The first President of the state was Mr. M.S. Phyllut from Jaintia Hills District and Mr. H.A. Roy Kharbuli from East Khasi Hills served as the Vice President. The party put up their best efforts to establish strong roots in a new environment. The journey was arduous, yet the leaders and committed party members work hard as they can set up a new unit in the state. Their diligent efforts yielded results when the party successfully nominated a candidate for the Parliamentary seat from Shillong in the year of its establishment in 1991. Although the party did not win, it achieved commendable results with a substantial number of

¹⁷⁸ NPP releases report card, claims achievements. *Meghalaya Monitor*. Dated: 12th January, 2023. <https://meghalayamonitor.com/npp-releases-report-card-claims-achievements/>. Accessed on 7th September, 2025.

votes. The election results show that the party marked its presence, signaling to the people that the party is going to serve the people of the state.¹⁷⁹

The national leaders of the party put their best efforts to grow the party in Meghalaya as soon as possible. Many party leaders visited Shillong to discuss the strategy of the party. For example, Shri L.K. Advani, a notable national figure of the party, visited Shillong in 1992. The visit was pleasant and productive as Shri L.K. Advani dedicated his time to engage with numerous prominent citizens and party workers of the state in Bijou Cinema, Police Bazaar, Shillong. The year also saw a significant advancement in the party as Mr. Thrang Hok Rangad joined the party.¹⁸⁰ He was one of the prominent leaders during the period and later became BJP legislator and Minister in the state. With his sincerity, hard work and involvement in the party advanced the party toward new heights.¹⁸¹ In this situation, the party leaders and member became excited and enthusiastic in contesting the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly election in 1993. The party for the first time fielded 20 candidates in the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly election 1993 but failed to open their account in the state.¹⁸²

The BJP as a national party adopted the same constitution, objectives and philosophy in all the states of India. Therefore, the BJP in Meghalaya did not have separate constitution and objectives. They have to abide the constitution of the BJP National Headquarters [the party objectives have already been discussed in Mizoram BJP]. According to Mr. David Kharsati, the BJP in Meghalaya cannot have a separate constitution as they have to adopt the same constitution all over India. He further argued that as a national party, the state cannot have different objectives or philosophy.

¹⁷⁹ Bharatiya Janata Party. *BJP Meghalaya: About us*. <https://meghalaya.bjp.org/about-bjp-meghalaya/>. Accessed on 24th September, 2024.

¹⁸⁰ Shillong adieu to 'honest' leader. *Telegraph India*. Dated: 6th July, 2003. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/north-east/shillong-adieu-to-honest-leader/cid/813571>. Accessed on 24th September, 2024.

¹⁸¹ Bharatiya Janata Party. *BJP Meghalaya. About us*, *op.cit.*

¹⁸² Esther M. Tariang, *op.cit.*, p.84.

They need to follow and implement the party objectives and philosophy. However, during election, they have autonomy to frame their own election manifesto.¹⁸³

Organizational Structure

The BJP unit in Meghalaya functions according to the party constitution. The party followed the organizational structure of the BJP National Headquarters. According to Mr. David Kharsati, the hierarchical structure of the BJP unit in Meghalaya are as follows: -

1. State Executive Committee
2. Core Committee
3. District Committee
4. Mandal (Block) Committee
5. Booth (Unit) Committee

According to Mr. David Kharsati, the BJP constitution allow the formation of different frontal organization in the state. As a result, the BJP in Meghalaya also established Yuva Morcha (Youth), Mahila Morcha (Women), Kisan Morcha (Farmers), Schedule Tribe Morcha, OBC Morcha, Minority Morcha, etc. In addition, the party also established various Wings/Cells such as—Legal Cell, Media Cell, Intellectual Cell, etc. which function under the state unit¹⁸⁴ (organizational structure of BJP in Mizoram and Meghalaya is more or less the same, therefore separate figure is not given in Meghalaya).

Mr. David Kharsati argued that the BJP in Meghalaya usually do not have direct elections within the party. He stated that normally the party Committee at various level nominate leaders instead of direct elections. They send their nominations to the Central authority. The BJP National Headquarters send an Observer and then officially declared the nominated leaders as state leaders. This method of nominating leaders was generally practiced in the state of Meghalaya.¹⁸⁵ According to Mr. AL

¹⁸³ The scholar interviewed David Kharsati (BJP National Council Member, Meghalaya) on 31st May, 2024 at State BJP Headquarters, Shillong.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Hek, electing party leaders at various level is the best for the party. At the same time, election is conducted in the party and sometimes the Central leaders used to appoint the party leaders.¹⁸⁶

According to Mr. AL Hek, he joined BJP in 1996 to serve the people and the state through the national party. He stated that he fought the election in 1993 as an independent candidate but lost the election. Even though he lost the election, he received more inspiration and motivation from the people. He realized that by joining the national party (BJP) he can fulfil his dream and aspiration, and as a result, he joined the BJP. He had been contesting the election from the same constituencies i.e. Pynthorumkrah A/C since 1998.¹⁸⁷ He won the elections and represented Pynthorumkrah A/C since 1998 as an MLA for six consecutive terms. Although, he left the BJP in 2010 and contested as a Congress candidate in Assembly election 2013, he retained his constituencies. Later, he rejoined BJP and became elected as BJP candidate in Assembly elections 2018 and 2023.

The BJP in Meghalaya is working diligently to increase its political influence in the state. At the same time, it had been facing substantial obstacles due to the presence of different regional parties and the Congress party. Besides, Meghalaya is a Christian dominated state and there had been strong resistance towards the BJP's ideology as the people believed it as a Hindu party. A.L Hek said that the party is alleged as 'anti-Christian' and promotes the agenda of Hindutva policy. He admits that to some extent, the party can be labelled as 'Hindu party' as majority of the Indian population are Hindu. At the same time, there are also some false allegations and charges against the BJP in different parts of the region. In the meantime, he argued that the people of Meghalaya did not vote much on party lines as the voter chooses the candidates on the basis of their personality.¹⁸⁸ According to Mr. David Kharsati, it was the slogan coined by other party who are anxious about the expansion of the BJP in different states. He further stresses that in reality it was the BJP government at the

¹⁸⁶ The scholar interviewed A.L. Hek (MLA from Pynthorumkrah A/C since 1998 & BJP Minister during the interviewed period) on 1st June, 2024 at his residence, Shillong.

¹⁸⁷ A.L. Hek, *op.cit.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Centre who helped and assist the poor through various Central schemes irrespective of caste, race, religion, etc. He believes that a time will come when the people will accept the BJP by observing the works and developments done by the party.¹⁸⁹ Even though the BJP were part of the coalition partners in different Ministry, the achievement of the party cannot be separately analysed as they have been the minor players in the coalition government.

The above studies show there are similarities as well as the difference between political parties in Meghalaya. It is observed that various regional parties are functioning in the state with different regional agendas for the state. Therefore, Meghalaya is also known as a home of regional political parties. Similarly, some of the national parties are operating in the state of Meghalaya. It is important to mention that some regional and national parties disappear right after elections were over. Political parties (both regional and national parties) usually fought the elections without any pre-poll alliance. However, with the fracture mandate in the elections, they simply came together and entered into a post-poll alliance to form a coalition government. Political parties and party leaders in Meghalaya switch their political alliance easily to gain political power. As a result, coalition government in the state experienced frequent change of Ministry as well as Chief Minister. It is learnt that political parties in Meghalaya normally remains active only during election period. It seems that political parties do not regularly run party offices as party offices and party workers were not active throughout the year. In Mizoram, political parties have regular party activities such as devotion, weekly party assembly, speeches from party leaders and their offices remains active throughout the year. While, such kind of party activities and functioning is rarely found in the state of Meghalaya.

¹⁸⁹ David Kharsati, *op.cit.*

Chapter-III

Elections in Mizoram and Meghalaya

Elections are essential to a representative democracy. It serves as a mechanism for the people to articulate their sentiments regarding the political leaders and the way they govern. Election is a major exercise in which people participate both individually and collectively at various levels.¹ The will of the people cannot be ascertained without an election. Election can be regarded as the cornerstone of any democratic system, as it provides individuals the opportunity to select their own government.² Elections in India—the most populous nation in the world—is described as a ‘spectacle’ or ‘carnival’ due to the substantial voter participation.³ The chapter discusses the State Legislative Assembly elections in Mizoram and Meghalaya that were held in 2018 and 2023.

3.1 Elections in Mizoram

The electoral politics of the Lushai Hills begin with the formation of the District Conference when the British was about to leave India at the end of 1946. It was initiated with the efforts of A.R.H. Mac Donald, the then-Superintendent of the Lushai Hills. The Superintendent believed that the Conference could help him by providing advice in the administration of the Lushai Hills.⁴ Thereafter, the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills constituted a District Conference in 1946 comprising of 40 members—20 members from the chiefs and another 20 members from the commoners. The provision of electing one chief and one commoner from each Circle as a representative to the Circle Representative Committee promoted the political awareness of the Lushais.⁵

¹ G. Palanithurai. (2000). *Grassroot Democracy in Indian Society*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company. p.32.

² Lalsangzuala Khiantge. (2021). *State Election Commission in Mizoram*. Aizawl: Lengchhawn Offset. p.13.

³ Deepan Das. (2019). *Politics of North East India with special reference to Assam*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd. p.121.

⁴ P. Lalnithanga. (2006). *Political Development in Mizoram*. Aizawl: Author. p.11.

⁵ Chawngsailova. (2012). *Mizoram during 20 Dark Years*. Guwahati: EBH Publishers. p.14.

During the period, the Cabinet Mission arrived in India in 1946 to hand over administration to the Indians. They recommended the formation of an Advisory Committee on Citizens, Minorities, Tribals, and Excluded Areas. On the basis of their recommendation, the Constituent Assembly established an Advisory Committee on 24th January, 1947. However, the Hills District Council was not established immediately after the enforcement of Indian Constitution. As a result, the government established an Interim Advisory Council in Assam's hill districts. Accordingly, the election to the Advisory Council for electing the chief representatives took place on 23rd March, 1948. Consequently, an election for commoner representatives to the Advisory Council was held on 15th April, 1948 through adult franchise. Chief representatives were elected by the chiefs, and commoner representatives were elected by the commoners in the Advisory Council election. In 1949, the Advisory Council was renamed as the Advisory Committee and it continued to function till 1951.⁶

During the time, the Mizo Union (MU) was one of the most popular political parties in the Lushai Hill. The MU dominated the electoral politics of the Lushai Hills since the adoption of the Lushai Hills District Advisory Council constitution in 1948. The total number of members of the Lushai Hills District Advisory Council was 35. Ten seats were reserved for chiefs, and the remaining 25 seats were reserved for commoners. During the time, another political party known as the United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO) was formed on 5th July, 1947. The Mizo Union won the District Advisory Council election held on 15th April, 1948.⁷ The District Advisory Council was upgraded to the status of District Council and the first Lushai Hills District Council election was held on 4th January, 1952. In the election, the MU won 17 out of total 18 seats. The first elected government in Lushai Hills District Council was formed by the MU. It was headed by Lalsawia as Chief Executive Member (CEM).⁸

⁶ P. Lalnithanga, *op.cit*, p.23.

⁷ R.N. Prasad. (1987). *Government and Politics in Mizoram*. New Delhi: Northern Book Centre. p.101.

⁸ CEM is the head of the Executive Committee (government) in Autonomous District Council. The Executive Committee is like a Cabinet and the CEM and the Executive Member (EM) are similar to the Chief Minister and Cabinet Ministers respectively. [L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima & Lal Lawmzuali, *op.cit*, p.37]

On 26th April, 1952, Bishnuram Medhi, the then-Chief Minister of Assam inaugurated the Lushai Hills District in Aizawl. After two years, the Lushai Hills District was changed to Mizo Hills District under the Indian Parliament's Lushai Hills District (Change of Name) Act, 1954.⁹ The Mizo Union continued its dominance in the electoral politics of the Mizo Hills District by consecutively winning the elections in the second District Council Elections in 1957 and the third District Council Election in 1962. Ch. Saprawnga and H.K. Bawihchhuaka were the Chief Executive Members (CEM's) during the period. The Mizo Union was defeated in the fourth District Council election in 1970 by the Congress party. With the help of independent candidates, the Congress for the first time formed the government with Zalawma as the CEM. In 1971, the Mizo Union took advantage of internal factionalism in the Congress and formed an Executive Committee with some Congress members which was led by Ch. Chhunga as CEM.¹⁰ From 1952 to 1970, the Mizo Union formed the Executive Committee in the District Council (with a one-year break in 1970). These clearly show that the Mizo Union party dominated the entire electoral scene in the then Lushai/Mizo Hills District Council.

The Mizo Hills District Council under the Assam government was elevated to the status of Union Territory on 21st January, 1972. As a result, the first Mizoram Union Territory Assembly election was held on 18th April, 1972. The Mizoram Union Territory Assembly had 30 members.¹¹ The Mizo Union formed the first Union Territory government and Ch. Chhunga became the first Chief Minister of Mizoram.¹² The Mizoram People's Conference (MPC) dominated the second & third Mizoram Union Territory Assembly elections held in 1978 and 1979 and formed government under the Chief Minister of Brig. Thenphunga Sailo.¹³ In the fourth Mizoram Union Territory Assembly elections held in 1984, the Congress formed government for the first time and Lal Thanhawla became the Chief Minister of Mizoram. After two years

⁹ R. Vanlawma. (1989). *Ka Ram leh Kei*. Aizawl: M.C. Lalrinthanga. p.238.

¹⁰ L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima & Lal Lawmzuali. (2015). *Government and Politics of Mizoram*. Guwahati: Scientific Book Centre. p.128.

¹¹ V. Venkata Rao, H. Thansanga & Niru Hazarika. (1987). *A Century of Government and Politics in North East India, Volume III- Mizoram*. New Delhi: S. Chand & Company (Pvt) Ltd. p.102.

¹² L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima & Lal Lawmzuali, *op.cit*, p.204.

¹³ *Ibid*, p.205.

and three months in power, Lal Thanhawla resigned from his post in order to make way for the Mizo National Front (MNF) leader Laldenga to become Chief Minister on 21st August, 1986. This was possible due to the signing of the ‘Memorandum of Settlement’ between the MNF and the Government of India on 30th June, 1986 (popularly known as the Mizoram Peace Accord) to end the MNF movement for independence of Mizoram. The interim government was formed to fill the gap before the State Legislative Assembly elections to be held in 1987.¹⁴

The first Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election was held on 16th February, 1987. The MNF won the election and form the government headed by Laldenga. He was sworn-in as the first Chief Minister (in post-statehood era) on 20th February, 1987. Mizoram was granted the status of a full-fledged state and became the 23rd state of the Indian Union on this day. However, due to intra-party factionalism, the first MNF Ministry did not last long.¹⁵ Laldenga’s government failed as he did not have majority vote in the Assembly. As a result, President’s Rule was imposed in the state for four months (September, 1988—January, 1989). It is important to mention that all the government in the post-statehood era (except the first government led by Laldenga) completed their tenure. Accordingly, the Mizoram State Legislative Assembly elections were held regularly and the latest being the State Assembly election 2023) During the period, the Congress and the MNF shared power by rotating among them after two terms in a cyclical manner since 1989—from 1989 to 1998 by the Congress, 1998 to 2008 by the MNF, the Congress from 2008 to 2018 and the MNF from 2018-2023. The Congress formed government for 20 years and the MNF formed government for 16 years and six months in the post-statehood era. During the time, Laldenga, Lal Thanhawla and Zoramthanga were the Chief Ministers. However, the trend of the State Assembly election was changed in 2023 as the new party—the Zoram Peoples Movement (ZPM) won the election in the Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election 2023. The details of Mizoram State Legislative Assembly elections 2018 and 2023 are discussed below.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.190.

¹⁵ P. Lalnithanga, *op.cit*, p.180.

Table-3.1: Name of the government, Chief Minister's & party who led the state government in Mizoram

Sl. No	Assembly Term & Year	No. of govt. changed	Chief Minister	Party who led government	No. of Year / month rule
1.	1 st Mizoram Legislative Assembly (1987-1989)	Did not complete term	Laldenga	MNF	1 year, 6 months
2.	President's Rule	-	-	-	4 months
3.	2 nd Mizoram Legislative Assembly (1989-1993)	-	Lal Thanhawla	INC	4 years, 10 months
4.	3 rd Mizoram Legislative Assembly (1993-1998)	-	Lal Thanhawla	INC	4 years, 11 months
5.	4 th Mizoram Legislative Assembly (1998-2003)	-	Zoramthanga	MNF	5 years
6.	5 th Mizoram Legislative Assembly (2003-2008)	-	Zoramthanga	MNF	5 years
7.	6 th Mizoram Legislative Assembly (2008-2013)	-	Lal Thanhawla	INC	5 years
8.	7 th Mizoram Legislative Assembly (2013-2018)	-	Lal Thanhawla	INC	5 years
9.	8 th Mizoram Legislative Assembly (2018-2023)	-	Zoramthanga	MNF	5 years
10.	9 th Mizoram Legislative Assembly (2023-till date)	-	Lalduhoma	ZPM	continuing

Source: Prepared by the scholar. (Reference: Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, National Informatics Centre, Mizoram State Centre. <https://mizoram.nic.in/gov/cm.htm>)

The above table (table 3.1) shows that political parties in Mizoram always experienced absolute majority by single party. However, pre-poll alliance was made in the second, third and fourth Assembly elections. Mizoram experienced the first pre-

poll alliance between the INC and the MNF (D) in the second Assembly election (1989). In the election, the INC won 23 seats while its alliance partner MNF (N) secured only two seats in the Assembly election 1989.¹⁶ It means that the INC can form government without the support of MNF (N). The third Assembly election (1993) also witnessed the pre-poll alliance between the INC and the Mizoram Janata Dal (MJD) led by Brig. T. Sailo. The INC captured 16 seats while the MJD secured eight seats. The INC-MJD coalition government was formed for a brief period as five of the MJD's MLA broke away from the party. Therefore, the MJD Ministers were dropped from the Ministry.¹⁷ There was also another pre-poll alliance between the MNF and the MPC in the fourth Assembly election (1998). In the election, the MNF managed to win 21 seats while the MPC won 12 seats. The MNF-MPC coalition government was installed with Zoramthanga as Chief Minister and MPC leader Lalhmingthanga as Deputy Chief Minister. The coalition government lasted for just a year as the MPC was forced to withdrawn from the Ministry.¹⁸

It means that none of the pre-poll alliance or coalition government was not successful as no one completed their term as coalition partner. At the same, with the exception of the first Assembly term, the other Ministry completed their normal tenure of five years. It is interesting to mention that Mizoram has had only four Chief Ministers in post-statehood era. Again, Lal Thanhawla and Zoramthanga controlled the state for nearly 35 years or so. However, the present study analyses the last two Mizoram State Legislative Assembly elections held in 2018 and 2023.

3.1.1 Role of Civil Society in Mizoram Elections

Elections in Mizoram are unique as compared to other states due to the participation of churches and civil society organizations. The civil society in Mizoram began its participation in the electoral process in the first Union Territory election 1972, when the church leaders appealed for a clean, free, and fair election. Since then, this has been a regular feature with the church. The Central Young Mizo Association, one of the most powerful civil society organizations joined this movement in 1987 by

¹⁶ L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima, Lal Lawmzuali, *op.cit*, p.209.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.210.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.211.

issuing an appeal. Later on, civil societies have taken a more proactive role in voter education and participation, as well as in voter registration for free and fair elections. This was manifested with the formation of the Mizoram People Forum (MPF) after the Assembly election, 2003.¹⁹

The MPF is an organization formed by a group of churches and civil society organizations in Mizoram. There are seven churches namely—Mizoram Presbyterian Church, Catholic Church, Lairam Isua Krista Baptist Kohhran, Evangelical Church of Maraland, Evangelical Free Church of India, Wesley Methodist Church and Independent Church of India. Besides, there are five civil society namely—Central Young Mizo Association, Mizoram Upa Pawl, Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl, Mara Thythlia Py and Young Lai Association. The MPF attempt to reform electoral politics in the state. The MPF aims to establish a transparent, accountable, and reliable government and establish good governance in the state. The MPF was formed after several unwanted incidents happened during the election to the fifth Mizoram Legislative Assembly in 2003. It prompted the Mizoram Presbyterian Church Synod to take necessary actions to reform electoral politics in the state. After a series of consultation and negotiations, all the major churches and prominent civil society organizations formed a common platform known as the Mizoram People Forum on 21st June, 2006 to bring reforms in politics and elections in the state. The MPF first involvement in the electoral process of Mizoram was in Tlungvel Assembly Constituency bye-election held in 30th October, 2006. The bye-election 2006 was significant as consultation meeting was held between the political parties and the MPF. This consultation meeting was the starting point (guideline) for the coordination between the MPF and political parties.²⁰ The participation of MPF in the electoral process can be discussed under three headings: -

¹⁹ Lalbiakmawia Ngente. (2016). Church and Election-I: The Role of Mizoram People Forum. In Mizoram People Forum Gen. Hqrs (Ed.), *Mizoram People Forum Chanchin 2006-2016 (The History of Mizoram People Forum 2006-2016)*. (1st ed, Reprint 2022, pp.255-262). Aizawl: Mizoram People Forum.

²⁰ Mizoram People Forum Gen. Hqrs (Ed.). (2016). *Mizoram People Forum Chanchin 2006-2016 (The History of Mizoram People Forum 2006-2016)*. Aizawl: Mizoram People Forum. p.174.

1. Signing of Agreement

An agreement was signed between the MPF and different political parties regarding election process. It includes election expenditure of the candidates, election campaigns, formulation of policy and setting of candidates. The aim of the MPF is to ensure clean, free and fair elections. Besides, it tries to reduce the expenditure of the candidate during election and minimize the money power in elections. The latest agreement was signed by the MPF and five political parties, namely—the BJP, the MNF, the MPC, the MPCC and the ZPM on 3rd April, 2024.²¹ The agreement enforces in all the elections in Mizoram including Lok Sabha election, Assembly election and local body elections. Some important points of the agreement are as follows: -

i) All political parties and candidates should refrain from organizing transportation and conveyance of voters to and from their towns/villages as restricted by the Model Code of Conduct.

ii) It prohibits corrupt practices such as bribing of voters through money and other incentives should be avoided. Public, organizations/associations and church denominations should avoid such practices. It also prohibits freebies in the form of silpouline, jerseys, footballs, mobile handsets, etc. Offering financial grants or transportation for carrying individual's needs should be avoided.

iii) Public feasts, dinners, picnics etc. should be avoided as it unnecessarily escalates the expenditure of the candidate.

iv) Since hoisting of banners, flags and posters escalates the election expenditure, the number of banners, flags and posters to be used are fixed according to the size of the local area. The details are given below:

a) If the number of VC/LC member is 7 and above: Banner (3 nos.), Flag (50 nos.) and Poster (30 nos.)

b) If the number of VC/LC member is up to 5: Banner (4nos), Flags (40nos) and Poster (20 nos.)

²¹ Pamphlet. *MPF leh Political Party te Thawh Hona Thuthlung (Agreement between the MPF and Political Party)*. Published by MPF General Headquarters, Aizawl, 2024.

c) If the number of VC/LC members is up to 3: Banner (3 nos.), Flags (30 nos.) and Posters (20 nos.)

d) Banner size: Not more than 4x8 ft. Poster size- not more than 3x4ft.

e) Flag size: For two-wheeler (1 nos., 1x2ft), for three-wheeler and four-wheeler (1 nos., 2x3ft). The height of flag would not be more than ft 3 high

v) If the leaders from Central India and other states convene public meetings, flags and banners should not be hoisted anywhere other than the meeting venue.

vi) Voting should be a secret ballot. The election laws prohibit carrying mobile phones inside polling booths or taking pictures during vote casting.

vii) Only achievable, realistic and promises which are possible to be fulfilled should be included in the manifesto, policy and programme.

viii) Political parties are expected to nominate potential candidates based on their integrity; honesty and diligence; abstain from corrupt practices, alcohol and drugs, fornication; respect for law; dedication to humanity and society and commitment to religion and church.

2. Election Campaign

The agreement comprises the election guidelines of the MPF. Some of the important points are as follows: -

i) House to House campaign for candidates should be prohibited from the date of announcement of election due to potential corrupt practices and the involvement of candidate expenditure. Instead, the MPF will establish a common platform for speeches/debate.

ii) After the declaration of polling date, common platform will be organized by the MPF at constituency and local forum level. People at the constituency and local level gather in one place in which the candidates discuss about their action plan and manifesto of the party.

iii) The MPF should conduct public meetings for parties and independent candidates including campaigners from outside the state.

iv) Political parties can set up stations within the constituency. The use of mics and horns as well as making noise should be strictly prohibited as it disturbs the public life.

v) The election campaign should prioritize party policy and program. Use of false propaganda, misinformation, and unproven truths should be avoided.

3. Polling Day

The agreement includes the actions to be taken up on the polling day. Some of them are as follows: -

i) The MPF leaders set up offices (help desk) on the day of polling. They monitor the election process.

ii) Community tea should not be served on the polling day for voters. The voter's slip of the voters shall be distributed by the MPF volunteers.

iii) The MPF provide tea, snacks and meals to the election officials.

iv) The MPF volunteers may arrange pick and drop system for the needy on the polling day.

v) If anybody is found violating the guidelines, then the MPF may openly announce it through public address system.

There are claims and counter claims on the participation of civil society in general and the MPF in particular in the electoral process of Mizoram. Some groups appreciate its work, while other groups argued that it should not be directly involved in election. The supporters of MPF include—F. Lalnunmawia (MNF),²² LT Kima

²² The scholar interviewed F. Lalnunmawia (ex-MNF MLA & Professor in Mizoram University) on 19th April, 2023 in his residence at Chawnpui, Aizawl.

Fanai (MNF),²³ Vanlalneiha (ZPM),²⁴ Malsawmliana (CYMA),²⁵ Chhinkhanmanga Thomte (MZP)²⁶ and Adam Sapirinsanga Halliday (Frontier Despatch).²⁷ They shared the common view that the MPF's participation in the elections has reduced buying and selling of votes, poll violence and money power. With the effort of the MPF, Mizoram became one of the few states who can conduct elections in an open, free and fair elections. They argued that MPF participation is significant as politicians in Lunglei and Hnahthial areas (these are the two areas where MPF cannot be formed due to the non-participation of church) have requested civil society to establish MPF in their areas due to its exemplary works in different constituencies.

On the other hand, there are some groups who believe that MPF should not be participated in elections. Among them—Vanlalthmuaka (BJP),²⁸ H.C. Vanlalruata²⁹ and Lallianchhunga.³⁰ They shared that the participation of MPF is not necessary as Model Code of Conduct is enforced by the Election Commission of India. In addition, the interference of the church in elections is not correct in a secular state. They argued that sometimes the MPF Local Forum are very biased in managing election process as their leaders cannot maintained political neutrality especially in the rural areas. Besides, they cannot take legal actions against the violators of their agreement. Moreover, Congress leaders (Zodintluanga Ralte,³¹ C. Lalpianthanga,³² F.

²³ The scholar interviewed L.T. Kima Fanai (General Secretary, MNF) on 19th September, 2024 at MNF Gen. Hqrs. Office, Aizawl.

²⁴ The scholar interviewed Vanlalneiha (Secretary-General, ZPM) on 19th September, 2024 at ZPM Office, Republic, Aizawl.

²⁵ The scholar interviewed Malsawmliana (General Secretary, Central YMA and Professor, Govt. T. Romana College on 24th September, 2024 at Govt. T. Romana College, Aizawl.

²⁶ The scholar interviewed Chhinkhanmanga Thomte [General Secretary, Mizo Zirlai Pawl (Mizo Students Association)] on 23rd September, 2024 in MZP Office at Aizawl.

²⁷ The scholar interviewed Adam Sapirinsanga Halliday (Editor, Frontier Despatch) on 24th September, 2024 in his residence at Chaltlang, Aizawl.

²⁸ The scholar interviewed Vanlalthmuaka (BJP President, Mizoram during the interviewed period) on 5th July, 2024 at State BJP Headquarters, Aizawl.

²⁹ The scholar interviewed H.C. Vanlalruata (Correspondent in the Times of India) on 25th September, 2024 in his residence at Salen Veng, Aizawl.

³⁰ The scholar interviewed Lallianchhunga (Faculty, Mizoram University & General Secretary, Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee) on 11th November, 2024 at Mizoram University.

³¹ The scholar interviewed Zodintluanga Ralte (ex-Congress Minister who represent Thorang A/C from 2003-2023) on 18th April, 2023 in his residence at Durtlang, Aizawl.

³² The scholar interviewed C. Lalpianthanga (General Secretary, Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee) on 23rd September, 2024 at Congress Bhavan, Aizawl.

Lalmangaiha³³ and Lianhleia³⁴ shared that the church are very biased during election period. They argued that the church openly criticized the opening of liquor stores in Mizoram during the Congress regime. For instance, the Presbyterian church sent Synod Revival Team to different parts of the state to campaign against the Congress Ministry. As a result, the Congress party was severely decimated in the Assembly election 2018.

In the meantime, there are some groups who praise the contribution of MPF while they also suggested some kind of improvement for the MPF. Among them—Lal Thanzara (INC),³⁵ K. Sapdanga (ZPM),³⁶ Vanlalhlana (ZPM)³⁷ and K. Beichhua (BJP).³⁸ They appreciated the effort of the MPF in ensuring free and fair elections; reducing unnecessary expenses such as community feasts, flag wars, etc; reducing money power and so on. On the other hand, they suggested that engaging more manpower, maintaining political neutrality, non-involvement of government servant and party workers in Local Forum would strengthen the functioning of MPF. Besides, the Local Forum leaders need sensitisation and training programme for the effectiveness of MPF.

According to Lalramliana Pachuau (General Secretary, MPF Gen. Headquarters), there are lots of differences in elections before and after the formation of MPF. The signing of agreements with political party results in selecting reputed candidates, reducing expenditure, community feasts, making of unnecessary wave in elections, etc. Besides, there are difference (in terms of use of money and the process of campaigning, etc.) between the area where MPF branches are formed and where

³³ The scholar interviewed F. Lalmangaiha (General Secretary, Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee) on 23rd September, 2024 at Congress Bhavan, Aizawl.

³⁴ The scholar interviewed Lianhleia (Vice Chairman, Communication Dept, MPCC) on 23rd September, 2024 at Congress Bhavan, Aizawl.

³⁵ The scholar interviewed Lal Thanzara (President, Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee) on 28th June, 2024 at his residence in Zarkawt, Aizawl.

³⁶ The scholar interviewed K. Sapdanga (Working President, ZPM during the interviewed period & present Home Minister) on 3rd February, 2023 at his residence in Aizawl Venglai, Aizawl.

³⁷ The scholar interviewed Vanlalhlana (Education Minister in ZPM Ministry & Faculty in Pachhunga University College) on 5th February, 2023 at his residence in Ramhlun North, Aizawl.

³⁸ The scholar interviewed K. Beichhua (BJP President & MLA, Mizoram) on 23rd September, 2024 at Legislators Home, Aizawl.

MPF local forum are not present. At the same time, the MPF also faces challenges such as—MPF leaders having party affiliation, inability to punish violators, etc. Sometimes, this kind of issue are exaggerated by some political parties and the MPF organized different training and conference and urged leaders (having party affiliation) not to participate as MPF duty. Further, the MPF also reports the violators of election laws to the election officials. He argues that the MPF did not force any political party to sign MoU but agreed to sign after a series of consultations between MPF and political parties. He further said that the agreement was not against the ECI's Model Code of Conduct, but they modified in the context of the society. He argues that the ECI appreciates the MPF's efforts and the MPF's success story was studied by various civil society and media. Moreover, the ECI officials also sent appreciation letter to the MPF for their exemplary works in the process of elections.³⁹

3.1.2 Election Campaign

Election campaigns play a crucial role in every election. The management of effective campaign and promotion of policies, programmes and manifestos largely depend on the success in election. There are different election campaigns or techniques employed all over the world. Political parties study the mindset of the electorate, the strategy of its rival parties, and the election manifestos of other parties to formulate effective electoral strategy. An important electoral strategy includes—managing election campaigns efficiently, conducting effective public meetings, understanding the problems of their constituencies and people, strengthening party workers and their supporters, etc.

In an election, voters were given awareness about the significance of elections, how to exercise their right to vote, etc. In the meantime, elections also provide opportunities for the candidates to present their positions to the public and try to win maximum votes. In order to achieve these objectives, it is important to have a well-organized and well-planned election campaign strategy.⁴⁰ The techniques of

³⁹ The scholar interviewed Rev. Lalramliana Pachuau (General Secretary, MPF Gen. Hqrs) on 25th October, 2024 at MPF Office, Aizawl.

⁴⁰ Open Election Data Initiatives. *Election Campaigns*. <https://openelectiondata.net/en/guide/key-categories/election-campaigns/>. Accessed on 13th October, 2024.

election campaign employed by political parties in Mizoram include house to house campaign, distributing pamphlets and manifestos by the party workers and candidates, public rally, explaining the party manifestos and flagship programmes during the joint platform organized by Mizoram Peoples Forum (MPF) or other forum and social media campaign.

It is argued that different political parties in Mizoram used more or less the same techniques during the elections. Firstly, house-to-house campaign and public meeting became one of the most powerful instruments in election campaigns. Almost all the party leaders (Lal Thanzara, Tawnluia,⁴¹ F. Lalnunmawia, Vanlalhmuaka, K. Sapdanga, Vanlalhlana) shared the same view. They argued that the two traditional forms of campaigning—house to house campaign and public meeting—are still relevant in the present society. While, for some constituencies, there are a number of villages in one constituency and are very difficult to access by road (some constituencies need to be reached by foot, boat, etc.). Therefore, it is not possible to organize house-to-house campaign in every village. C. Ngunlianchunga and Zodintluanga Ralte shared that there are 72 villages (in C. Ngunlianchunga's Lawngtlai West A/C) and more than 40 villages (in Zodintluanga's Thorang A/C) in their constituencies. It is not possible for them to visit their constituencies twice or thrice during election campaign. As a result, they entrusted their party workers and family members during the election.⁴² In addition, they worked hard in building loyal and trustworthy party workers as many people belongs to the ethnic minorities such as Chakma and Brus.⁴³

Secondly, the method of election campaign in rural areas and urban areas is also different. The agenda or issues needed for the rural areas and urban areas is different. In urban areas like Aizawl, people focus on the candidate's personality as strong party supporters are found less in the city. The issues in elections in urban areas are mainly development of the state. Whereas in rural areas, the focus is mainly on

⁴¹ The scholar interviewed Tawnluia (Sr. Vice President, MNF & Dy. Chief Minister during interviewed period) on 24th May, 2024 in his office chamber at New Secretariat Complex, Aizawl.

⁴² The scholar interviewed C. Ngunlianchunga (Vice President, MPCC & MLA from Lawngtlai West since 2013) on 4th July, 2024 at Legislator's Home, Aizawl.

⁴³ Zodintluanga Ralte, *op.cit.*

party affiliation. The election issues in rural areas include—rural economy, their agricultural products, connectivity and ruling perks for the party workers. Therefore, political parties need to address the needs of the people during their election campaign.⁴⁴

Thirdly, the use of information technology or social media became a new style of campaigning in Mizoram. According to K. Sapdanga (ZPM leader), the ZPM activated a technical cell known as Know Your Voters (KYV) in the Assembly election 2018 & 2023. The main role of the KYV was to prepare electoral rolls and make assessment in different constituencies. They also organized various trainings and programmes for the master trainers. He argued that the well preparedness of the party (especially the KYV) was one of the main factors for the good performance of the party in the Assembly election 2018.⁴⁵ Vanlalhlana (ZPM leader) also shared the same opinion. He personally set-up a website during the Assembly election in 2018. According to him, the creation of website was an important source of communication between the candidates and the people. He believed that formulating a pamphlet which outlined the vision and idea for the particular constituencies is very important in elections.⁴⁶ Lal Thanzara (Congress President) argues that social media plays a crucial role in campaigning. He said that the ZPM win the Assembly elections 2023 with the support of social media.⁴⁷

Besides the above different election campaigns, political parties in Mizoram used different techniques or strategies in elections. Firstly, the role of grassroots workers in election occupy an important position in elections. According to Lal Thanzara and Tawnluia, the Block and Unit leaders have a huge responsibility in the elections as they are the workers at the grassroots level. They said that there should be cordial relations between the candidates and the party workers in order to win the elections. The Unit and Block level party leaders had a great influence and lobbying in selecting candidates for their constituencies. Normally, the party Nomination

⁴⁴ Malsawmliana, Vanlalhlana, F. Lalnunmawia, *op.cit*

⁴⁵ K. Sapdanga, *op.cit*.

⁴⁶ Vanlalhlana, *op.cit*.

⁴⁷ Lal Thanzara, *op.cit*.

Committee or the party Headquarters usually did not make decision against the wishes of the unit and block leaders. If the party leaders took decision against the local level party workers, the candidates or the party used to have issues and problems (split within the party or joining other parties) on or after the elections.⁴⁸

Secondly, selection of party candidate is based on their winnability chance. In other words, political parties used to give party tickets to those candidates who have more chance to win the election. It is observed that selecting a winnable candidate became very important strategy in Mizoram election.⁴⁹ Political parties in Mizoram try to induct or recruit an influential and popular Mizo leaders who dominate in various field like—civil society organizations, church leaders, reputed government servant, renounce personalities in their own field (art, literature, sports, business, and many more), etc. to boost and strengthen their party. Every political party make an attempt to increase the party wave by inducting popular new faces in their party.⁵⁰ Thirdly, political parties also took the advantage of the importance of church in Mizoram. Church denomination became a strong point for the candidates in some constituencies.⁵¹ On the other hand, leaders from ADC areas—C. Ngunlianchunga and K. Beichhua argued that church denomination did not have much impact in the ADC areas.⁵² According to H.C. Vanlalruata, there are different factors in selecting the candidates at different level of elections. In every level of elections, electorates are concerned about the candidate's personality and their involvement in church and civil society organizations.⁵³

Moreover, there are various factors in winning the Assembly elections in Mizoram. Among them—candidate's personality, candidate's educational qualification, party affiliation and church affiliation—contributed in winning the elections. There are different opinions for winning the elections in Mizoram. Firstly, many of the party leaders, academicians,⁵⁴ civil society leaders and journalists

⁴⁸ Lal Thanzara, Tawnluia, *op.cit.*

⁴⁹ Adam Sapransanga Halliday, H.C. Vanlalruata, F. Lalnunmawia, *op.cit.*

⁵⁰ Lal Thanzara, Tawnluia, *op.cit.*

⁵¹ H.C. Vanlalruata, Lal Thanzara, *op.cit.*

⁵² C. Ngunlianchunga, K. Beichhua, *op.cit.*

⁵³ H.C. Vanlalruata, *op.cit.*

⁵⁴ Lallianchunga, *op.cit.*

expressed that a candidate's personality became an important factor in elections.⁵⁵ Some leaders argue that there cannot be single factors in winning the elections. Therefore, they believed that elections are won due to a combination of factors. Lal Thanzara argues that political parties, candidate's personality and church denomination are the three important pillars for winning the elections.⁵⁶ C. Ngunlianchunga said that the candidate's personality, party affiliation and money power are the three biggest factors in winning the elections.⁵⁷ While K. Sapdanga opines that a candidate having integrity, involved in different social or church organizations and higher academic background have more chance of winning the elections.⁵⁸ Senior MNF leader Pu Tawnluia said that a candidate's personality and educational background contributed much in winning the elections.⁵⁹

Secondly, political party as well as party leaders also play a crucial role in elections especially in the last Assembly election 2023. Adam Sapprinsanga Halliday, Malsawmliana and Chinkhanmanga Thomte expressed the same view. They argued that the voters are much enthused of the leaders or the Chief Ministerial candidate specifically in the last election. They said that the voters give the mandate by looking at the party wave during the election campaign and whom they believe will form a government.⁶⁰ Adam Sapprinsanga Halliday also claims that a party leader or a party wave is much more important than a candidate in winning the election especially in the Assembly election 2023.⁶¹ L.T. Kima Fanai and Vanlalneiha also expressed their opinion that a candidate's personality and party affiliation are the two important factors in winning elections in Mizoram.⁶² Malsawmliana also shared the same view. He said that the voters elect their representatives by looking both their personality as well as

⁵⁵ Tawnluia, Vanlalneiha, L.T. Kima Fanai, Lal Thanzara, C. Ngunlianchunga, Lallianchhunga, Malsawmliana, Chinkhanmanga Thomte, Adam Sapprinsanga Halliday, H.C. Vanlalruata, *op.cit.*

⁵⁶ Lal Thanzara, *op.cit.*

⁵⁷ C. Ngunlianchunga, *op.cit.*

⁵⁸ K. Sapdanga, *op.cit.*

⁵⁹ Tawnluia, *op.cit.*

⁶⁰ Adam Sapprinsanga Halliday, Malsawmliana, Chinkhanmanga Thomte, *op.cit.*

⁶¹ Adam Sapprinsanga Halliday, *op.cit.*

⁶² L.T. Kima Fanai, *op.cit.*

party affiliation. In Aizawl, personality is a must, but one cannot be elected without the support of political party.⁶³

Thirdly, Adam Sapprinsanga Halliday, Malsawmliana and Chinkhanmanga Thomte argue that nowadays the voters are interested in the educational qualification of the candidates. Even though the candidate is well educated and having good personality does not mean they can win the election particularly in the State Legislative Assembly elections without the support of the party. It is very difficult for an independent candidate to win the elections.⁶⁴ In the last two Assembly elections (2018 & 2023), no independent candidate manages to win the election. Fourthly, money power also matters in every election to encourage and strengthen their party workers and leaders during the elections. Money is also required to cover all the expenditure involved during elections like—banner, posters, pamphlets, expenditure of party workers and campaigners, party rally, vehicles, etc.⁶⁵ However, some party leaders argued that the involvement of money power became higher in every election. Among them include—C. Ngunlianchunga, K. Beichhua, L.T. Kima Fanai and Lallianchhunga.⁶⁶

The above shows that the technique of election campaign and electoral strategy of different political parties in Mizoram did not have much difference. The common feature of election campaign in Mizoram includes—house-to-house campaign, street campaign, public rally, distribution of pamphlets and manifesto's, social media campaign, etc. Almost all the political parties (except the ZPM in 2018 as stated by Pu K. Sapdanga) used the same methods or techniques which have been practiced in the state.

3.2 Mizoram State Legislative Assembly Election 2018

The Election Commission of India on 6th October, 2018 announced that it would hold State Legislative Assembly elections to constitute new Legislative

⁶³ Malsawmliana, *op.cit.*

⁶⁴ Adam Sapprinsanga Halliday, Malsawmliana, Chinkhanmanga Thomte, *op.cit.*

⁶⁵ L.T. Kima Fanai, C. Ngunlianchunga *op.cit.*

⁶⁶ C. Ngunlianchunga, K. Beichhua, L.T. Kima Fanai, Lallianchhunga, *op.cit.*

Assemblies in the states of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Mizoram and Telangana. As a result, the 8th Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election was held on 27th November 2018 and the result was announced on 11th December 2018. Six political parties were in the election fray, namely—Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian National Congress (INC), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Mizo National Front (MNF), Peoples Representation for Identity and Status of Mizoram (PRISM), National People's Party (NPP) and some independent candidates.⁶⁷

The Mizoram State Assembly elections 2018 were conducted peacefully and successfully. In the election, the ruling party the Congress and its main rival party the MNF contested in each Assembly constituencies without alliance with other parties. The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM), a pre-poll alliance by six political organizations contested the election in 38 constituencies as independent candidate. They contested as independent candidate because the party was not recognised by the Election Commission of India and they used a 'hat' as a common symbol. The BJP which is the ruling party at the centre as well as in different states of the region contested in 39 Assembly constituencies. Other parties like—the NCP, the NPP, the PRISM and Zoramthar (independent) however did not contest in all the Assembly constituencies.⁶⁸ The study focuses mainly on three political parties, namely—the INC, the MNF and the ZPM. These three political parties are the only parties who had a meaningful impact in the electoral politics of Mizoram and also the parties who formed government after statehood era.

3.2.1 Election Manifesto

The election manifesto is a pamphlet or booklet published by a political party that specifies its programmes and policies in the run-up to an election. Every political party enters the election with its manifesto to woo voters. Typically, political parties publish a unique manifesto that can communicate all of the key ideas, programmes, and political values of the party. It should be thorough and dynamic to keep up with

⁶⁷ Chief Electoral Officer, Mizoram. (2019). *Election to Mizoram Legislative Assembly, 2018: Mizoram Votes 2018*. Mizoram: Chief Electoral Officer. p.122.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.123.

the shifting demands of the political environment.⁶⁹ The party manifesto serves as a tool for communication with the party and the voters. It comprises plans, strategies, and tactics, political ideas, and beliefs on how to govern the country/state. It is considered as the most significant and successful communication instrument of the party.⁷⁰ In contrast, people are cynical, because manifestos are rarely fully executed. Not every promise made in the manifesto has been kept.

The election manifestoes of the INC, the MNF and the ZPM are discussed below:

3.2.1 (i) The Indian National Congress (INC)

The election manifesto of the Congress (I) outlined 21 points. The key points of the election manifesto are as follows: -

a) To continue its flagship programme, i.e. the New Land Use Policy (NLUP). It will revise the guidelines as well as increase the amount of the beneficiaries. (as in no.1).

b) To continue the New Economic Development Programme (NEDP) and to facilitate youth employment programme through the NEDP schemes. (as in no.2).

c) To provide a better health care system through the Mizoram State Health Care Scheme and the Govt. of India scheme Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY). Steps will be taken up for the poor families who are suffering from critical illness to cover more than Rs. 5 lakhs. (as in no.4).

d) Efforts will be made to improve and sustain the Mizoram Institute of Medical Education & Research (MIMER) as one of the best premier medical colleges in India. (as in no.6).

⁶⁹ Asghar Ali Engineer. *Election Manifestos and Minorities: Promises Galore*. Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 33, No. 19 (May 9-15, 1998), pp.1069-1070. <https://www.epw.in/journal/1998/19>. Accessed on 23rd November, 2022.

⁷⁰ Allanson Wahlang. *Analysis of Political Manifestos through Dalit and Tribe Perspective*. Dalit and Tribal. Dated: 21st January, 2010. <https://dalitandtribe.wordpress.com/2010/01/21/analysis-of-election-manifestos-of-major-political-parties-in-india/>. Accessed on 23rd November, 2022.

e) Efforts will be made on the installation of Solar Power Plant in various rural areas of Mizoram along with the Hydel Project. (as in no.16).⁷¹

The Land Use Policy or the NLUP is the permanent flagship programme of the Congress party in Mizoram. The Congress Ministry implemented the NLUP in the state three times between 1984-1987, 1991-1997, and 2011-2018.⁷² The main objective of the NLUP is to eliminate temporary or shifting (jhum) cultivation. It tries to provide permanent occupation for livelihoods until they become self-sufficient. It provides assistance and supports up to Rs. 1 lakh, which can be increased based on the individual's needs.⁷³ The Congress party also launched a new economic policy i.e. New Economic Development Policy (NEDP) on 30th September, 2016. The NEDP was born out of the state's flagship programme (NLUP) which was launched in 14th January, 2011. The primary objective of the NEDP is to lead Mizoram from a subsistence-based economy to a market-based economy.⁷⁴ It aims to boost the economy by enhancing productivity, creating jobs, improving public finances, fostering a sustainable business environment, and enhancing public service delivery.⁷⁵ The party fought the Assembly election in 2018 by promising that it will continue its flagship programme (NLUP) and its economic policy (NEDP).

3.2.1 (ii) The Mizo National Front (MNF)

The MNF fought the election by raising its party flagship programme—Socio-Economic Development Programme (SEDP). The MNF election manifesto was divided into six main points, namely—political, administration, economic

⁷¹ Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee. *Election Manifesto 2018 MLA Election*. Aizawl: Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee.

⁷² James L.T. Thanga. *Land Use Policies in the state of Mizoram*. Journal of Economic & Social Development, Vol. - XVI, No. 1 & 2, (December, 2020). pp.55-65.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351969786_. Accessed on 15th October, 2024.

⁷³ NLUP Implementing Board & NLUP Media Cell, I&PR, Govt. of Mizoram. (2013). *New Land Use Programme leh Kut Hnathawktute (New Land Use Policy and the Farmers)*. (A Magazine Publication on NLUP). p.8

⁷⁴ Pratap Chhetri. New Economic Development Policy Launched by Chief Minister. *DIPR, Govt. of Mizoram*. Dated: 30th September, 2016. <https://dipr.mizoram.gov.in/post/new-economic-development-policy-launched-by-chief-minister-2>. Accessed on 18th May, 2025.

⁷⁵ Planning & Programme Implementation Department (Mizoram State Planning Board), Govt. of Mizoram. *New Economic Development Policy (Comprehensive Growth Strategy for Mizoram)*. Aizawl: Mizoram Government Press. p.3.

development, infrastructure, social security, education & youth welfare. Altogether, it had 59 objectives or missions. Some of the main points are as follows: -

a) To work for the unification of all Mizo tribes inhabited in different parts of the world under one administrative umbrella as provided in UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People dated: 13th September, 2007. (as in political, no.1).

b) To safeguard and promote the Mizo's religion, customary law, language and customs. (as in political, no.2).

c) To set up Vigilance Commission / Lok Ayukta for eliminating corruption. (as in administration, no.1).

d) Steps will be taken for implementing Socio Economic Development Policy (SEDP) in different sectors. (as in economic development, no.1)

e) MLPC Act, 2014 which allowed selling of liquors in the state will be revoked and steps will be taken for those habitual drinkers for setting up of Rehabilitation Centre with the initiatives of Church, NGO and various stakeholders. (as in social security no.1)⁷⁶

The SEDP is the flagship programme of the MNF during their opposition period. It explains the party's objectives and strategies for achieving its visions for the development of Mizoram. The strategy focuses on land protection, resource conservation, judicious use of resources, transparent administration and self-sufficiency in food. It aims to foster a peaceful and harmonious society, promote inclusive and participatory governance, equality and equity among citizens, paving the way for a better and prosperous future for Mizo society.⁷⁷ To achieve these goals, nine governmental departments have formulated plans and trade for the success of SEDP.⁷⁸ While the other political party criticized the SEDP as it is a freebies policy that harms

⁷⁶ Mizo National Front. *MLA Election Manifesto 2018*. Aizawl: Media & Publicity Department, MNF General Headquarters.

⁷⁷ Mizo National Front. (2017). *SEDP (Policies & Programmes)*. Aizawl: MNF Gen. Headquarters, Mizoram. p. 2

⁷⁸ Fishery Department, Govt. of Mizoram. *Family Oriented SEDP Guideline*. <https://fisheries.mizoram.gov.in/uploads/attachments/2022/12/f2ecf744ab3d53a83e8dab5431f01733/sedp-family-oriented-guidelines.pdf>. Accessed on 29th May, 2025.

the moral of the people. The ZPM Chief Ministerial candidate Mr. Lalduhoma vehemently slammed the NLUP and SEDP as it is a bait to entice voters. The Congress under NLUP promised Rs 1 lakh each to poor families, while the MNF pledges Rs 3 lakh each to farmers under SEDP.⁷⁹ The MNF (claims themselves as champion of Mizo nationalism) always prioritizing the unification of different Mizo tribes. It also pledges to work for the promotion and protection of the Mizo religion (here it means Christianity), culture and tradition of the Mizo people. It is important to mention here that the Mizoram Liquor Prohibition Act (MLPC), 2014 was a hot political issue during the period. The Act was passed by the Congress Ministry in 2014 which allows the selling of liquor with certain restrictions. The MNF severely criticized the MLPC Act and promised to revoke the Act if it comes to power in the state.⁸⁰

3.2.1 (iii) The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM)

The ZPM raised the slogan '*Kalphung Thar*' (New System) during the Assembly election 2018. The ZPM manifesto has nine Parts and each part contains a brief explanation of '*Kalphung Thar*'. The different parts of the manifesto have a total of more than 100 points of objectives and provide a detail framework for the implementation of '*Kalphung Thar*' in different sectors. The main points of the ZPM are as under: -

a) Government will be formed under the guidance of '*Val Upa Council*' (Advisory Council of Elders). [as in Part-I, 1 (i)].

b) To work for the reunification of the Mizo tribes in collaboration with ZORO (Zo Reunification Organization). [as in Part-II, 1 (i)].

c) '*Bana Kaih Policy*' (Hand Holding Policy) will be implemented for the welfare of the farmers and for assisting the hard workers. [as in Part-III, 6].

⁷⁹ Henry L. Khojol. ZPM Slams Cong, MNF Growth Policies. *The Telegraph (online)*. Dated: 16th September, 2018. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/north-east/zpm-slams-cong-mnf-growth-policies/cid/1668923>. Accessed on 29th May, 2025.

⁸⁰ Mizo National Front to re-impose total prohibition if it comes to power. *The Morung Express*. Dated: 9th November, 2018. <https://morungexpress.com/mizo-national-front-re-impose-total-prohibition-if-it-comes-power>. Accessed on 29th May, 2025.

d) To set up Mizoram Education Reform Commission for the improvement of quality education in Mizoram. [as in Part-III, 7 (xi)].

e) To review the existing Mizoram State Health Care System and to upgrade the system for utilization of the people. [as in Part-IV, 4 (iii)].⁸¹

The ZPM fought the Assembly election 2018 by raising the slogan ‘*Kalphung Thar*’ (New System). The main idea of ‘*kalphung thar*’ is that Mizoram needs a new system of administration in the state. The party challenged both the INC and MNF for the uneven development of the state. They charged both parties responsible for inculcating a bad system which hampers the moral of the people. The INC and the MNF are the only two parties that had been ruling the state since statehood period. As a result, the ZPM raised the catchphrase ‘non-Congress, non-MNF in 2018’.⁸² The party also expressed that if they formed the government, *Val Upa Council* (Council of Elders) will guide and monitor the performance of the government. The party, like another regional party (MNF) also promises to work for the reunification of different Mizo tribes residing in different parts. Among many promises, it attempts to reform the education system by establishing Education Reforms Committee. It also focuses to review the health care system and tries to strengthen health sector in various fields.

3.2.1 (iv) The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

The BJP contested the elections by releasing their manifesto entitled ‘*Hmathlir*’ 2018 (Vision Document 2018). The election manifesto was divided into seven main points, such as—educational policy, youth development, rural & urban development, boundary, political, city & town management and tourism. Altogether, it comprises of 41 points. Some of the key points are as follows: -

⁸¹ Zoram People’s Movement. *The Manifestos of the Zoram People’s Movement (2018)*. Aizawl: The Zoram People’s Movement General Headquarters.

⁸² Naresh Mitra. Mizoram Assembly election 2018: Cong, MNF cannot form govt without us, says ZPM candidate. *The Times of India*. Dated: 24th November, 2018.
<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/mizoram-assembly-election-2018-cong-mnf-cannot-form-govt-without-us-says-zpm-candidate/articleshow/66781268.cms>. Accessed on 30th May, 2025.

a) Inclusion of Mizo language in the Eight Schedule to the Constitution [as in educational policy (m)].

b) Creation of sustainable employment for the youth [as in youth development policy (a)].

c) To implement National Health Protection (PMJAY) Scheme in the state which covers health care up to Rs. 5 lakhs [as in rural/urban development policy (d)].

d) To resolve Assam-Mizoram boundary dispute and upgradation of CIJW, Vairengte into Central Defence University [as in boundary policy (a)].

e) Implementation of Sixth Schedule Autonomous District Council in all administrative districts [as in political policy (a)].⁸³

The BJP contested the election by utilizing the strength of the Union government led by the BJP. The election manifesto was set to be released by BJP National President Amit Shah. As the National President was behind schedule in his tour, it was released by Ram Madhav, the National Secretary. The party attempted to dethrone the ruling (Congress party) as Mizoram was the last bastion in North East India where they formed government. Therefore, they made promises to attract the voters. Among them include—establishment of Mizoram University Southern Campus, upgradation of MIMER (Mizoram Institute of Medical and Educational Research) to Central Medical College, upgradation of Lunglei Polytechnic to Engineering College, provision of rice at Rs.1 for the BPL family. The party also promises to promote trade, tourism and industries.

3.2.2 Election Result

The counting of votes for the Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election 2018 was held on 11th December, 2018 and the result was declared on the same day. In the election, there were 209 candidates (191 male and 18 female) who contested for the 40 seats in the Assembly. Among them, 97 candidates (81 male and 16 female)

⁸³ Bharatiya Janata Party Mizoram Pradesh. *Hmathlir (Vision Document) 2018*. Aizawl: Bharatiya Janata Party, Mizoram Pradesh.

forfeited their deposit in the election. The performance of political parties in the Election to Mizoram State Legislative Assembly, 2018 is given below:⁸⁴

Table-3.2: Performance of Political Parties in Election to Mizoram State Legislative Assembly, 2018

Legislative Assembly, 2010						
Sl. No	PARTY	SEATS			SHARE IN VALID VOTES POLLED IN STATE	
		CONTESTED	WON	FORFEIT DEPOSIT (FD)	VOTES POLLED	VOTING PERCENTAGE
NATIONAL PARTIES						
1.	BJP	39	1	33	51087	8.09
2.	INC	40	5	Nil	189404	30.56
3.	NCP	5	Nil	5	334	0.05
STATE PARTIES						
4.	<u>MNF</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>Nil</u>	<u>238168</u>	<u>37.69</u>
STATE PARTIES-OTHER STATE						
5.	NPP	10	Nil	10	3748	0.59
REGISTERED (UNRECOGNIZED PARTIES)						
6.	PRISM	12	0	12	1158	0.18
INDEPENDENTS						
7.	IND	63	8 ⁸⁵	37	144928	22.94
8.	NOTA				2932	0.46
GRAND TOTAL		209	40	97	631759	-

Source: CEO Mizoram. (Election to Mizoram Legislative Assembly, 2018 (Mizoram Votes 2018: A Brief Overview & Statistical Report).

In the Assembly Election 2018, the MNF managed to capture power from the Congress. Despite the fact that many pollsters and psephologists predicted a hung assembly,⁸⁶ the MNF won the elections. The MNF won 26 out of 40 seats and formed

⁸⁴ Chief Electoral Officer, Mizoram, *op.cit*, p.123.

⁸⁵ ZPM candidates contested as independent candidates.

⁸⁶ Exit polls predict hung assembly in Mizoram. *The Times of India*. Dated: 8th December, 2018. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/exit-polls-predict-hung-assembly-in-mizoram/articleshow/66990945.cms>. Accessed on 30th May, 2025.

a new government under Zoramthanga as the Chief Minister whereas the Congress won only five seats. The other seats were shared between the BJP and independent where the former bagged one seat and the latter managed to capture eight seats. It is important to mention here that the independent candidates belong to the ZPM party. As stated above, the ZPM contested the election in 38 constituencies as independent candidate as they did not get recognition from the Election Commission of India. Actually, the eight independent MLAs belong to the ZPM party. Out of the 40 members, half of elected members (20 MLAs) are first timers.⁸⁷ In terms of vote share, the MNF secured 37.69% from the total vote polled while the Congress party received 29.98% from the total votes. In short, the difference between the Congress (I) and the vote share is 14.75%. However, the number of seats won by the MNF (26 seats) is 21 seats more than the Congress (I). It also means that the Congress (I) seats have been decreased by 29 seats as they secure 34 seats in the Assembly election 2013.

The independent candidates (including the ZPM) managed to secure 22.94% vote share. It can be noted that the independent vote share increased as the ZPM fought the election as independent candidates. Out of the 67 independent candidates, 38 candidates are supported and back by the ZPM party. But, out of the 38 independent (ZPM) candidates, 12 candidates⁸⁸ forfeited their deposits as they failed to secure 1/6 of the valid vote polled. It means that the remaining 26 independent (ZPM) candidates secure good votes which led to the high percentage of independent candidates. Furthermore, the ZPM candidates secured second position in nine Assembly constituencies.⁸⁹ As stated above, the eight independent candidates belong to the ZPM. Out of the eight MLAs, it is remarkable to mention that six of them are elected from Aizawl city and two from rural areas. The BJP who won one seat received 8.09% vote share across Mizoram. Other political parties such as NCP, NPP and PRISM were

⁸⁷ Mizoram Assembly elections 2018: Half of elected MLA's are first timers. *The Mizoram Post*. Vol-16, Issue-199. Dated: 17th December, 2018.

⁸⁸ The forfeited deposit candidates are from Hachhek, Dampa, Mamit, Serlui, Tuivawl, Champhai North, South Tuipui, Thorang, West Tuipui, Lawngtlai West, Lawngtlai East and Siaha. [Extract from CEO Mizoram, General Election to Mizoram Legislative Assembly, 2018: Mizoram Votes 2018 (A Brief Overview & Statistical Report)].

⁸⁹ ZPM candidates who secured second position includes Assembly constituencies—Kolasib, Chalfilh, Tawi, East-I, East-II, Tuichang, East Tuipui, Lunglei North and Lunglei East. [Extract from CEO Mizoram, General Election to Mizoram Legislative Assembly, 2018: Mizoram Votes 2018 (A Brief Overview & Statistical Report)].

below 1% vote share. The total votes for None of the Above (NOTA) option accounts for 0.46% in the 40 Assembly constituencies.⁹⁰

It can be mentioned here that the Congress (I) is the only national party that came to power in Mizoram but decimated in the election. The Congress party retained only five seats, its worst performance in Mizoram State Assembly elections. Among them, only two incumbent Minister, namely—Zodintluanga (Thorang A/C) and C. Ngunlianchunga (Lawngtlai West) were re-elected. Former Congress legislator and ex-Minister Nihar Kanti Chakma (West Tuipui), K.T. Rokhaw (Palak A/C) and the first timer Lalrindika Ralte (Hachhek A/C) were the other Congress members who got elected. The incumbent Chief Minister Lal Thanhawla has been ousted from two constituencies. The Congress put their best effort to make history by winning three consecutive elections, but it was defeated badly by the MNF. This indicates that no party has been able to form a government in Mizoram for more than ten years.

The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM), a coalition of six political organizations won eight seats. The performance is beyond the expectations of some political analysts. Despite the fact that the party's workers believe it will form its own government, many political analysts do not believe that it will cross more than five seats. While almost all the exit poll predicts hung assembly for the first time in the state. They also believed that the ZPM and the BJP will be crucial in formation of government.⁹¹ Surprisingly, Lalduhoma, the alliance's Chief Ministerial candidate, was elected from two assembly constituencies—Aizawl West-I and Serchhip. He sacrifices Aizawl West-I and a bye-election was conducted. As a result, MNF candidate Zothantluanga won the election in his place, therefore, reducing the ZPM MLA to seven.⁹² Unfortunately, another ZPM MLA from Tuirial A/C (Kolasib District) Mr. Andrew H. Thangliana expire during the Assembly term. Consequently,

⁹⁰ Chief Electoral Officer, Mizoram, *op.cit*, p.123.

⁹¹ Mizoram Assembly Election 2018: Key candidates and battles. *India Today*. Dated: 10th December, 2018. <https://www.indiatoday.in/elections/story/mizoram-assembly-election-key-candidates-lal-thanhawla-zoramthanga-lalduhoma-zaichhawna-hlawndo-1406171-2018-12-10>. Accessed on 10th June, 2025.

⁹² MNF's Zothantluanga wins Aizawl West-I by-poll in Mizoram. *The Times of India*. Dated: May 23, 2019. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/mnfs-zothantluanga-wins-aizawl-west-i-bypoll-in-mizoram/articleshow/69463498.cms>. Accessed on 16th October, 2024.

bye-election was conducted and Mr. K. Laldawngliana, the ruling MNF won the second bye-elections, reducing the ZPM to six seats in the Assembly and increasing the MNF Assembly seats to 28.⁹³ Moreover, another bye-election occurred in Serchhip A/C where the ZPM leader Lalduhoma was disqualified from MLA by the Assembly Speaker on the ground of anti-defection law. The petition was submitted by the 12 ruling MNF MLA's.⁹⁴ However, Lalduhoma managed to win the bye-election thereby maintaining the ZPM seats in the Assembly.

The BJP had opened an account in Mizoram for the first time, which is a notable achievement of the party. The BJP National President Amit Shah kicked off the election campaign in Aizawl.⁹⁵ The Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several Union Ministers extensively campaigned for the BJP. Among them, Rajnath Singh (Home Minister), Nirmala Sitharaman (Defence Minister) and Kiren Rijiju (MoS Home) campaigned in different parts of the state.⁹⁶ Chief Ministers and Minister from other states who campaigned in Mizoram includes—Biplab Deb (Tripura CM), Y. Patton (Nagaland Dy. Chief Minister), Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma (Assam Minister) and several BJP Ministers from North East regions.⁹⁷ Besides, national leaders like Ram Madhav (General Secretary) and many other leaders also campaigned in different constituencies.⁹⁸ Despite the fact that various national and state leaders from various

⁹³ Ruling MNF wins Mizoram's Tuirial by poll. *The Hindu*. Dated: 2nd November, 2021.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/mizoram-tuirial-bypoll-result/article37298806.ece>. Accessed on 16th October, 2024.

⁹⁴ Pratap Chhetri. Mizoram Legislative Assembly Speaker Pu Lalrinliana Sailo announced disqualification of Pu Lalduhoma, MLA of 26-Serchhip (ST) A/C. *DIPR, Govt. of Mizoram*. Dated: 27th November, 2020. <https://dipr.mizoram.gov.in/post/>. Accessed on 16th October, 2024.

⁹⁵ Tora Agarwala. Next Christmas will be under BJP govt: Amit Shah kicks off campaign in poll-bound Mizoram. *The Indian Express*. Dated: 18th October, 2018. <https://indianexpress.com/article/north-east-india/mizoram/amit-shah-bjp-mizoram-elections-5406396/>. Accessed on 1st June, 2025.

⁹⁶ Biswa Kalyan Purkayastha. BJP quest to bloom lotus in Mizoram Assembly faces great wall of Mizo National Front in elections. *First Post*. Dated: 22nd November, 2018. <https://www.firstpost.com/politics/bjp-quest-to-bloom-lotus-in-mizoram-assembly-faces-great-wall-of-mizo-national-front-in-elections-5597161.html>. Accessed on 2nd June, 2025.

⁹⁷ Tripura CM Biplab Deb, BJP leaders to campaign in Mizoram Assembly elections 2018. *The Statesman*. Dated: 23rd October, 2018. <https://www.thestatesman.com/india/tripura-cm-biplab-deb-bjp-leaders-to-campaign-in-mizoram-assembly-elections-2018-1502699840.html>. Accessed on 2nd June, 2025.

⁹⁸ BJP To Fight Mizoram Polls Alone: General Secretary Ram Madhav. *NDTV*. Dated: 3rd October, 2018. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/bjp-to-fight-mizoram-assembly-election-alone-says-general-secretary-ram-madhav-1926151>. Accessed on 2nd June, 2025.

states campaigned for the party in Mizoram, BJP failed to make a positive impact in Mizoram. Also, some believed that the BJP legislator won the election at his individual capabilities as he is popular Chakma leader.⁹⁹ Other smaller parties, such as the NCP, NPP, PRISM, and Zoramthar were defeated, indicating that they did not have a significant impact on the election. The two parties—the Congress and the MNF that ruled the state since 1984 till 2023—shared power by rotating among them after two terms in a cyclical manner since 1989 (from 1989 to 1998 by the Congress, 1998 to 2008 by the MNF, 2008 to 2018 by the Congress). The MNF formed the government under Chief Minister Zoramthanga and lasted for five years.

3.3 Mizoram State Legislative Assembly Election 2023

The Election Commission of India announced the date of elections to constitute new Legislative Assemblies in the states of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Rajasthan and Telangana on 9th October, 2023.¹⁰⁰ The 9th Mizoram State Legislative Assembly elections were held on 7th November, 2023 and the results were declared on 3rd December, 2023. The election was contested by five political parties namely—Aam Admi Party (AAP), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian National Congress (INC), Mizo National Front (MNF), Zoram Peoples Movement (ZPM) and some independent candidates.¹⁰¹

The Mizoram State Legislative Assembly elections 2023 were conducted peacefully. In the election, the ruling MNF and its traditional rival the INC and the ZPM contested each other in every constituency without having any alliance with other. In other words, there was a triangular or three corner contests in the 9th Mizoram

⁹⁹ Utpal Parashar. Assembly Election Results 2018: After 5 unsuccessful attempts, BJP tastes first victory in Mizoram. *Hindustan Times*. Dated: 11th December, 2018. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/mizoram-elections/assembly-election-results-2018-after-5-unsuccessful-attempts-bjp-tastes-first-victory-in-mizoram/story-4z3QScfmYFluRdRV46edzL.html>. Accessed on 10th June, 2025.

¹⁰⁰ Press Note of CEO, Mizoram on Election to Mizoram Legislative Assembly, 2023. *DIPR, Govt. of Mizoram*. Dated: 9th October, 2023. <https://dipr.mizoram.gov.in/post/press-note-of-chief-electoral-officer-mizoram-on-general-election-to-mizoram-legislative-assembly-2023>. Accessed on 16th October, 2024.

¹⁰¹ Election Commission of India. *Mizoram Legislative Election 2023-Statistical Report*. <https://www.eci.gov.in/mizoram-legislative-election-2023-statistical-report>. Accessed on 16th October, 2024.

State Legislative Assembly Election 2023. Other national parties such as the AAP contested only in four constituencies while the BJP competed in 23 constituencies. There were 27 independent candidates in 24 Assembly Constituencies. There were three Assembly Constituencies namely—Aizawl East-II A/C, Serchhip A/C and Lawngtlai West A/C where there are two independent candidates. In the election, a total number of 174 candidates (156 male & 18 female) contested for the 40 Assembly seats.

3.3.1 Election Manifesto

The election manifestos of the INC, the MNF and the ZPM¹⁰² for the Assembly election 2023 are analysed below: -

3.3.1 (i) The Indian National Congress (INC)

The Congress party fought the Assembly election 2023 with their slogan ‘*Tang Puihna*’ (helping or assisting hard work). The Congress party was the first political party that released its manifesto for Assembly election 2023. It released its election manifesto two times. First, it released its Election Manifesto No.1 ‘*Tang Puihna*’ on 30th September, 2022.¹⁰³ The second manifesto was released on 21st October, 2023 with 31 points.¹⁰⁴ The key points of the INC election manifesto include:-¹⁰⁵

a) Manifesto No.1 ‘*Tang Puihna*’: ‘*Tang Puihna*’ is an economic programme for farmers and entrepreneurs to develop sustainable economic and livelihood activities. The manifesto discusses four main points in which ‘*Tang Puihna*’ can be implemented. Firstly, it emphasises on helping the agricultural workers through good link roads, proper irrigation system, offering specialized cropping zone, providing

¹⁰² The study focuses mainly on three political parties, namely—the INC, the MNF and the ZPM as they are the only parties who formed government after statehood era.

¹⁰³ MPCC in Congress Manifesto No.1 ‘*Tang Puihna*’ tlangzarh (MPCC release election manifesto no.1 ‘*Tang puihna*’. *Zalen (Mizo Online News Apps)*. Dated: 30th September, 2022. <https://zalen.in/detail/mpcc-in-congress-manifesto-no-1-tang-puihna-tlangzarh>. Accessed on 21st October, 2024.

¹⁰⁴ Mizoram: Cong unveils loft manifesto for assembly polls. *The Statesman*. Dated: 25th October, 2023. <https://www.thestatesman.com/india/mizoram-cong-unveils-lofty-manifesto-for-assembly-polls-1503234535.html>. Accessed on 21st October, 2024.

¹⁰⁵ Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee. *Manifesto 2023 General Election*. Aizawl: Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee. p.1-12.

godown and cold storage, proper marketing system, managing contract farming and strengthening Co-operative Society for the agricultural workers. Secondly, '*Tang Puihna*' can be implemented for starting new business, new initiative for self-sufficient workers, capacity building and various vocational guidance for encouraging the farmers and entrepreneur. Thirdly, it focuses on unemployed youth by assisting the youth in various schemes and project through skill development, entrepreneurship development, etc. Fourthly, it can also be benefited for the oppressed, physically and mentally disordered by implementing social security scheme.¹⁰⁶

b) Manifesto No.2 '*Sawrkar Tha*' (Good Governance): It expresses the importance of good governance for the people and for the state. The party promises to reform the governance system by establishing Administrative Reforms Commission. It also pledges to restore Old Pension System (OPS) for the government employees.¹⁰⁷

c) Manifesto No.3 contains 30 points of ideas and promises. It stated that the party will make an attempt to transform various sectors. It includes—education, health services, power, police, sports & youth development, environment & forests, agriculture and allied sectors, food civil supply & consumer, etc. It also mentioned drinking water supply, providing master plan for Aizawl city and other districts, reforming old age pension scheme, providing Young Mizo Entrepreneurship Programme (YM Elevate), land reforms, etc.¹⁰⁸

The Congress manifesto can be grouped into three categories. The first category focuses on '*Tang Puihna*' while the second category emphasises on 'good governance'. The third category highlights various department and ideas covering 30 points of actions. It is important to mention here that the Congress party for the first time fought the election (Assembly 2023) without announcing NLUP as its flagship programme. It fought the election on new slogan '*Tang Puihna*'. It was initiated by the party new President Lalsawta (former Finance Minister). In an interview, Lalsawta said that the party will not continue its flagship programme (NLUP) and will

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p.1-4.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p.5-7.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p.8-12.

emphasise on ‘*Tang Puihna*’ in Assembly election 2023.¹⁰⁹ Even though the Congress was the first party to release its election manifesto (*Tang Puihna*), it was not as attractive as compared to the previous NLUP. The electorate and even the party worker do not properly understand their main election agenda. Other political parties and people criticize the NLUP as it is freebies policy of distributing Rs.1 lakh to the people. At the same time, some people also challenge ‘*Tang Puihna*’ as it promises to give assistance of Rs. 2 lakhs and above to the people. The party in its manifesto no.2 prioritizes establishing good governance in the state. It believes that good governance is the foundation of overall development and administration. The manifesto no.3 contains various plans and actions to be implemented in different government departments.

3.3.1 (ii) The Mizo National Front (MNF)

The MNF released its election manifesto on 20th October, 2024.¹¹⁰ The MNF manifesto comprises of six main themes namely—political, administration, economic development, infrastructure, social security, and education & youth affairs. Some of the main points of the MNF election manifesto 2023 are as under: -

a) Political: The MNF promises to work for ‘*Zofas*’ or ‘*Zohnahthlak*’ (different Mizo tribes inhabiting different region) to be united under a single government with ‘higher authority’ in accordance with the UN Declaration on Indigenous People’s Rights notified on 13.09.2007.

b) Political: It pledges to implement all the clauses of the Peace Accord (signed between MNF and Govt. of India 1986) and safeguarding the Peace Accord as it leads to peace and normalcy in the state.

c) Administration: It tries to strengthen the Lok Ayukta which was established by the MNF government to combat corruption.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Lalsawta. *The Aizawl Post (Mizo Daily Newspaper)*. Dated: 22nd March, 2023. <https://theaizawlpost.org/amp/interview-lalsawta/>. Accessed on 29th May, 2025.

¹¹⁰ MNF Manifesto Tlangzarh (MNF released Manifesto). *Vanglaini (Mizo Daily Newspaper)*. Dated: 21st October, 2023. <https://www.vanglaini.org/tualchhung/103633>. Accessed on 21st October, 2024.

d) Economic Development: It promises to continue family oriented SEDP for the upliftment of the agricultural workers.

e) Social Security: It attempts to improve the Mizoram State Health Care Scheme through Asian Development Bank (ADB) funding to have better and effective health care system. (as in social security no.4).

f) Education and Youth Affairs: It tries to implement National Education Policy (NEP) in accordance with safeguarding Mizo customs and social norms by enhancing quality education in the state.¹¹¹

It can be argued that the MNF won the Assembly election, 2018 with its party flagship programme i.e. the SEDP. The SEDP plays a major role in forming the MNF government in 2018, besides the anti-incumbency of the Congress government (2008-2018) and the church openly criticizing the MLTP Act 2014. Unfortunately, with the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, the MNF government failed to fulfil its promises to implement its flagship programme till mid-2022. However, the MNF government launched its SEDP on 19th August, 2022.¹¹² The MNF in its election manifesto 2023 again promises to continue family oriented SEDP for the upliftment of the agricultural workers. At the same time, there are many criticisms from the people and opposition party as it cannot give Rs. 3 lakhs to the people. Instead, they give Rs. 20000-Rs.50000 to the people on the eve of election. As a result, many people do not believe in the promises of the MNF's SEDP.¹¹³ Like its election manifesto in 2018, the MNF reaffirms to work for the reunification of Mizo tribes inhabiting in different parts of the world. The party also promises to improve the Mizoram Health Care Scheme. The MNF government was also criticized for the poor management of Health Care Scheme

¹¹¹ Mizo National Front. *MLA Election Manifesto 2023*. Aizawl: Election Department, MNF General Headquarters. p.1-10.

¹¹² Pratap Chhetri. Chief Minister Pu Zoramthanga'n Family Oriented SEDP hawng (Chief Minister Zoramthanga inaugurates Family Oriented SEDP). *DIPR, Govt. of Mizoram*. Dated: 19th August, 2022. <https://dipr.mizoram.gov.in/post/chief-minister-pu-zoramthanga-family-oriented-sedp-hawng>. Accessed on 29th May, 2025.

¹¹³ Zonuna Kawlni. SEDP leh PAHOSS hlawhchham (The failure of SEDP and PAHOSS)- CLP Leader. *Lenkaw! (Daily Newspaper in Serchhip, Mizoram)*. Dated: 4th September, 2023. <https://lenkaw!khampat.com/2023/09/sedp-leh-pahoss-hlawhchham-clp-leader.html?m=0>. Accessed on 29th May, 2025.

as the government cannot pay the pending reimbursement bill of the patients.¹¹⁴ Therefore, it promises to improve the Health Care Scheme through ADB in order to have better and effective health care system.

3.3.1 (iii) The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM)

The ZPM election manifesto 2023 outlined its aims and vision of the party. The manifesto promises to establish “God’s Kingdom in state administration’ (*Ram rorelnaa Pathian ram tun din*). To achieve its objectives, good governance, transparency and decentralization will be very crucial. The main points of the election manifesto of the party are as follows: -

a) Administration: The ZPM attempt to establish ‘*Kalphung Thar, Mipui Sawrkar*’ (‘New System, People’s Government’) for the people of Mizoram in a more simple and reasonable way.

b) Development: The party promises to provide a separate budget for the agricultural workers.

c) Industry: It tries to facilitate dedicated and promising workers in various sectors through ‘*Bana Kaih*’ (Hand Holding).

d) Social Security: The ZPM promises to formulate effective health care system.

e) Youth Welfare: The party promises to recruit and assist eligible and qualified person in job recruitment and will distribute work to them.

f) Environment: It tries to work for the preservation and conservation of environment and climate change.

¹¹⁴ Mizoram Elections: MNF reason for state’s healthcare issues, says Congress. *Business Standard*. Dated: 2nd November, 2023. https://www.business-standard.com/elections/mizoram-elections/mizoram-elections-mnf-reason-for-state-s-healthcare-issues-says-congress-123110201067_1.html. Accessed on 29th May, 2025.

g) Long-term Development Project: It promises to work for the unification of different Mizo tribes residing in different territory under one administrative umbrella.¹¹⁵

The ZPM slogan of ‘non-Congress, non-MNF government in 2018’ was very popular but failed to win the State Assembly election 2018. However, within a short period of time since its formation (2017), the party managed to win eight seats in the election. They put their best efforts to establish a strong foundation following the Assembly election. They continued to raise the slogan of ‘*Kalphung Thar, Mipui Sawrkar*’ (New System, People’s Government) all over the state. As a result, they also fought the Assembly election 2023 on this theme and they repeatedly raised the slogan ‘non-Congress, non-MNF government’.¹¹⁶ The party popularized the idea of ‘*Bana Kaih*’ (Hand Holding) as the party’s flagship programme.

3.3.1 (iv) The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

The BJP election manifesto *Hmathlir* Document 2023 (Vision Document 2023) was released by J.P. Nadda, BJP National President on 27th October, 2023 at Aizawl. Some of the key points of the election manifesto are as follows: -

a) To establish Mizoram Agri-Infra Mission with Rs. 1000 crore for the farmers (under prosperous farmer).

b) Reservation of 33% government jobs for women. Provision of financial assistance of Rs.1.5 lakhs to every girl child (under empowering women).

c) Promises a budget of Rs. 250 crores and Rs. 350 crores for revamping and restructuring government schools and colleges (under education and youth).

¹¹⁵ Zoram People’s Movement. *2023 General Election Manifesto*. Aizawl: ZPM General Headquarters, Aizawl, Mizoram

¹¹⁶ MNF ni lo, Congress ni lo sorkar Mizoram in a mamawh—Duhoma (Mizoram needs a new government led by non-MNF and non-Congress—Duhoma). *Bengvarna* (Mizoram online news website). Dated: 15th October, 2022.

<https://www.bengvarna.com/post/mz/mizoramnews/0/220/MNF+ni+lo,+Congress+ni+lo+sorkar+Mizoramin+a+mamawh+--+Duhoma>. Accessed on 30th May, 2025.

d) Launching of Mizoram Health Infrastructure Fund by investing Rs. 500 crores (under healthcare for all).

e) Provision of Lotus Family ID Card to each family. It covers—uninterrupted electric and water connection, provision of Rs. 10 lakhs free loan to students, provision of government jobs for each family (under inclusive development).¹¹⁷

The BJP again contested the election with a promise to implement its election manifesto with the help of the party and government at the national level. The BJP had high expectations in 2023 as they focus on the minority dominated areas. Besides, Mizoram is the only state in North East India where BJP is not leading the government or is not part of the coalition partner. Therefore, various party leaders, Union Ministers and Ministers at the state level tirelessly campaign for the party. Even though MNF is part of the BJP led NDA government at the Centre, the BJP criticize the ruling (MNF party). The BJP promises to establish special investigation team to probe irregularities and corruption in implementation of SEDP, the flagship programme of the MNF party.¹¹⁸

3.3.2 Election Result

The Mizoram State Legislative Assembly elections 2023 were held along with the State Legislative Assembly of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Telangana. The Election Commission notified that counting of vote for the all the five states to be held on 3rd December, 2023 (Sunday). However, in Mizoram, as the counting date happened to be on Sunday, there was strong protest against the ECI decision and requested to change the counting dates. All the civil society organizations, church leaders, political parties and different student's organizations sent representations and made appeal to the ECI as church programmes are held on Sunday

¹¹⁷ Bharatiya Janata Party. *Hmathlir* Document (Vision Document) 2023. Aizawl: Bharatiya Janata Party.

¹¹⁸ Utpal Parashar. BJP's Mizoram manifesto vows 33% reservation for women in govt jobs. *Hindustan Times*. Dated: 28th October, 2023. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/bjps-mizoram-manifesto-vows-33-reservation-for-women-in-govt-jobs-101698431909901.html>. Accessed on 28th October, 2025.

in Mizoram. As a result, the ECI changed the counting date for Mizoram from 3rd December to 4th December, 2024 (Monday).¹¹⁹

Thus, the counting of votes was held on 4th December, 2023 and all the results were declared on the same day. The total electors in the state of Mizoram are 8,57,063. Out of the total voters, 6,99,867 cast their vote (including EVM & Postal Ballot) which constitute 82.26%. Out of the 174 candidates, 68 candidates (56 male & 12 female) forfeited their deposits. The performance of political parties in the Mizoram State Legislative Assembly, 2023 are discussed below:¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Mizoram Assembly Elections: Election Commission defers vote counting to December 4. *The Hindu*. Dated: 2nd December, 2023. <https://www.thehindu.com/elections/mizoram-assembly/mizoram-assembly-elections-election-commission-postpones-vote-counting-to-december-4/article67595381.ece>. Accessed on 16th October, 2024.

¹²⁰ Election Commission of India. *Mizoram Legislative Election 2023-Statistical Report*. <https://www.eci.gov.in/mizoram-legislative-election-2023-statistical-report>. Accessed on 16th October, 2024.

Table-3.3: Performance of Political Parties in Election to Mizoram State Legislative Assembly, 2023

Sl. No	PARTY	SEATS			SHARE IN VALID VOTES POLLED IN STATE	
		CONTESTED	WON	FORFEIT DEPOSIT (FD)	VOTES POLLED	VOTING PERCENTAGE
NATIONAL PARTIES						
1.	AAP	4	0	4	615	0.09
2.	BJP	23	2	20	35524	5.06
3.	INC	40	1	12	146113	20.82
STATE PARTIES						
4.	MNF	40	10	Nil	246338	35.10
REGISTERED (UNRECOGNIZED PARTIES)						
5.	<u>ZPM</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>27</u>	5	<u>265755</u>	<u>37.86</u>
INDEPENDENTS						
7.	IND	27	0	27	4749	0.68
8.	NOTA				2778	0.40
GRAND TOTAL		174	40	68	699867	-

Source: Election Commission of India (<https://www.eci.gov.in/mizoram-legislative-election-2023-statistical-report>). Accessed on 16th October, 2024.

In the Mizoram State Legislative Assembly elections 2023, the ZPM dethroned the ruling MNF. The ZPM broke the electoral trends in Mizoram since 1989 as the government was changed between the MNF and the Congress after ten years in power. The MNF party leaders propagate during the election campaign that they will continue to rule for another five years as history repeat itself since 1989. Besides these, many pollsters and exit poll predict to be a neck-to-neck fight between the MNF and

the ZPM while some predict a hung assembly in the state.¹²¹ However, the ZPM, a new political party managed to win 27 seats by its own crossing the half way mark (21 seats) to form government. In other words, ZPM won the Assembly election with simple majority. The ruling MNF won 10 seats reducing their number by 17 seats as compared to the Assembly election 2018. The Congress party which is the oldest political party in the state managed to win only one seat. This is the worst electoral performance of the Congress (I) in the Mizoram State Legislative Assembly elections. The BJP secured two seats from Siaha District (Siaha A/C and Palak A/C) and increased its seats from one to two in 2023.¹²²

Among the elected MLA's, Lalduhoma, the legislator from Serchhip A/C and the present Chief Minister became the oldest legislator with 73 years. It is worth mentioning that he is the only elected MLA who crossed 70 years in the current Assembly term. Baryl Vanneihsanga, a media person turned politician from Aizawl South-III and the footballer turned politician Jeje Lalpekhlua from South Tuipui A/C (Hnahthial District), both 32 years are the two youngest legislators. It is important to note here that three women were elected in the elections, namely—Baryl Vanneihsangi (ZPM) from Aizawl South-III, Lalrinpuii (ZPM) from Lunglei East (Lunglei district) and Prova Chakma (MNF) from West Tupui (Lunglei district). This is remarkable because for the first time Mizoram has elected more than one woman MLA in Assembly since Union Territory era.

The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) party formed the first non-Congress and non-MNF government in the state as it wins the Assembly election 2023. The ZPM, a young political party formed only in 2017 managed to win 27 seats in the election. There are various factors for winning the elections by the ZPM. It is observed that the strong anti-incumbency against the MNF is one of the main factors for winning

¹²¹ Mizoram Exit Poll 2023: Neck-and-neck fight between Zoramthanga's MNF & ZPM. *The Economic Times*. Dated: 30th November, 2023. <https://m.economictimes.com/news/elections/assembly-elections/mizoram-assembly-elections/mizoram-exit-polls-2023-result-latest-news-updates-30-nov-mizoram-election-winning-prediction-bjp-congress-mnf-zpm-political-party/articleshow/105629136.cms>. Accessed on 4th June, 2025.

¹²² Election Commission of India. *Election to Assembly Constituencies: Trends & Result Dec-2023, Mizoram*. <https://results.eci.gov.in/AcResultGenDecNew2023/partywiseresult-S16.htm>. Accessed on 16th October, 2024.

the elections by the MNF. The MNF government failed to implement its flagship programme of SEDP as it promises to distribute Rs. 3 lakhs to each family. Besides, the MNF government have been criticize by individual, civil society organizations and political parties in combatting Covid-19 pandemic. Further, a new movement of ‘non-MNF or non-Congress government’ became a strong factor for the rise of the young political parties. As the state had been ruled by the Congress and the MNF more than four decades (since 1984 to 2023), the people are being fed up of the two dominating parties. Moreover, the ZPM raised an attractive slogan called ‘*Kalphung Thar, Mipui Sawrkar*’ (New System, People’s Government) as they promised to introduce a new system of governance in the state. In addition, the party flagship programme ‘*Bana Kaih*’ (Hand Holding Policy) boosted their party’s popularity among the neutral voters. The party tries to provide a helping hand (through loans, materials, technological knowledge, etc) to the farmers, entrepreneurs and educated youth for starting their business. Besides, many have high expectation to the ZPM leader Lalduhoma, an IPS turned politicians who had been active in Mizoram politics more than four decades and whose potential is yet to be tested as a Chief Minister. So, many people wish to see him as Chief Minister of Mizoram.

After forming government in December 2023, the ‘*Bana Kaih*’ (Hand Holding) Scheme aims to promote economic growth and self-sufficiency. It also emphasises empowering citizens by providing financial, technical, and institutional support to farmers and entrepreneurs across the state. The scheme was launched by Mizoram Chief Minister Pu Lalduhoma on 19th September, 2024. The scheme is implemented by 16 departments under the government.¹²³ In the state budget 2025-2026, the Mizoram government has earmarked Rs.350 crore for the flagship programme. It surpluses the previous year (2024-2025) allocation of Rs.200 crore, which is a 75% increase from the previous budget.¹²⁴ The party also fulfils its

¹²³ Commerce & Industries Department, Govt. of Mizoram. *About Bana Kaih*. Dated: 24th October, 2024. <https://industries.mizoram.gov.in/page/about-bana-kaih>. Accessed on 30th May, 2025.

¹²⁴ Umanand Jaiswal. Mizoram govt raises budget of Handholding Scheme by 75 percent to boost sustainable development. *The Telegraph (online)*. Dated: 5th March, 2025. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/north-east/mizoram-government-raises-budget-of-handholding-scheme-by-75-per-cent-to-boost-sustainable-development-prnt/cid/2087085>. Accessed on 30th May, 2025.

manifesto as it formulates Mizoram Universal Health Care Scheme. The scheme ensures cashless and paperless system covering government employees, civil pensioners and the general public. The scheme was launched by Chief Minister Pu Lalduhoma on 19th March, 2025.¹²⁵ These are a few achievements that can be mentioned here from the present government.

3.4 Elections in Meghalaya

The electoral politics of the state of Meghalaya can be traced back to the formation of District Councils in the then undivided Assam. The Jaintia Hills, Khasi Hills and Garo Hills in the undivided Assam were included under the provision of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. As a result, Autonomous District Councils were established in the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills in 1952. A separate District Council for the then Jowai sub-division (now Jaintia Hills District) was created in 1964 (but actual functioning in 1967) after its bifurcation from the then United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District.¹²⁶ At present, there are three Autonomous District Councils such as—Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC), Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council (JHADC) and Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC). The three Autonomous District Councils cover the entire state of Meghalaya (except Municipality and Cantonment Board).

The first election of the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council was held on 27th March, 1952. The Council consisted of 24 seats of which 18 were elected and six members were appointed.¹²⁷ Mr. F. War and Mr. Josingh Rynjah were elected as Chairman and CEM respectively by the newly constituted District Council. Later, the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council was inaugurated by the new Governor of Assam Shri Jairamdas Daulatram on 27th June,

¹²⁵ K. Saitluanga. Chief Minister launches Mizoram Universal Healthcare Scheme, Effective from April. *DIPR, Govt. of Mizoram*. Dated: 19th March, 2025. <https://dipr.mizoram.gov.in/post/chief-minister-launches-mizoram-universal-healthcare-scheme-effective-from-april>. Accessed on 30th May, 2025.

¹²⁶ L.S. Gassah. (2023). Paragraph 12A of the Sixth Schedule and Meghalaya Politics. In M.N. Karna, L.S. Gassah & C.J. Thomas (Ed.), *Power to People in Meghalaya: Sixth Schedule and the 73rd Amendment*. (Reprinted 2023, pp.50-54. New Delhi: Regency Publications.

¹²⁷ John F. Kharsiing & Bodhi S. Ranee. (2022). *The Khasi States: A Brief Historical Timeline (1771 to 2017)*. Shillong: Author in collaboration with the Tribal Intellectual Collective India. p.28.

1952 at Dinam Hall, Jaiaw, Shillong.¹²⁸ The United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council witnessed two District Council elections in 1952 and 1958 before the creation of a separate Autonomous District Council for the Jaintia Hills. The Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC) witnessed fourteen District Council elections (including United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District Council).¹²⁹ The latest KHADC election was concluded on 21st February, 2025.¹³⁰ In the meantime, the movement for the creation of a separate Hill State was started in 1960s. After twelve years (in 1972), they will have a Legislative Assembly with 60 members.¹³¹

The 1st Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly election was held on 9th March, 1972. The APHLC won the elections and formed the government. Capt. Williamson Sangma of the APHLC was sworn-in as the first Chief Minister of Meghalaya.¹³² The latest election was the 11th State Legislative Assembly election held in 2023. It can be noted here that Meghalaya always witnessed fractured verdicts and instability except the first Assembly elections in 1972. The regional and national parties (including the INC) struggle to secure a comfortable position in the 60 members House. The fractured verdict results in coalition government inevitable since the second Assembly election.¹³³ It becomes normal rather than exception. Unfortunately, the state witnessed an instable government. Very often, governments failed to complete their normal tenure of five years. The following table shows the instability of government and the frequent change of Chief Ministers in Meghalaya.

¹²⁸ Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council. *Home (About KHADC)*. <https://khadc.nic.in/>. Accessed on 17th June, 2025.

¹²⁹ W. Kharkrang, Secretary, KHADC. *Down Memory Lane (1952-2002)*. https://khadc.nic.in/archive/down_memory_lane.html. Accessed on 17th June, 2025.

¹³⁰ Meghalaya Governor sets February 21 as poll date for KHADC, JHADC. *North East News*. Dated: 18th December, 2024. <https://nenews.in/meghalaya/meghalaya-governor-sets-february-21-as-poll-date-for-khadc-jhadc/17099/>. Accessed on 17th June, 2025.

¹³¹ V. Venkata Rao, Barrister Pakem & Niru Hazarika, *op.cit*, p.94.

¹³² Esther M. Tariat. *Glimpses on Political Developments in Meghalaya*. Chennai: Notion Press Media Pvt. Ltd. p.89.

¹³³ Kailash Chandra Das. *Assembly Elections in Meghalaya: A Historical Insight*. IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science. Vol. 20, Issue. 6 (June, 2015). pp.82-91. <https://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol20-issue6/Version-5/L020658291.pdf>. Accessed on 5th June, 2025.

Table-3.4: No. of government, Chief Minister's & party who led coalition in Meghalaya after statehood

Sl. No	Assembly Term & Year	No. of govt. changed	Chief Minister's	Party who led coalition	No. of Year / month rule
1.	1 st Meghalaya Legislative Assembly (1972-1978)	2	Capt. Williamson A. Sangma	APHLC	5 years & 8 months
			Capt. Williamson A. Sangma	INC	1 year & 3 months
2.	2 nd Meghalaya Legislative Assembly (1978-1983)	3	D.D. Pugh	APHLC	1 year & 1 month
			B.B. Lyngdoh	APHLC	2 years
			Capt. Williamson A. Sangma	INC	1 year & 9 months
3.	3 rd Meghalaya Legislative Assembly (1983-1988)	2	B.B. Lyngdoh	APHLC	1 month
			Capt. Williamson A. Sangma	INC	4 years & 10 months
4.	4 th Meghalaya Legislative Assembly (1988-1993)	3	P.A. Sangma	INC	2 years & 1 month
			B.B. Lyngdoh	HPU	1 year & 6 months
			President's Rule	-	3 months
			D.D. Lapang	INC	1 year
5.	5 th Meghalaya Legislative Assembly (1993-1988)	Nil	S.C. Marak	INC	5 years
6.	6 th Meghalaya Legislative Assembly (1998-2003)	3	B.B. Lyngdoh	UDP	1 year & 11 months
			E.K. Mawlong	UDP	1 year & 9 months
			Flinder Anderson Khonglam	Independent	1 year & 2 months
7.	7 th Meghalaya Legislative Assembly (2003-2008)	3	D.D. Lapang	INC	3 years & 3 months
			J.D. Rymbai	INC	8 months
			D.D. Lapang	INC	1 year
8.	8 th Meghalaya Legislative Assembly (2008-2013)	4	D.D. Lapang	INC	10 days
			Donkumar Roy	UDP	1 year
			President's Rule	-	54 days
			D.D. Lapang	INC	11 months
			Mukul Sangma	INC	2 years & 2 months
9.	9 th Meghalaya Legislative Assembly (2013-2018)	Nil	Mukul Sangma	INC	5 years
10.	10 th Meghalaya Legislative Assembly (2018-2023)	Nil	Conrad Sangma	NPP	5 years
11.	11 th Meghalaya Legislative Assembly (2023-till date)	N/A	Conrad Sangma	NPP	continuing

Sources: Prepared by the scholar (Reference:

https://www.sacnilk.com/news/List_of_Chief_Minister_of_Meghalaya)

The above table (table 3.4) shows that the state witnessed eleven Legislative Assembly elections since 1972. It became clear that fracture mandate became a norm in the state Assembly elections as individual party failed to win majority by their own. Therefore, coalition government is inevitable in the state. After the first government was formed by APHLC, all subsequent governments were formed with the help of the Congress party. Out of the eleventh Legislative Assembly elections, the Congress party ruled the state for the longest period of time, sometimes as a major partner and sometimes as a junior partner in the coalition. The INC had been in the coalition government since 1972-2018 (nearly five decades). It means the INC ruled the state for the maximum number of years. Out of the 12 Chief Ministers, six belongs to the INC, namely—Williamson A. Sangma, P.A. Sangma, D.D. Lapang, S.C. Marak, J.D. Rymbai and Dr. Mukul Sangma. The remaining Chief Ministers were—D.D. Pugh (APHLC), B.B. Lyngdoh (APHLC/HPU/UDP), E.K. Mawlong (UDP), Flinder Anderson Khonglam (Independent), Dr. Donkumar Roy (UDP) and Conrad Sangma (NPP).¹³⁴

The above table also reveals that the coalition politics led to instability in the government as political parties frequently switch their support to one political party to another. Within one Assembly term, the coalition government is led by different political parties and different Chief Ministers. Even within the same political parties, changing of Chief Minister is very common. For instance, the 7th Assembly term (2003-2008) experienced the changing of Chief Minister for three times—D.D. Lapang (for two times) and J.D. Rymbai, even though they belong to the same party (the Congress party). On average, the government in Meghalaya changed after every two years and two months. In fact, among the 12 Chief Ministers, only—Capt. Williamson Sangma, S.C. Marak, Mukul Sangma and Conrad Sangma can complete five years. It is interesting to mention that an independent MLA Flinder Anderson Khonglam once became Chief Minister. The instability of government also results in the imposition of President's rule twice in the state. However, the state has never

¹³⁴ Sacnilk. *List of Chief Ministers of Meghalaya*.
https://www.sacnilk.com/news/List_of_Chief_Minister_of_Meghalaya. Accessed on 5th June, 2025.

experienced mid-term poll despite the frequent change of government.¹³⁵ The present study focus the last two Assembly elections held in 2018 and 2023.

3.4.1 Role of Civil Society in Meghalaya Election

The civil society organization in Meghalaya do not participate in the election as compared to Mizoram. One of the main reasons for the non-participation of civil society is that Meghalaya is inhabited by three major tribes, namely the Jaintia, the Khasi and the Garo. Besides, the civil society organizations in different region have their own regional interest. As a result, there is no strong civil society organizations which can represent the interest of the state. Party leaders, academicians, journalists and civil society leaders also shared their opinion. It is learnt that the church does not directly involve in the elections instead they appeal to the people by offering prayers. According to Linda Chhakchhuak, churches do not get directly participated in the elections. However, sometimes, they have a hidden agenda so that their members or their followers can be elected.¹³⁶ The civil society also do not directly involve in the elections. According to David Kharsati, the civil society directly did not participate in the elections. However, they have a hidden agenda and they tried to influence or mobilize their people so that their purpose can be delivered.¹³⁷ In short, the civil society play minimum role in the electoral process of Meghalaya.

3.4.2 Election Campaign

The campaign strategies of political parties in Meghalaya are not different from the strategies employed by various parties in Mizoram. The campaign strategy used by political parties in Meghalaya include—house to house campaign, distributing pamphlets and manifestos by the party workers and candidates, street campaign, pocket meeting (two-three villages gathered in one place and had a campaign meeting), public rally, social media campaign, etc. However, the nature of election campaign

¹³⁵ Meghalaya gets 21st government in 37 years. *The Times of India*. Dated: 13th May, 2009. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/meghalaya-gets-21st-government-in-37-years/articleshow/4525238.cms>. Accessed on 5th June, 2025.

¹³⁶ The scholar interviewed Linda Chhakchhuak (freelance journalist, born and raised in Shillong) on 3rd June, 2024 at Malki Cafe, Shillong.

¹³⁷ The scholar interviewed David Kharsati (BJP National Council Member, Meghalaya) on 31st May, 2024 at State BJP Headquarters, Shillong.

differs from elections to elections and also depends on the types of elections (Lok Sabha, State Assembly, local elections).

The state of Meghalaya also employed more or less the same campaign strategy in elections. Firstly, the traditional form of election campaign such as house-to-house campaign and public rally are the most relevant campaign strategies in Meghalaya. Different political party leaders (Sanjay Das,¹³⁸ Lakyntiew Sokhlet,¹³⁹ Ampareen Lyngdoh,¹⁴⁰ and Paul Lyngdoh¹⁴¹) shared the same view. According to Ampareen Lyngdoh, door-to-door campaign became the most useful instrument in her election campaign. It gives the opportunity of knowing information about the people and their problems by visiting their house.¹⁴² The four-time Cabinet Minister Mr. Paul Lyndoh argued that he employed different style of campaign in election. He mentioned that door-to-door campaign is the most effective means as it helps to connect the candidates and the people.¹⁴³ While Mr. Ardent Miller Basaiawmoit did not support the traditional form of campaign. He stated that the VPP did not campaign door-to-door. Instead, the people should gather in public rally and pocket meeting and should patiently listen to the propaganda of the party. He argued that those who attend the meeting shows the sincerity of the electorate towards the VPP who came by their own choice. They should not believe whoever came to their house and promises the unachievable things during election campaign.¹⁴⁴

Secondly, pocket meeting became very popular in Meghalaya. It is a meeting of two to three villages gathered in one place and the candidates try to woo the voters. Mr. Metbah Lyngdoh said that pocket meeting became relevant because the types of election campaign in rural areas and in urban areas are different. In urban areas, door-

¹³⁸ The scholar interviewed Sanjay Das (General Secretary, Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee) on 19th December, 2022 in Congress Bhava, Shillong.

¹³⁹ The scholar interviewed Ms. Lakyntiew Sokhlet (General Secretary, Meghalaya Pradesh Youth Congress) on 19th December, 2022 at Congress Bhavan, Shillong.

¹⁴⁰ The scholar interviewed Ampareen Lyngdoh (NPP Minister) on 16th December, 2022 at her residence in Shillong.

¹⁴¹ The scholar interviewed Paul Lyngdoh (Working President, UDP and Minister during the interviewed period) on 5th June, 2024 at Minister's Chamber, Shillong.

¹⁴² Ampareen Lyngdoh, *op.cit.*

¹⁴³ Paul Lyngdoh, *op.cit.*

¹⁴⁴ The scholar interviewed Ardent Miller Basaiawmoit (VPP President and MLA from Nongkrem A/C) on 6th June, 2024 in his residence at Shillong.

to-door campaign is more effective as the constituencies in urban areas are smaller and compact as compared to rural areas. In rural areas, door-to-door campaign is not possible and as a result, public rally or pocket meeting is more popular and convenient.¹⁴⁵ H. Srikant¹⁴⁶ and Raphael Massor¹⁴⁷ opined that the strategies and issues differ at various level of elections. For instance, in Assembly election in Shillong areas, some were influenced by parties while party may come second in some constituencies.

Thirdly, some leaders argued that hard work and dedication for the people is the best way of campaigning in elections. The four-time legislator Ampareen Lyngdoh argued that proper utilization of MLA Fund contributed in re-electing the candidates. She further said that she utilizes her MLA Fund in poverty alleviation programme which is benefited by the economically weaker section. She also utilizes her MLA Fund in education and health related issues, and enhancing self-employment scheme for starting their new business.¹⁴⁸ Senior BJP leader and six-time legislator from the same constituency (Pynthorumkhrah A/C) A.L. Hek shared the same view. He argues that door-to-door campaign is also not required after electing him as MLA in 1998. He said that the people assess the candidates from the works and services they rendered as an MLA and the people gave their response in the next election.¹⁴⁹

Fourthly, elections in Meghalaya are fought on different issues. The issues in election also differ from one election to another election. Party leaders (Conrad Sangma,¹⁵⁰ Metbah Lyngdoh) and academician (H. Srikant, Batskhem Myrbuh¹⁵¹ and Raphael Massor shared that the common issues in election includes—border issues, demand for implementation of ILP, developmental issue, corruption issues,

¹⁴⁵ The scholar interviewed Metbah Lyngdoh (UDP President & Assembly Speaker during the interviewed period) on 14th December, 2022 at Speaker's Chamber, Shillong.

¹⁴⁶ The scholar interviewed H. Srikant (Professor in NEHU) on 5th June, 2024 at NEHU, Shillong.

¹⁴⁷ Raphael Massor is psephologist from Meghalaya. The scholar interviewed Raphael Massor (psephologist from Meghalaya) on 5th June, 2024 at NEHU, Shillong.

¹⁴⁸ Ampareen Lyngdoh, *op.cit.*

¹⁴⁹ The scholar interviewed A.L. Hek (MLA from Pynthorumkhrah A/C since 1998 & BJP Minister during the interviewed period) on 1st June, 2024 at his residence, Shillong.

¹⁵⁰ The scholar interviewed Conrad Sangma (National President, NPP and Chief Minister of Meghalaya) on 6th June, 2024 at Chief Minister's Bungalow, Shillong.

¹⁵¹ The scholar interviewed Batskhem Myrbuh (Founding Member of VPP & Faculty in NEHU) on 5th June, 2024 in his office chamber at NEHU, Shillong.

unemployment issue, security issue and good governance. Different party leaders shared their opinion on which issues election are fought. According to Mr. Conrad Sangma, the NPP as a national party having regional mindset prioritize the general development, identity issue and representation of the North East.¹⁵² The veteran eight-time legislator Mr. Timothy D. Shira shared that he focuses on education, establishment of new schools, road connectivity, promoting the welfare of the youth, etc.¹⁵³ According to Mr. Sanjay Das, the Congress focuses on—ideology, development to grassroot democracy and the flagship programmes like the MGNREGA.¹⁵⁴ On the other hand, Mrs. Patricia Mukhim argued that the parties in Meghalaya rarely addressed the development issues during election campaign.¹⁵⁵

Fifthly, information technology and social media also play an important role in the campaign strategy in Meghalaya. According to Sanjay Das, social media campaign became a new style of campaign strategy. The party also utilized information technology and various social media platform to attract the voters. It became more effective among the youth.¹⁵⁶ The NPP Youth President Nicky Nongkhlaw shared that the campaign strategy differs from one region to another region. He said that besides the normal campaign strategy, social media and electronic media became very effective at the present scenario¹⁵⁷

In Meghalaya, it can be argued that Assembly elections are the most vibrant elections in the state followed by District Council elections and Lok Sabha election. Political leaders, civil society leaders, academician and journalist shared the same view. There are various factors in winning the Assembly elections in Meghalaya. Among them—candidate personality, party affiliation, church affiliation, etc. contributed in winning the elections. However, leaders expressed different opinion for winning the election. Firstly, political leaders and scholars (Metbah Lyngdoh, Paul

¹⁵² Conrad Sangma, *op.cit.*

¹⁵³ The scholar interviewed Timothy D. Shira (MLA since 1978 & Dy. Speaker during the interviewed period) on 15th December, 2022 at Dy. Speaker's Chamber, Shillong.

¹⁵⁴ Sanjay Das, *op.cit.*

¹⁵⁵ The scholar interviewed Patricia Mukhim (Editor, Shillong Times) on 1st June, 2024 in her residence at Shillong.

¹⁵⁶ Sanjay Das, *op.cit.*

¹⁵⁷ The scholar interviewed Nicky Nongkhlaw (Working President in National Peoples Youth, NPP) on 15th December, 2022 at NPP Office, Shillong.

Lyngdoh, James Lyngdoh,¹⁵⁸ Risha¹⁵⁹ Linda Chhakchhuak, H. Srikant, Raphael Massor) believed that personality factor contributed the most in winning the elections. According to Paul Lyngdoh, in the early 1980's, the success of national party strongly influenced the people sentiment and as a result the INC dominate the state electoral politics. From 1990's, people look upon the personality of the candidate.¹⁶⁰ Pi Linda Chhakchhuak said that personality is the most important factor in every election. In every election, there are two or more independent candidates won the elections on their personality factors.¹⁶¹

Secondly, the involvement of money power is also another factor in elections. There is one group who claims that money power attributed the most in elections while there is another group who believes that the involvement of money power is not as high as compared to other state. Mrs. Patricia Mukhim and Donald V. Thabah¹⁶² shared that the involvement of money in the election of Meghalaya is high as in Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland. She further stated that money power attributed the most important factors in elections.¹⁶³ According to Batskhem Myrbuh, money power plays a vital role in election. In the meantime, VPP introduced a new system in the election where the voters voluntarily donate money to the candidates.¹⁶⁴ On the other hand, Nicky Nongkhlaw mentioned that the involvement of money power in elections depend upon the candidates and he believed that the Model Code of Conduct is very effective in the election.¹⁶⁵ James Lyngdoh and Risha shared more or less the same opinion. They argued that the involvement of money is not very much in Meghalaya elections.¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁸ The scholar interviewed James Lyngdoh (Vice President, AITC) on 15th December, 2022 at AITC Office, Shillong.

¹⁵⁹ The scholar interviewed Risha (Mahila President, AITC) on 15th December, 2022 at AITC Office, Shillong.

¹⁶⁰ Paul Lyngdoh, *op.cit.*

¹⁶¹ Linda Chhakchhuak, *op.cit.*

¹⁶² The scholar interviewed Donald V. Thabah (General Secretary, Khasi Students Union) on 1st June, 2024 at Khasi Students Union Office, Shillong.

¹⁶³ Patricia Mukhim, *op.cit.*

¹⁶⁴ Batskhem Myrbuh, *op.cit.*

¹⁶⁵ Nicky Nongkhlaw, *op.cit.*

¹⁶⁶ James Lyngdoh, Risha, *op.cit.*

Thirdly, some people believed that winning an election depends on various factors. Ms. Lakyntiew Sokhlet shared that people in Meghalaya are concerned about the parties than personality factors or church denomination or caste factors.¹⁶⁷ Ardent Miller said that personality and party play a major role in elections. It is like a coin having two faces as both the personality and party are equally important in the elections.¹⁶⁸ Donald V. Thabah argued that earlier the educated candidates used to influence the voters in Meghalaya elections. In the later stage, the combination of money power, personality factors and party affiliation have an influence in the election.¹⁶⁹ Patricia Mukim also shared that the combination of money power followed by personality factors, religion and the party affiliation are the four important factors in elections.¹⁷⁰

Fourthly, religion or church denomination (in the case of Meghalaya) also play a significant role in the electoral politics of Meghalaya. A.L. Hek stated that religion is also one important factor in the electoral politics of the state. He said that the BJP has been labelled as anti-Christian party. However, he did not deny that there may be some places where the Christian religion may suffer due to the extremist right-wing groups. But sometimes the allegation hinders the progress of the BJP in the state.¹⁷¹ Linda Chhakchhuak argues that the denomination of the church (for instance Presbyterian and Catholic) also contributed in winning the elections. She believed that party affiliation did not contribute much in elections.¹⁷²

It is observed that the campaign strategy of different political parties in Meghalaya do not differ much. The campaign strategy such as the door-to-door campaign, public rally, pocket meeting, distribution of pamphlets and manifestos and social media campaign are the strategies in Meghalaya. Almost all the political parties (except the VPP strategy stated by Mr. Ardent Miller and Dr. Bastkhem) used the same

¹⁶⁷ Lakyntiew Sokhlet, *op.cit.*

¹⁶⁸ Ardent Miller Basaiawmoit, *op.cit.*

¹⁶⁹ Donald V. Thabah, *op.cit.*

¹⁷⁰ Patricia Mukhim, *op.cit.*

¹⁷¹ A.L. Hek, *op.cit.*

¹⁷² Linda Chhakchhuak, *op.cit.*

methods or techniques which have been practiced in the state since very long time and it is still relevant.

3.5 Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly Election 2018

The Election Commission of India on 18th January, 2018 announced to hold elections for the Legislative Assemblies of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura.¹⁷³ Subsequently, the 10th Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly elections were held on 27th February, 2018 in single phase and the results were announced on 3rd March, 2018. In the elections, 14 political parties were in the fray.¹⁷⁴

In the Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly elections 2018, the Congress (then ruling party) was the only party which contested in all the 60 seats. The NPP contested in 52 constituencies followed by BJP in 47 seats and the UDP fielded candidates in 35 constituencies. Political parties like NCP (21 candidates), PDF (26 seats) and HSPDP (13 candidates) were also contested in the election. Other parties namely—AAP, LJP, NEINDP and RPI (A) fielded less than 10 candidates. There were 85 independent candidates in the elections.¹⁷⁵

3.5.1 Election Manifesto

The election manifesto of the Indian National Congress (INC), National People's Party (NPP) and United Democratic People (UDP) are examined here. Because these are the parties who led the government (coalition) in Meghalaya in the past and present. The key points of the election manifesto of INC, NPP and UDP in the Assembly election 2018 are mentioned below: -

¹⁷³ Election Commission of India. *Announcement of Schedule for the Elections to the Legislative Assemblies of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura*. <https://old.eci.gov.in/files/file/4539-announcement-of-schedule-for-general-elections-to-the-legislative-assemblies-of-meghalaya-nagaland-and-tripura-2018-english>. Accessed on 23rd October, 2024.

¹⁷⁴ Election Commission of India. *Meghalaya Legislative Election 2018*. <https://old.eci.gov.in/files/file/3694-meghalaya-general-legislative-election-2018/>. Accessed on 23rd October, 2024.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

3.5.1 (i) The Indian National Congress (INC)

The INC fought the election on the slogan of “Vote for Inclusive Development, Vote for Your Way of Life, Vote for Peace and Stability, Vote for Congress” to tackle the growing forces of the BJP in the centre and in different states. The election manifesto of the INC can be divided into three parts—pledges, achievements and promises. The ‘pledges’ comprise of the party commitment to work on governance, agriculture, youth and employment, health care, infrastructure, environment, education, inter-state border, influx and illegal immigration and law & order. The ‘achievements’ contain the successfully implemented policies and programme in 15 sectors. The key points of the election manifesto are: -

a) Human capital development: The Congress prioritizes education in Meghalaya, aiming to shape its destiny and make it a national educational hub in the North East.

b) Employment and youth empowerment: The party initiated the flagship programme known as ‘LEAP (Life Skills, Employability, Aspirations and Purpose)’. It aims at equipping young people with confidence, life skills and coping strategies to live wholesome, happy and productive lives.

c) Agriculture and allied activities: The party committed to turn farming into an attractive activity and providing farmers ‘remunerative prices to framers’ for their product.

d) Health: The party pledges to expand the ‘Megha Health Insurance Scheme (MHIS)’ to ensure universal coverage and significantly improve the insurance cover beyond the recently announced scheme of the central government of Rs. 5 lakhs.

e) Housing scheme: The party promises to offer housing assistance to economically weaker sections (EWS) with Rs. 75,000, aiming to extend it through convergence with other schemes.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Indian National Congress. *Manifesto: Legislative Assembly Election, Meghalaya 2018*. Shillong: General Secretary, Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee.

The Congress party released their election manifesto on 24th February, 2018 which was a day before the campaign ends. It can be argued that the main emphasis of the manifesto was health sector, agriculture, youth and employment.¹⁷⁷ The manifesto stressed on youth and employment challenges as it promises to create 3 lakhs new job or livelihood for the youth in the next five years by covering at least one youth per family. It will be initiated through flagship programme LEAP and a new programme known as ‘Entrepreneurship Program Through Digital Business (ETDB)’. They stated that the Meghalaya government is the first state in the country to set up ‘Enterprise Facilitation Centre’ in every block to support youth in securing employment.¹⁷⁸ The party also tries to enhance health sector through Megha Health Insurance Scheme (MHIS). They committed to increase the sum cover of the insurance cover for the MHIS. It promises to add Rs. 5 lakh per family above the insurance cover announced by the central government.¹⁷⁹ The manifesto also targets agricultural farmers as they argued that 85% of the population of the state depends on agriculture and allied activities. In order to recognize their struggle, it promises to provide ‘seed capital assistance’ to every small and marginal farmer in the state. It will be benefitted by around 4 lakhs farmers across the state.¹⁸⁰

3.5.1 (ii) The United Democratic Party (UDP)

The United Democratic Party (UDP), a key opposition party in Meghalaya released their election manifesto on 20th February, 2018. The 12-pages election manifesto was released by former Chief Minister and UDP President Dr. Donkumar Roy. It aims for a corruption-free, secure Meghalaya, focusing on affordable education, healthcare, employment, women and children’s security, and sustainable

¹⁷⁷ Meghalaya Assembly Election: Congress releases poll manifesto, promises to enhance Centre’s health insurance cover. *First Post*. Dated: 24th February, 2018.

<https://www.firstpost.com/politics/meghalaya-assembly-election-congress-releases-poll-manifesto-promises-to-enhance-centres-health-insurance-cover-4365347.html>. Accessed on 11th June, 2025.

¹⁷⁸ Indian National Congress, Manifesto: Legislative Assembly Election, Meghalaya 2018, *op.cit*, p.1.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p.7.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p.3.

development. The important points of the election manifesto of the UDP are as follows: -¹⁸¹

a) The UDP promises to increase the upper age limit for entry into government jobs for SC/ST candidates from the existing 27 years to 32 years.

b) The party pledges to provide free education for children hailing from below poverty line (BPL) families up to graduation level. The government schools and colleges will be upgraded and strengthened to ensure that they become the preferred institutions by the students in the state.

c) The UDP also committed to introduce minimum support price for the farmers in the state of Meghalaya.

d) The party also promised setting up of a single-window agency to clear permissions for mining of limestone in the state.

e) The UDP manifesto aims to combat corruption and welcomes institutions like Lok Ayukta and Ombudsman.

3.5.1 (iii) The National People's Party (NPP)

The National People's Party (NPP) released their election manifesto titled "People's Document 2018" on 23rd February, 2018. The "People's Document" emphasizes governance in economic planning, education, healthcare, infrastructure, agriculture, employment, youth welfare, women empowerment, and environmental protection.¹⁸² Some of the main points of the manifestos are as follows: -

a) Fiscal and economic reforms: The party attempts to formulate an Economic Development Policy of the state by initiating fiscal and economic policy reforms for sustainable and all-round development of the state.

¹⁸¹ Meghalaya's UDP promises free education till graduation to poor children. *Business Standard*. Dated: 19th February, 2018. https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/meghalaya-s-udp-promises-free-education-till-graduation-to-poor-children-118021901625_1.html. Accessed on 24th October, 2024.

¹⁸² NPP releases People's Document for Meghalaya Poll. *The Statesman*. Dated: 24th February, 2023. <https://www.thestatesman.com/india/npp-releases-peoples-document-meghalaya-polls-1502591333.html>. Accessed on 26th October, 2024.

b) Education and human capital development: It tries to frame a comprehensive Education Policy that aims to enhance the quality of education at all levels of the state.

c) Medical and health care: It aimed to formulate the State Health Policy to improve healthcare accessibility in both rural and urban areas of the state.

d) Agriculture, horticulture and rural economy: The party promises to formulate an effective State Agriculture and Horticulture Policy.

e) Sports and youth affairs: It aimed to formulate an effective Youth Policy.¹⁸³

The NPP election manifesto was released on 23rd February, 2018 by the national President and Lok Sabha MP from Tura (during the time) Conrad K. Sangma at election rally in Jowai of Jaintia Hills. Conrad Sangma argued that the NPP manifesto titled as “People’s Document” aims to bring about significant change that the people of Meghalaya are desperately in need of.¹⁸⁴ The party attempts to formulate an Economic Development Policy of the state for sustainable and all-round development of the state. As a measure, the party will work towards rationalization of state taxation system which aims to create an efficient and robust tax collection system. The NPP also addressed the education policy and health policy of the state. The party aims to formulate an effective education policy to improve quality of education at all levels. It wishes to re-draft the school curriculum in line with the NCERT guidelines by incorporating Meghalaya socio-cultural, political and historical knowledge. It also tries to formulate state health policy to enhance easy accessibility for both rural and urban areas to improve health sector and also steps will be taken to boost Eco and Medical Tourism in the state through various means. The party also promises to formulate effective State Agriculture and Horticulture Policy by empowering and

¹⁸³ National People’s Party. *People’s Document 2018*. Shillong: Kupar Blah, General Secretary, National People’s Party, Meghalaya State.

¹⁸⁴ Meghalaya Polls 2018: National People’s Party releases ‘People’s Document’. *North East Now*. Dated: 22nd February, 2018. <https://nenow.in/north-east-news/meghalaya-polls-2018-national-peoples-party-releases-peoples-document.html>. Accessed on 11th June, 2025.

supporting farmers. It further aims to formulate effective Youth Policy to provide new infrastructure in sports, improve the skills of youth, etc.

3.5.1 (iv) The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

The BJP election manifesto Vision Document 2018 was released by Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Defence Minister on 16th February, 2018. Some of the key points of the manifesto are as follows: -

- a) It attempts to provide 24x7 electric supply to every household.
- b) It tries to resolve coal mining issue within 180 days of forming government.
- c) It promises housing for all with pucca roofs.
- d) It aims to create jobs opportunity for the youth and employment to 2 lakhs in the tourism industry.
- e) It attempts to establish pukka roads to connect every village to district headquarters.¹⁸⁵

The BJP like the other North Eastern states, it aims to overthrow the ruling (Congress) party from the state. The party who fails to win any seat in the Assembly elections 2013 tries to become kingmaker in the elections and keeps option open for post-poll alliance. As a result, they made poll promises to attract the voters and raised the slogan 'time for change'. However, other party leaders including the Congress party criticized the BJP manifesto claiming that the party makes promises it cannot fulfil.

3.5.2 Election Result

The election for the 10th Meghalaya Legislative Assembly was held on 27th February, 2018 on 59 constituencies. The election cannot be conducted in one

¹⁸⁵ Meghalaya election 2018: BJP promises pension, jobs and pukka roads in manifesto, keeps options open for post-poll alliance. *Firstpost*. Dated: 16th February, 2018. <https://www.firstpost.com/politics/meghalaya-election-2018-bjp-promises-pension-jobs-and-pukka-roads-in-manifesto-keeps-options-open-for-post-poll-alliances-4353949.html>. Accessed on 28th October, 2025.

Assembly constituency i.e. Williamnagar A/C as the NCP candidate Jonathone Sangma was killed in an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blast in East Garo Hills district on 18th February, 2018.¹⁸⁶ The counting of votes for the Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly election was held on 3rd March, 2018. In the elections, 15,56,641 (86.78%) voters turn out and cast their vote. In the Assembly election 2018, there were 361 candidates (329 male and 32 female) who contested the election. Three women candidates who won the election. In the election, 211 candidates (191 male and 20 female) forfeited their deposits. The performance of political parties in the Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly election, 2018 is given below: -¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Ratnadip Chaudhury. Voters Worried About Safety After NCP Candidate in Meghalaya Killed. *NDTV*. Dated: 20th February, 2018. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/voters-worried-about-safety-after-ncp-candidate-in-meghalaya-killed-1814648>. Accessed on 27th October, 2024.

¹⁸⁷ Election Commission of India. *Meghalaya Legislative Election 2018*. <https://old.eci.gov.in/files/file/3694-meghalaya-general-legislative-election-2018/>. Accessed on 27th October, 2024.

**Table-3.5: Performance of Political Parties in Election to Meghalaya State
Legislative Assembly, 2018**

Legislative Assembly, 2010						
Sl. No	PARTY	SEATS			SHARE IN VALID VOTES POLLED IN STATE	
		CONTESTED	WON	FORFEIT DEPOSIT (FD)	VOTES POLLED	VOTING PERCENTAGE
NATIONAL PARTIES						
1.	AITC	8	0	8	5544	0.35
2.	BJP	47	2	32	151292	9.63
3.	INC	60	21	12	447770	28.50
4.	NCP	21	1	19	25247	1.61
STATE PARTIES						
5.	HSPDP	13	2	4	84011	5.35
6.	NPP	52	19	16	323745	20.60
7.	UDP	35	6	18	182494	11.61
STATE PARTIES- OTHER STATE						
8.	AAP	6	0	6	1410	0.09
9.	LJP	1	0	1	104	0.01
REGISTERED (UNRECOGNIZED) PARTIES						
10.	GNC	6	0	4	21682	1.38
11.	KHNAM	8	1	7	14164	0.90
12.	NEINDP	1	0	1	327	1.83
13.	PDF	26	4	14	128413	8.17
14.	RPI (A)	1	0	1	169	0.01
INDEPENDENTS						
15	IND	85	3	68	170269	10.84
16.	NOTA	60	0	59	14635	0.93
GRAND TOTAL		430	59	270	1571276	-

Source: ECI (Statistical Report of Election to State Legislative Assembly (Vidhan Sabha). <https://old.eci.gov.in/statistical-report/statistical-reports/>

In the Meghalaya Assembly election 2018, the state again witnessed the fractured mandate as no party crossed the half way by its own. As a result, the first NPP led coalition government known as Meghalaya Democratic Alliance-1.0 (MDA-1.0) was formed under the leadership of Conrad Sangma. The INC emerged as the single largest party by winning 21 seats. However, they failed to form government against its rival NPP and the coalition of regional parties. The MDA-1.0 comprises of 34 MLA's namely—the NPP (19 seats), the UDP (6 seats), the PDF (4 seats), the HSPDP (2 seats), the BJP (2 seats) and one independent candidate. The other seats were shared by NCP (1 seats), KHNAM (1 seats) and another two independent candidates, counting the total to 59 seats. The seat sharing formulas of the Council of Ministers in the MDA-1.0 includes—five Ministers (including CM) from NPP, three from the UDP, two Ministers from the PDF and one each for the BJP and the HSPDP.¹⁸⁸ In the elections, 68 independent candidates (out of 85 independent candidates) forfeited their deposits while three independent candidates got elected. As already stated, by looking the electoral politics of Meghalaya, the independent candidates had the chance of winning the Assembly election. The independent candidates even secured 10.84% from the total votes in the Assembly election 2018.

In Meghalaya, the Congress emerged as the single largest party. It received 28.50% of the total votes while the NPP secured only 20.60 % of total votes. It means that the difference between the vote share of Congress and NPP is 7.9%. The Congress party attempted to form government with the help of regional parties and independent MLAs. As a result, the top Congress leaders—Ahmed Patel, Kamal Nath and Mukul Wasnik rushed to Shillong to work out possible ties with others to form government. The urgency in Congress decision comes in the backdrop of criticism in the past as the party failed to form government in the state of Manipur and Goa against the BJP. Even though the Congress emerged as the single largest party in these two states, they cannot form the government as the BJP swiftly announced an alliance and formed government. At the same time, Assam Finance Minister and Convener of North-East

¹⁸⁸ NPP to govern Meghalaya, with a little help from its friends. Alliance, cabinet formulas here. *India Today*. Dated: 4th March, 2018. <https://www.indiatoday.in/assembly-elections-2018/meghalaya-assembly-election-2018/story/npp-in-power-in-meghalaya-with-a-little-help-from-its-friends-alliance-cabinet-formula-s-here-1181783-2018-03-04>. Accessed on 27th October, 2024.

Democratic Alliance (NEDA)¹⁸⁹ headed to Shillong to form non-Congress government in the state. Finally, the Congress was ousted again in Meghalaya, making the Congress rule only in other four states—Punjab, Karnataka, Mizoram and Puducherry in 2018.¹⁹⁰ However, it was remarkable that the Congress emerged as the single largest party in the state while the BJP tries several ways and means to destroy the Congress.¹⁹¹ Even the Chief Minister Dr. Mukul Sangma managed to win from both the seats in Ampati A/C and Songsak A/C. This is the first time Congress party was not in power in the state of Meghalaya since the first Assembly elections in 1972. For instance, sometimes the Congress party led the coalition and sometimes they became junior partner in the coalition government. There was a time when different regional parties combined together and formed non-Congress government. Due to the frequent change of government, the party occasionally serve on both the ruling and opposition benches within one Assembly term. Despite these, the Congress party had the opportunity to form government before the expiry of Assembly term. This means that the Congress party was either part of the coalition government in one way or another during the nine Assembly terms (1972-2018).

The National People's Party (NPP) led coalition was formed for the first time in Meghalaya after its establishment in 2013. Some of the NPP MLAs are the former Congressmen who jumped the ship one year (2017) before the election. Although Conrad Sangma (MP from Tura, Meghalaya) was not in the election fray, he emerged as the unanimous choice for chief ministership. Donkumar Roy, the UDP chief, stated that his party would only join the alliance if Conrad Sangma is the chief ministerial candidate. This was Sangma's second tenure in state politics. He served as the finance minister of the non-Congress Meghalaya Progressive Alliance (MPA) administration from 2008 to 2009. The MPA government comprises of NCP, UDP, HSPDP,

¹⁸⁹ NEDA is a non-Congress party alliance in North East India.

¹⁹⁰ Meghalaya Election results 2018: Hung Assembly, Parties eye post-poll alliances. *Business Today*. Dated: 3rd March, 2018. <https://www.businesstoday.in/latest/economy-politics/story/meghalaya-election-results-2018-congress-single-largest-party-bjp-hopes-pinned-alliance-248340-2018-03-03>. Accessed on 28th October, 2018.

¹⁹¹ How BJP stole a march on Congress in Meghalaya. *The Times of India*. Dated: 5th March, 2018. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/how-bjp-stole-a-march-on-congress-in-meghalaya/articleshow/63165303.cms>. Accessed on 7th June, 2025.

KHNAM, BJP and two independent legislators. The MPA was formed under the leadership of Dr. Donkumar Roy (UDP) as Chief Minister but it was short lived.¹⁹²

In the Assembly election 2018, the regional parties (UDP, HSPDP, PDF & KHNAM) managed to win only 13 seats and cannot have a major share in the government formation. The Congress, the single largest party struggled to secure support from regional parties during its nearly decade-long power, while the BJP had more established partners. The NPP, UDP, and BJP were all constituent partner in NEDA and the HSPDP is an electoral ally of UDP.¹⁹³ As a result, the Congress failed to form a government and NPP led Meghalaya Democratic Alliance government was formed in 2018. The BJP which contested in 47 Assembly constituencies managed to win two seats. It means BJP has managed to win two seats from none in the previous elections 2013. The saffron party vote saw a significant increase in its share of the popular vote, rising from 1.27 % to 9.6%.¹⁹⁴ However, as the NPP was a constituent partner in the BJP's NEDA (but this time fought election separately), the BJP found one Cabinet berth in the coalition government.¹⁹⁵

3.6 Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly Election 2023

The Election Commission of India announced that Tripura will go on poll for 16th February, 2023 while Nagaland and Meghalaya will poll on 27th February, 2023. The elections were counted for all the states on 2nd March, 2023.¹⁹⁶ In Meghalaya, 13 political parties contested the elections.¹⁹⁷ The Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly elections 2023 were conducted in 59 Assembly constituencies. Election cannot be held on Sohiong A/C as the former Home Minister and UDP candidate HDR Lyngdoh died

¹⁹² Esther M. Tariang, *op.cit.*, p.95.

¹⁹³ The Times of India (Dated: 5th March, 2018), *op.cit.*

¹⁹⁴ David Laitphlang. Congress single largest in Meghalaya, but NPP could cobble up the numbers to rule. *Hindustan Times*. Dated: 3rd March, 2018. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/congress-single-largest-in-meghalaya-but-npp-could-cobble-up-the-numbers-to-rule/story-sDI5rPdoxqqpQzUzbZht9K.html>. Accessed on 7th June, 2025.

¹⁹⁵ Patricia Mukhim. Meghalaya Elections 2018: A Repeat of 2008. *Economic and Political Weekly (Engage)*. Vol. 53, Issue No. 10, (10 Mar, 2018). <https://www.epw.in/engage/article/meghalaya-elections-2018-repeat-2008>. Accessed on 28th October, 2024.

¹⁹⁶ Election Commission of India. *Election to Legislative Assemblies of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura, 2023*. <https://www.eci.gov.in/ae-2023-meghalaya>. Accessed on 28th October, 2024.

¹⁹⁷ Election Commission of India. *Election Results-Full Statistical Report*. <https://old.eci.gov.in/files/file/14873-meghalayaexcluding-ac-23/>. Accessed on 28th October, 2024.

of cardiac arrest on 20th February, 2023.¹⁹⁸ In the election, the BJP and the INC fielded 59 candidates. The ruling NPP which attained National Party status (the first in North East India)¹⁹⁹ contested in 56 assembly constituencies while the NCP led by former Chief Minister Dr. Mukul Sangma contested in 55 constituencies. The UDP fielded 45 candidates, the highest number of candidates among the regional parties, while other parties did not field more than 10 candidates. Besides, there were 44 independent candidates in the election. Altogether, there were 369 candidates (333 male and 36 female) who were in the election fray. In the election, the maximum contestants in a constituency were nine, while the minimum contestants in a constituency were four.²⁰⁰

3.6.1 Election Manifesto

The election manifesto of the Indian National Congress (INC), the National People's Party (NPP) and the United Democratic Party (UDP) for the Assembly election 2023 are examined below: -

3.6.1 (i) The Indian National Congress (INC)

The preface of the election manifesto of the Congress stated that the party is committed to take forward on the path of growth and development in Meghalaya, ensuring accessible, impactful and transparent governance for its citizens. The election manifesto of the INC can be broadly categorized into 15 main points. Some of the key points of the election manifesto are as follows: -

a) Industry, trade commerce and e-commerce sector: The Congress promises to generate 4 lakh new jobs and livelihoods within the next five years by providing at least a job to one youth per family.

¹⁹⁸ Meghalaya Elections 2023: Polling in Sohiong Assembly Seat Adjourned After Candidate's Death. *News 18*. Dated: 25th February, 2023. <https://www.news18.com/news/elections/meghalaya-elections-2023-polling-in-sohiong-assembly-seat-adjourned-after-candidates-death-7164541.html>. Accessed on 28th October, 2024.

¹⁹⁹ Amrita Madhukalya. NPP became the 1st national party from North-East. *Hindustan Times*. Dated: 8th June, 2019. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/npp-becomes-the-1st-national-party-from-north-east/story-ZYmpYcMJfMQv3XNcVSxiGI.html>. Accessed on 28th October, 2024.

²⁰⁰ Election Commission of India, Election Results-Full Statistical Report, *op.cit.*

b) Health sector: It tries to increase the coverage of the popular Congress schemes, Megha Health Insurance Scheme (MHIS) from Rs.5.3 lakhs to Rs. 6 lakhs, with an additional Rs. 50,000 for senior citizens.

c) Power sector: The party pledges 200 units of free power to each household with consumption expenditure below the poverty line (BPL).

d) Education sector: The Congress attempt to make education free for all girl students from kindergarten to XII standard.

e) Welfare related issue: It promises free LPG cylinder quarterly to each household with consumption expenditure below the poverty line (BPL).²⁰¹

The Congress party election manifesto was released on 11th February, 2023 by former Union Minister and AICC General Secretary Jairam Ramesh. The manifesto focuses mainly on jobs, education and health care.²⁰² Many of the promises in the Assembly election 2018 were repeated in 2023. For instance, the party pledged to create 3 lakh new jobs in 2018 while this year it promises to create 4 lakh new jobs and livelihoods in the next five years by covering at least one youth per family. Similarly, the MHIS which promises Rs. 5 lakhs in the previous manifesto are increased to cover Rs. 6 lakhs, with an additional Rs. 50000 for senior citizens. In education sector, it attempts to provide free education for all girl students up to Class-XII. The promises of the Congress include many freebies such as—free roofing materials for BPL families, free power supply up to 200 units to BPL household, free LPG cylinders quarterly to BPL families across the state, empowering every BPL single mother with a monthly allowance of Rs. 3000, etc.

3.6.1 (ii) The United Democratic Party (UDP)

The UDP which is the second largest parties in the ruling MDA-1.0 released their election manifesto on 17th February, 2023. The manifesto emphasizes the

²⁰¹ Indian National Congress. *Meghalaya Congress Manifesto 2023*. Shillong: Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee.

²⁰² Congress's Meghalaya manifesto focusses on jobs, healthcare, education. *Deccan Herald*. Dated: 11th February, 2023. <https://www.deccanherald.com/elections/congress-meghalaya-manifesto-focusses-on-jobs-healthcare-education-1190340.html>. Accessed on 11th June, 2025.

importance of employment, agriculture, health, economic growth, clean and corruption-free government, effective, fair, and impartial government. Some of the important points of the election manifesto are highlighted as under: - ²⁰³

a) The UDP pledges to enhance healthcare accessibility and affordability by enhancing infrastructure development and improving medical personnel efficiency throughout the state.

b) The party promises to establish an Education Commission to improve quality education, ensure teacher security, uniformity in educational institutions, maximum enrolment, focusing on dropout rates, and align with the National Education Policy.

c) The UDP plans to provide financial incentives for agriculture and related activities, establish welfare schemes for farmers, and introduce minimum support prices.

d) The UDP reiterated its commitment to implement the inner line permit (ILP) and emphasized the need to comply with state laws like the Meghalaya Residents Safety and Security Act.

e) The party urged the Union government to include Khasi and Garo languages in the 8th Schedule to the Indian Constitution, as per the state's legislative assembly resolution.

3.6.1 (iii) The National People's Party (NPP)

The ruling Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA)-1.0 (2018-2023) led by the NPP released their election manifesto for the Assembly election on 3rd February, 2023. The election manifesto was titled as "People's Document: Vision 2023-2028". The document provides a comprehensive overview of the government's significant achievements, titled 'Promises Delivered', and the story of making a better Meghalaya,

²⁰³ United Democratic Party releases manifesto for February 27 polls. *Ukhrul Times*. Dated: 18th February, 2023. <https://ukhrultimes.com/united-democratic-party-releases-manifesto-for-february-27-polls/>. Accessed on 24th October, 2024.

while the vision aims to take Meghalaya from better to best.²⁰⁴ The main points of the election manifesto of the NPP are as below: -

a) Employment: It attempts to create 5 lakh jobs for youth, focusing on entrepreneurship, tourism, agro-processing, and digital sectors. Skill development includes multi-sectoral skill parks, exposure trips, and livelihood sectors through PRIME scheme. It aims for Meghalaya to become India's Best Startup State.

b) Farmer welfare and rural rejuvenation: The party promises to continue supporting farmers in Meghalaya through flagship programs like FOCUS²⁰⁵ and FOCUS+, expanding to all producer households. The vision aims to improve agri-value chain, produce more, transport easily, and sell at the best prices by 2023-2028.

c) Infrastructure sector: It aims to plan village-by-village connectivity in Meghalaya including a new "Chief Minister's Village Connectivity Scheme" to further enhance road and village connectivity.

d) Economy sector: The party aims to become India's top ten state, focusing on Meghalaya's GDP growth, per capita income, and public expenditure over the next five years, with a strong emphasis on the social sector.

e) Governance: The party pledges to continue collaborating with Union government to include Khasi and Garo languages in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution and implement the Inner Line Permit in Meghalaya.²⁰⁶

The NPP "People's Document: Vision 2023-2028" was released by the NPP President and Chief Minister Conrad Sangma. The manifesto laid special emphasis on entrepreneurship, tourism, agro-processing and knowledge, education, health and

²⁰⁴ National People's Party. *NPP launches their manifesto: People's Document—Vision 2023-2028*. <https://nppindia.in/2023/02/03/npp-launches-their-manifesto-peoples-document-vision-2023-2028/>. Accessed on 24th October, 2024.

²⁰⁵ FOCUS full form is Fostering Climate Resilient Upland Farming System.

²⁰⁶ National People's Party. *People's Document: Vision 2023-2028*. Shillong: F.L. Mawlong, General Secretary, National People's Party, Meghalaya.

sports sectors in both rural and urban areas.²⁰⁷ The NPP like the Congress focuses on youth and employment issue of the state. The Congress aims to create 4 lakh jobs while the NPP attempts to create 5 lakh jobs and employment opportunities through various scheme such as—PRIME, YESS Meghalaya, STAR, Aspire Meghalaya, etc. The party already initiated many schemes during MDA-1 (2018-2023) and many remarkable achievements were achieved during the time. For instance, there are already 1500 beneficiaries under PRIME and 5 PRIME Hubs have already been set up in the state.²⁰⁸ Under agriculture sector, the party promises to continue supporting farmers in Meghalaya through flagship programs like FOCUS and FOCUS+ expanding to all producer households. The scheme was already utilized by 3.1 lakhs farmers including 2.05 lakh women farmers. The state government spent Rs.155 crore on this programme during 2018-2023.²⁰⁹ The party also attempted to improve infrastructural development as well as economic development as it aims to become India's top ten state in terms of GDP growth, per capita income and public expenditure.

3.6.1 (iv) The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

The BJP released their election manifesto Vision Document 2023 on 15th February, 2023 by Shri J.P. Nadda, BJP National President. The main points of the election manifesto of BJP are as follows: -

- a) It promises 33% reservation for women in all government jobs and implementation of 7th Pay Commission recommendations for state employees.
- b) It tries to provide financial assistance of Rs. 24,000 annually to all dependent widows and single mother.
- c) It aims to provide an investment of Rs. 2500 crores for the development of Medical College and other health infrastructures in the state.

²⁰⁷ Manosh Das. Meghalaya Assembly Election: Focus on generating 5 lakh jobs in NPP manifesto. *The Times of India*. Dated: 4th February, 2018.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/shillong/meghalaya-assembly-election-focus-on-generating-5-lakh-jobs-in-npp-manifesto/articleshow/97592696.cms>. Accessed on 11th June, 2025.

²⁰⁸ National People's Party, People's Document: Vision 2023-2028, *op.cit*, p.3.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p.2.

d) It promises monthly financial assistance of Rs. 1000 to unemployed graduates for a period of one year to help them prepare for higher education or government jobs.

e) It attempts to provide Rs. 5 meals through canteens. It promises free education to girls till post-graduation, free scooters for female college toppers, a government bond of Rs. 50,000 on the birth of a girl child and an all-woman battalion.²¹⁰

The BJP manifesto focuses on youth, women and girl child as Meghalaya has a matrilineal society. Besides, the party tries to woo different sections of the society by utilizing the power of the Centre. Among them—two free LPG cylinders to all the beneficiaries of PM Ujjwala Yojana, 24x7 power supply, promises to double senior citizen's pension to Rs. 1000 per month, free rice, wheat and dal to all eligible public distribution system beneficiaries, increase financial assistance of PM Kishan to Rs. 8000 per annum, smartphones for meritorious students of Class-12. At the same time, the party also challenged the NPP which is the coalition partner in the state and the Centre. It promises to establish special task force to investigate all corruption cases in the state and to check illegal mining.

3.6.2 Election Result

The counting of votes for the Assembly elections of Nagaland, Tripura and Meghalaya were held on 2nd March, 2023. The results were declared on the same day. The election results of the three states were not different from the previous Assembly elections in 2018. In Tripura, the BJP and Indigenous Progressive Front of Tripura (IPFT) managed to form government whereas in Nagaland, the BJP and Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) formed government for two consecutive terms. History repeat itself in Meghalaya as the electorate gave a hung Assembly with the

²¹⁰ Meghalaya polls: BJP promises 33% reservation for women in govt. jobs. *The Print*. Dated: 15th February, 2025. <https://theprint.in/india/meghalaya-polls-bjp-promises-33-reservation-for-women-in-govt-jobs/1374081/>. Accessed on 29th October, 2025.

NPP emerging as the single largest party in the state.²¹¹ The performance of political parties in the Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly election, 2023 is given in the following table:²¹²

²¹¹ Highlights: BJP Keeps Nagaland, Tripura, Reunites with Meghalaya Ally. *NDTV*. Dated: 2nd March, 2023. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/live-election-results-2023-tripura-nagaland-meghalaya-stakes-high-for-bjp-in-tripura-nagaland-conrad-sangma-in-meghalaya-3826192>. Accessed on 30th October, 2024.

²¹² Election Commission of India. *Meghalaya General Legislative Election 2023*. <https://old.eci.gov.in/files/file/14873-meghalayaexcluding-ac-23/>. Accessed on 28th October, 2024.

Table-3.6: Performance of Political Parties in Election to Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly, 2023

Legislative Assembly, 2025						
Sl. No	PARTY	SEATS			SHARE IN VALID VOTES POLLED IN STATE	
		CONTESTED	WON	FORFEIT DEPOSIT (FD)	VOTES POLLED	VOTING PERCENTAGE
NATIONAL PARTIES						
1.	AITC	55	5	35	255742	13.78
2.	BJP	59	2	42	173043	9.33
3.	INC	59	5	38	243841	13.14
4.	NPP	56	26	6	584338	31.49
STATE PARTIES						
5.	HSPDP	10	2	5	65989	3.56
6.	PDF	9	2	6	34974	20.60
7.	UDP	45	11	22	300747	16.21
STATE PARTIES- OTHER STATE						
8.	JD (U)	3	0	3	1025	0.06
REGISTERED (UNRECOGNIZED) PARTIES						
10.	GNASURKP	1	0	1	1375	0.07
11.	GNC	2	0	1	9348	0.5
12.	RPI	2	0	2	434	0.02
13.	RPI (A)	6	0	6	1869	0.1
14.	VPP	18	4	11	101264	5.46
INDEPENDENTS						
15.	IND	44	2	39	66704	3.6
16.	NOTA	-	-	-	14680	0.79
GRAND TOTAL		369	59	217	1855373	-

Source: ECI (Statistical Report of Election to State Legislative Assembly. <https://old.eci.gov.in/statistical-report/statistical-reports/>). Accessed on 30th October, 2024

The Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly election 2023 again witnessed a fractured mandate. No single party secure simple majority in the election. The NPP managed to win 26 seats and emerged as the single largest party in the state. The NPP achieved the highest percentage of votes polled. Its vote share improved from 20.60% in 2018 to 31.49 % in the Assembly election 2023. This means that the NPP votes share has increased by 10.89%. The UDP secured 11 seats, which means that it had increased their seats from six to eleven in the Assembly election 2023. Also, its vote share improved from 11.61% to 16.21%. While, the Congress turncoat Dr. Mukul Sangma's AITC won five seats (four from Garo Hills and one from Khasi Hills). It also witnessed a significant increase of vote share by the AITC. The AITC received 0.35% votes share in 2018 while it managed to secured 13.78%. The AITC vote share has increased by 13.43%.²¹³ The main reason for the increased in vote share may be attributed to the joining of AITC by the former Congress Chief Minister Mukul Sangma and 11 Congress legislators in November, 2021.²¹⁴ Besides, it can be argued that the elected legislators from AITC won because they are well known individuals in the electoral politics of the state.

The INC who formed government for the maximum period of time was decimated in the election. The party retained only five seats due to leadership tussle while they managed to secured 21 seats in 2018. The party seats and vote share declined rapidly as compared to the Assembly election 2018. Its vote share had been decreased by 15.36%. It was the worst ever performance of the Congress party in the state Assembly election.²¹⁵ There are many reasons for the decline of the Congress party. One of the important reasons for the decline of the party is that it does not have a prominent and popular leader. Secondly, the departure of Dr. Mukul Sangma to the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) created a vacuum in the state leadership. The other national party i.e. the BJP also did not improve their seats as they retained two Assembly seats in 2018 and 2023. Besides, the voting percentage of the party

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ Meghalaya: 12 of 17 Congress MLAs led By Ex CM Mukul Sangma, Jump Ship to TMC. *The Wire India*. Dated: 25th November, 2021. <https://m.thewire.in/article/politics/meghalaya-12-of-17-congress-mlas-led-by-ex-cm-mukul-sangma-jump-ship-to-tmc>. Accessed on 9th June, 2025.

²¹⁵ Election Commission of India, Election Results-Full Statistical Report, *op.cit.*

decreased by 0.3% as compared to Assembly election 2018.²¹⁶ It is observed that the BJP candidates also won the elections on their personality factors. The reason is that the BJP two legislators—A.L. Hek and Sanbor Shullai have been elected from the same constituencies as BJP ticket in 2018 and 2023 respectively. Mr A.L. Hek represented his constituency Pynthorumkhrah for sixth consecutive term. Whether, he contests as BJP or Congress candidate, A.L. Hek won the election. Similarly, Sanbor Shullai also represent South Shillong constituency for third consecutive term. Earlier, he was elected from South Shillong constituency as NCP candidate in 2013 and as a BJP candidate in 2018 and 2023 respectively.²¹⁷

The other regional parties such as the HSPDP retained their two seats while the PDF seat was decreased from four to two in 2023. The HSPDP vote share also decline by 1.79% whereas the PDF seat increased from 8.17% to 20.60%.²¹⁸ Another surprising fact was the success of the Voice of the People Party (VPP). The VPP, a young political party established only in 2021 managed to win four seats in its electoral debut which constitutes 5.46% of the votes polled.²¹⁹ The other two seats were won by the independent candidates. It can be noted here that the number of independent candidates is 44 in 2023 which is less than 85 in 2018. Besides, the number of elected independents decreased from three to two legislators in 2023. The voting percentage of independent candidates declined from 10.84% to 3.6% in 2023. While, the other political parties did not perform well as they failed to secured less than 1% of the votes polled.²²⁰

The NPP formed a coalition government for the second time with the help of regional parties in the state. The electorate of Meghalaya did not give clear mandate to any political party. Therefore, coalition is the only option for the formation of

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ Kenny Jyrwa. Meghalaya BJP leader from South Shillong slams Al Hek for projecting himself as the next CM. *India Today NE*. Dated: 6th February, 2023. <https://www.indiatodayne.in/elections/meghalaya-assembly-elections-2023/story/meghalaya-bjp-leader-from-south-shillong-slams-al-hek-for-projecting-himself-as-the-next-cm-508396-2023-02-06>. Accessed on 10th June, 2025.

²¹⁸ Election Commission of India, Election Results-Full Statistical Report, *op.cit.*

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

government. Right after the elections were over, attempts were made by some parties to form political alliance to form government. An attempt was first made to form non-NPP led government by parties like—INC, UDP, PDF, HSPDP, TMC and VPP.²²¹ But they failed to form a government. As a result, the NPP led coalition alliance was formed. It comprises of five parties—NPP, BJP, HSPDP, UDP, PDF and two independent MLAs. The alliance is termed as Meghalaya Democratic Alliance-2.0 (MDA-2.0). It has 45 MLAs under the leadership of Conrad K. Sangma. In the MDA-2.0 government, the NPP had a major share by having eight Cabinet Ministers including the Chief Minister and two Dy. Chief Ministers (one from Jaintia Hills and one from Khasi Hills). The UDP had two Ministerial berth and the BJP and HSPDP are accommodate with one Ministerial berth each. The Chief Minister Conrad Sangma on addressing the issue of a Khasi CM, he stated that out of the twelve Cabinet Ministers, four (including CM) were from Garo Hills and the rest eight Ministers were from Khasi Hills regions.²²²

The Meghalaya Democratic Alliance-2.0 led by the NPP claims that they have formed a stable government and contribute for the consistent growth to the state. As Meghalaya always experienced instability in the government, the MDA spokesperson Paul Lyndoh termed the performance of MDA-1.0 and MDA-2.0 government as phenomenal. He said that the state would be a 10 billion dollar economy by the end of their tenure in 2028. The Tourism Minister Paul Lyngdoh stresses that among many remarkable achievements, the CM Elevate programme and the progress of Art & Culture Department and Tourism Department in the development of tourism sector is noteworthy.²²³

²²¹ Utpal Parashar. Twist in Meghalaya govt formation; HSPDP MLAs support Sangma's NPP, party withdraws. *Hindustan Times*. Dated: 4th March, 2024. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/meghalaya-govt-formation-drama-hspdp-mlas-support-sangma-s-npp-party-withdraws-101677900523591.html>. Accessed on 30th October, 2024.

²²² Prabin Kalita. Conrad Sangma led MDA 2.0 has eight Ministers from Khasi Hills. Dated: 7th March, 2024. *The Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/conrad-sangma-led-md-2-0-has-eight-ministers-from-khasi-hills/articleshow/98464061.cms>. Accessed on 30th October, 2024.

²²³ Conrad and Paul happy with government performance. *Meghalaya Monitor*. Dated: 6th March, 2024. <https://meghalayamonitor.com/conrad-paul-happy-with-govt-performance/>. Accessed on 29th October, 2025.

Chapter-IV

Local Democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya

Local democracy is a system of governance where elected representatives hold decision-making power at the local level. It allows citizens to directly influence the local affairs and aims to align local policies with the community needs. Effective local democracy facilitates public participation, enhanced service delivery, strengthen community and improved development outcomes.¹ Local democracy constitutes the foundation of a vibrant and inclusive democratic system. The strengthening of local democracy is crucial for India which is the largest democracy in the world. Effective local governance would guarantee essential services, community representation, and citizen participation in decision-making processes.² The chapter discusses local democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya. The main focuses are the working of local self-government in both the states.

4.1 Local Government in Mizoram

The local government in Mizoram can be broadly classified into three—urban local bodies, rural local bodies and the Autonomous District Council. In the urban local bodies, the Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) in Aizawl city is studied. On the rural local bodies, it focuses on the Village Council system. Another local government in Mizoram is the Autonomous District Council (ADC) under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. The study on Autonomous District Council mainly focuses on Lai Autonomous District Council in Lawngtlai district.

4.2 Urban Local Bodies in Mizoram

Urban local government refers to the governance of urban areas by elected representatives, with the state government defining its jurisdiction. There are eight

¹ Elliot Bulmer. (2017). *Local Democracy*. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). p.3.

² P. Sakthivel & Showkat Ahmad Dar. *Strengthening Local Democracy in India-A Focus on Robust Governance*. Indian Journal of Natural Sciences. Vol.14, Issue No. 80, (October, 2023). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/374848064_Strengthening_Local_Democracy_in_India_-_a_Focus_on_Robust_Governance. Accessed on 9th November, 2024.

types of urban local governments in India, namely—Municipal Corporation, Municipality, Notified Area Committee, Cantonment Board, Township, Port Trust and Special Purpose Agency.³ The system of urban government was constitutionalized through the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992. The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 was instrumental in constitutionalizing the urban government system.⁴ In Mizoram, there are two urban local bodies namely Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) for Aizawl and Lunglei Municipal Council (LMC) for Lunglei. The AMC and the LMC are responsible for civic administration of Aizawl city and the urban areas of Lunglei respectively. The study of urban local bodies in Mizoram is confined to Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC). The rationale for selecting AMC is that the AMC is the first established urban bodies in Mizoram while the LMC was recently established. It also confined to one Local Council under AMC. The Local Council is the lowest form of urban local bodies under Municipality in Aizawl.

4.2.1 Aizawl Municipal Corporation

The Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007 provides for the establishment of a three-tier system of administration for urban local bodies, namely—Municipality, Ward Committee and Local Council. The Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007 and the Mizoram Municipalities (Second Amendment) Act, 2015 provides for the establishment of three types of municipalities in Mizoram:

i) Municipal Board for a transitional area (an urban area having a population not less than five thousand).

ii) Municipal Council for a smaller urban area (an urban area having a population not less than fifty thousand).

iii) Municipal Corporation for a larger urban area (an urban area having a population not less than three lakhs).⁵

³ M. Laxmikanth. (2020). *Indian Polity*. Chennai: McGraw Hill Education (India) Private Limited. p.39.

⁴ *Ibid*, p.39.

⁵ L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima & Lal Lawmzuali. (2024). *Government and Politics of Mizoram*. Guwahati: South-Eastern Book Agencies. p.157.

Accordingly, the Aizawl Municipal Council was established by the Government of Mizoram on 1st July, 2008 under the Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007. The Aizawl Municipal Council started functioning on 1st July, 2008. The Aizawl Municipal Council was elevated to the status of Corporation on 15th October, 2015. The AMC is divided into 19 wards. Out of the 19 wards, six wards are reserved for women which is rotated after every five years. The tenure of the Corporation is five years. The Indian National Congress (INC) and the Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) alliance won the first election held in November 2010. CT Zakhuma was the first Chairman of AMC. However, the INC-ZNP alliance collapsed and the ZNP member Zarzoliana was elected as Chairman on July, 2014. Within a short time, Zarzoliana was also removed and CT Zakhuma was again elected as Chairman on February, 2015. CT Zakhuma was the first Chairman of Aizawl Municipal Council as well as the first Mayor of Aizawl Municipal Corporation as the Council was elevated to Corporation during the period. The MNF won the second AMC election held in November, 2015. PC Lalhmingthanga was elected as Mayor and Lalringliana as Deputy Mayor. The MNF completed their full term without any changes in the Executive Council. The third AMC election was held in February, 2021. The MNF again won the election and Lalrinenga was elected as Mayor and R. Thanglura as Deputy Mayor. As of now, the state government had already transferred 15 out of 18 subjects under the Twelfth Schedule to the Constitution of India.⁶

Mission & Vision

The main mission and vision of the Aizawl Municipal Corporation are as follows: -

- i) To provide basic civic amenities in the jurisdiction of Aizawl Municipality.
- ii) To collect tax and non- tax revenues.
- iii) Issue of shop licenses.
- iv) Maintenance of public places like parks / gardens, etc.

⁶ Aizawl Municipal Corporation. *The Particulars of Organisation, Functions and Duties*. <https://amcmizoram.com/page/rti>. Accessed on 11th November, 2024.

- v) To provide access to socio-economic databases
- vi) To provide citizen centric (govt. to citizen) services, e-governance applications.
- vii) Market access and e-commerce
- viii) Generation of employment
- ix) To use IT tools for sustainable regional development.⁷

Organizational Structure

The highest decision-making body of the AMC is the Board of Councillors (BoC). It consists of 19 elected and 12 appointed members (11 MLAs within Aizawl and one Lok Sabha MP) appointed by the Governor. The BoC headed by the Mayor is similar to the State Legislative Assembly. The appointed members did not have voting rights in the BoC. There is an Executive Council consisting of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, both elected by the Corporators. Besides, there are four Executive Corporators which are appointed by the Mayor. The Mayor is the executive head of the AMC and the Executive Council exercises all executive powers.⁸

At the intermediary level, there is a Ward Committee in every ward. The Ward Committee consists of a Chairman (elected Corporator from that ward) and two members from all Local Councils within the ward. Besides, the Ward Committee Chairman shall appoint three prominent citizens, one of whom shall be a woman. The term of Ward Committee is five years. The Ward Committee are responsible for local and internal arrangement and activities within the Ward. They are also entrusted with the responsibility of supervision and monitoring, and role in planning within the Ward.⁹ At the bottom, there is a Local Council in every locality within Aizawl city. The size of the Local Council depends upon the number of voters in the locality. The Local Council, being the lowest level of grassroot government plays a significant role

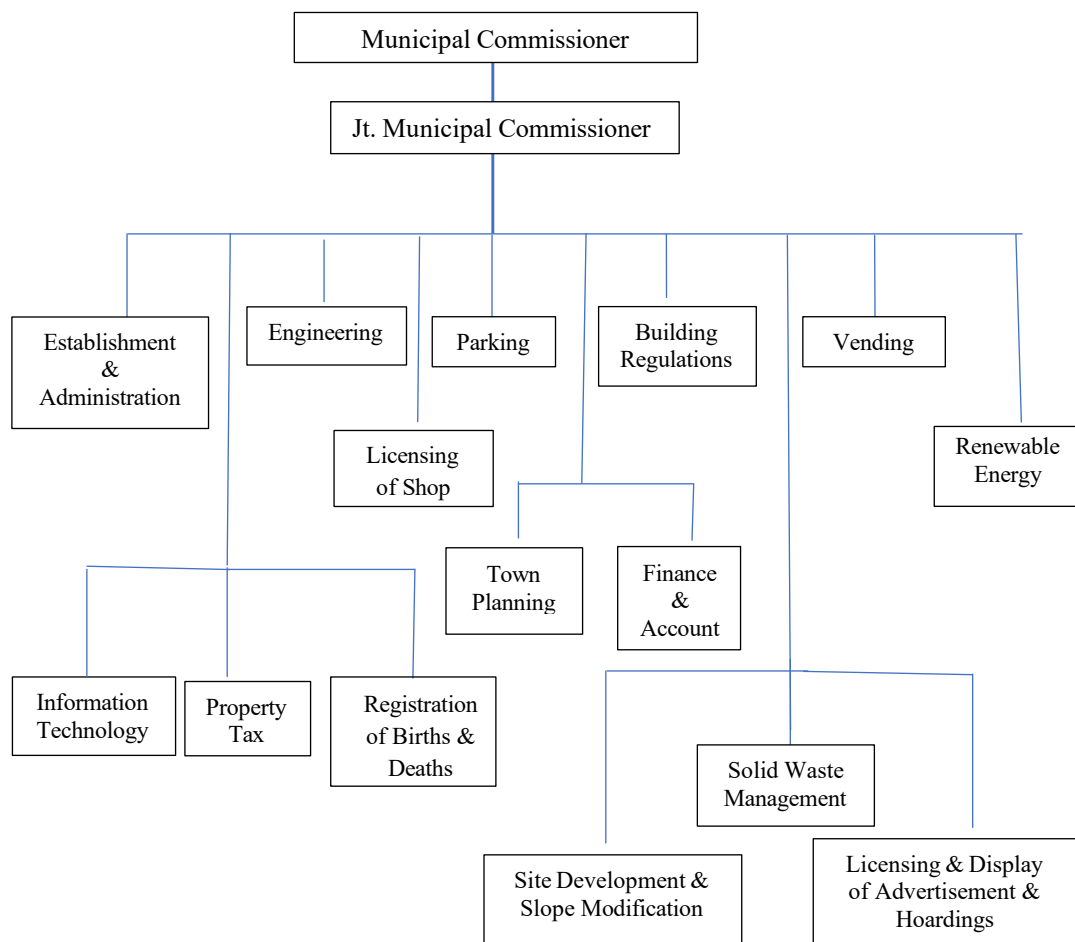
⁷ Aizawl Municipal Corporation. *Mission-Vision*. <https://amcmizoram.com/page/mission-vision>. Accessed on 11th November, 2024.

⁸ Aizawl Municipal Corporation. *Organization Structure*. <https://amcmizoram.com/page/organisation-structure>. Accessed on 11th November, 2024.

⁹ LH Chhuanawma, Lalthakima, Lal Lawmzuali, *op.cit*, p.185.

in local governance. There are 85 Local Councils in Aizawl city.¹⁰ The Local Council and the AMC (the parent body) work effectively for the civic administration in Aizawl city. In the meantime, the Ward Committee which is the intermediary body under AMC did not function properly as per the provision. Therefore, the study is confined to Local Council as it represents the people at the grassroot level in urban areas.

Fig. 4.1: Organizational Chart of Aizawl Municipal Corporation



Source: Prepared by the Scholar

¹⁰ Aizawl Municipal Corporation, The Particulars of Organisation, Functions and Duties, *op.cit.*

4.2.2 Local Council

The Local Council is the lowest form of grassroots democracy in urban areas in Mizoram. Before the establishment of the Local Council, there were Village Council in Mizoram. Since the establishment of the Aizawl Municipal Council in Aizawl city, all the Village Councils in Aizawl were changed to Local Councils since November 2010. The Mizoram Municipalities (Ward Committee and Local Council) Rules, 2010 provides that the Municipality shall form a Local Council in every locality within the ward to address local internal affairs in accordance with Mizo traditions, customs, and practices, as well as other items essential for the effective functioning of Local Councils. The first elections to establish 83 Local Councils were held in February 2012.¹¹ The election to Local Council was conducted by State Election Commission. The Act allows all residents of a locality the right to vote provided whose name is included in the electoral roll for councillor election. The Act does not lay down specific qualifications for Local Council elections. But it stated that eligible voters may be elected, except an employee under the central government or state government or public sector undertakings. The Act allows the Municipality to establish more than one Local Councils in the area previously governed by a village council if necessary.¹²

The number of members of Local Council depends upon the number of voters. A locality having less than 1500 voters shall have five members while a locality with more than 1500 voters shall have seven members. One-third of seats are reserved for women in the Local Council. The term of the Local Council is five years. After declaration of results, the first meeting of the elected members will take place within ten days to elect the Chairman and two members to represent the Local Council in the Ward Committee.¹³ At present, there are Chairman, Vice Chairman and Treasurer and the others as member in every Local Council. The Local Council appoints a Secretary

¹¹ Comptroller and Auditor General of India. *An Overview of the Organization, Finances, Devolution and Accountability Framework of Urban Local Bodies*.

https://cag.gov.in/uploads/download_audit_report/2012/Mizoram_TL_ULB_RLB_2012_chap_1.pdf. Accessed on 12th November, 2024.

¹² Mizoram.gov.in. *Aizawl Municipalities Ward Committees and Local Council Rules*.

<https://udpa.mizoram.gov.in/uploads/qms/f7e9c902dfee15a7fba223260cb4c4ae/aizawl-municipalities-ward-committee-and-local-council-rules-2010.pdf>. Accessed on 12th November, 2024.

¹³ *Ibid*.

who is a non-elected member and *Tlangau* (village announcer) who helps and assists the Local Council. The functions of Local Council are classified into three categories—general functions, other functions and role in planning. The power and functions of Local Council are: -¹⁴

1) General functions: The general functions of the Local Council are determined by the Municipality and include common civic services and community benefits in accordance with the Mizo traditions, customs and practices as provided under subsection (3) of section 23 of the Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007.

2) Other functions: The other functions include-

a) The state government or the Municipality or the Ward Committee may entrust one or more powers of the Ward Committee to the Local Council under Rule 11 of these Rules within the locality.

b) The Local Council, under the supervision of the Ward Committee or Municipality within the ward shall supervise and monitor-

i) detecting violations of numerous provisions of the Act, such as illegal construction, encroachments on municipal and public properties, public nuisance, tax evasion, unauthorized activities, and the like.

ii) arresting unnecessary use of various municipal services such as tap water, street hydrants, street lights, parks and playgrounds, community centre, and so on.

iii) detection of unclean premises and accumulated waste, with the authority to order the owner or occupier of such premises to clean and dispose of the garbage.

3) Role of Local Council in Planning: The role of Local Council in planning comprises of-

a) The Local Council shall provide all necessary support to the Ward Committee in fulfilling its responsibilities.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

b) The Ward Committee is responsible for assigning certain tasks or functions under the Local Council's jurisdiction, which the Council must perform satisfactorily.

c) The Local Council is responsible for identifying uncompleted work or poor-quality work or inferior quality within the ward and reporting it to the concerned authority for action.

The Municipality may dissolve any Local Council for different reasons. However, it provided that the reason may be documented in writing and investigated discreetly by a fully authorized and accountable authority. In the event of such dissolution, the Municipality may nominate a prominent member of the community to serve as Administrator. The Administrator will take over the charge of the Local Council until a new election is held. It is provided that fresh election must be conducted within sixty days from the date of dissolution of the Local Council.¹⁵

4.2.3 A Case Study on the Working of Tuikual South Local Council

Tuikual South Local Council is taken for a case study to understand the working of the Local Council under the AMC. Tuikual South locality belongs to Ward-XII of Aizawl Municipal Corporation. Tuikual South locality is selected for the study because it is situated in the heart of the Aizawl city. Besides, the locality is one of the most populous areas with 3907 voters in the last electoral roll published on 8th February, 2024.¹⁶ Further, the locality is home to a diverse population, including a sizable number of Nepali (Gorkhali) community who are the permanent inhabitants of the locality.

Tuikual South Local Council was established on November, 2010 with the formation of Aizawl Municipal Council. There are seven Local Council member. In addition to this, there is one Secretary appointed as per the rules of AMC. In the Local Council election 2020, the INC managed to form executive body by winning four seats against the state ruling MNF party who bagged three seats. The Local Council

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Deputy Commissioner, Aizawl District, Govt. of Mizoram. *Final Electoral Roll 2024*. Dated: 8th February, 2024. <https://dcaizawl.mizoram.gov.in/category/electoral-roll-2023>. Accessed on 12th November, 2024.

witnessed the change of executive body thrice during the term (2020-2025). The main reason is due to the changing of party by one INC member to MNF and again to the ZPM. The executive body during (2020-2025) are as follows: -

Chairman	: Pu Douglas Lalmawikima, INC
Vice Chairman	: Pu Zarzoliana, INC
Secretary	: Pu Lalrinfela, INC (appointed)
Treasurer	: Pu K. Laldinthara, MNF
Member	: 1. Pu T. Laltanpuia, MNF 2. Pu Biakthanzama, ZPM 3. Pi Lalsangzuali, MNF (elected through the reserved seat for women) 4. Pi. Lalringliani, INC (elected through the reserved seat for women)

The Local Council is responsible for the overall administration and management of their localities. According to Douglas Lalmawikima, the main functions of Local Council include—waste management, repairing street lights, proper drainage system, ensuring sanitation, managing cooking gas (home delivery system), supervision of public distribution system, market management, implementing building regulations, certifying and recommending important government applications, etc. Besides these, all the government departments and agency approach the Local Council for assistance during census, survey, revision of voters list, construction of developmental works, etc. in their locality.¹⁷

Another important function of the Local Council is issuing certificate and recommendation for application to various government offices. For instance, the people approach the Local Council member for recommendation for various certificate namely—Scheduled Tribe certificate, residential certificate, income certificate, character certificate, no objection certificate, etc. Moreover, the application of Inner Line Permit (ILP) from non-tribals who are working in the area also require the approval of Local Council. In order to obtain the above recommendation letter and

¹⁷ The scholar interviewed Douglas Lalmawikima (Chairman, Tuikual South Local Council during the interviewed period) on 25th November, 2024 in his residence at Tuikual South.

certificate, people normally collect it from their residence at any time. In addition, the Local Council used to open office twice a week in the locality for the people. Besides, the Local Council plays an important role in implementing AMC building regulation. To construct house within AMC area, it required the prior approval of the concerned Local Council. The AMC also entrusted the Local Council for supervising violators of the building regulations within their locality.

The Local Council plays an important role in the management of public distribution system and cooking gas in their locality. For public distribution system (rice ration, kerosene oil, etc.), the Local Council selects the person to be in charge of collecting and disbursement of ration to the people. They are known as retailers and they manage the government fair price shops in their locality under the supervision of the Local Council. The Local Council informs the people to collect their monthly quotas of rice, kerosene, etc. through public information system (Tuikual South YMA Information Centre). The Local Council also manages to deliver the cooking gas in the locality. Tuikual South is one of the few localities which introduced home delivery of cooking gas. They introduced the system of home delivery in 2024. The Local Council utilizes modern technology and they create a WhatsApp group. They used the WhatsApp group to give information to the locality such as on in which date their cooking gas will be delivered. Earlier, cooking gas was delivered in a particular selected location of the locality. The Local Council identified some places for collection of cooking gas. In this system, they used to give information through public information system.

Moreover, the Local Council also plays an important role in waste management of their locality. For example, the AMC introduced Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode in waste management. The Local Council hire trucks and mini trucks for collecting garbage. Each family contributes Rs. 200 monthly for waste collection. The Local Council collected the money and manages the waste collection in their locality. Furthermore, various government departments used the Local Council as their agent. For instance, the Local Council assisted government officials in conducting census, survey and report to be submitted to different government

departments. Besides, all the developmental schemes and works to be implemented needs prior approval of the Local Council. The developmental works which are carried out by government departments or which are under MLA or MP Local Area Development (LAD) fund need the prior approval of the Local Council. Normally, the Local Council functions as implementing agency in the construction of foot path, retaining wall, steps, drainage system, etc. under MLA / MP LAD works.

However, there are many challenges in the functioning of Local Council. According to Douglas Lalmawikima, the main problem lies with the funding issue as they did not have proper and regular funding system. The Local Council requires funds for maintaining street lights, cleaning drainage system, sanitation, etc. Besides, the Local Council functions as an agency for all government departments and sometimes it becomes a burden to certify all the applications and documents in the government.¹⁸ Another challenge is that they did not have actual power and they do not hold a respectable position in the society as compared to the Village Council in the earlier days. This opinion is supported by Pu Douglas Lalmawikima, Pu F. Lalrinawma¹⁹ and Pu David Lalthanngura Sailo.²⁰ They opined that earlier the Village Council had a Village Council Court which can settle the dispute within the locality as they are empowered with third class magisterial power. The Local Council did not have such kind of power. They did not have actual power in implementing building regulations as they cannot impose penalty or fines and the final authority rest with the AMC. Further, the honorarium of Local Council member is very minimal (Rs.1000 per month) and need to increase for preserving the prestige and position of Local Council.

Another challenge is reservation of seats for women in Local Council. All the elected leaders and community leaders argued that women seat reservation create lots of problems as it is very difficult to find women candidates. Sometimes, it becomes a hindrance in the functioning of Local Council as women have more responsibility in

¹⁸ Douglas Lalmawikima, *op.cit.*

¹⁹ The scholar interviewed F. Lalrinawma (retire as Secretary from Govt. of Mizoram and Gen. Secretary in Mizoram Civil Pensioner Association) on 26th November, 2024 at Civil Pensioner Office, Tuikual South, Aizawl.

²⁰ The scholar interviewed David Lalthanngura Sailo (Vice President, Young Mizo Association, Tuikual South Branch) on 26th November, 2024 in his residence at Tuikual South.

maintaining household activities in Mizo society. The woman Local Council member Lalsangzuali also argued that women's reservation is not necessary as it degrades the woman's position as it shows that women can be elected only through reservation. She added that a capable and potential woman can be elected without reservation as a woman's position in Mizo society is better as compared to other states.²¹ David Lalthanngura Sailo pointed out another challenge within the functioning of Local Council. He argues that all important decisions are taken in the Local Council sitting in a democratic manner, but due to the intervention of party politics, strict actions cannot be taken for violators as they belong to political parties and seek for their re-election.²² Apart from the above challenges, the Local Council is a democratic body which is responsible for administering the local body in urban areas. The Local Council is not powerful as the Village Council, but it became one of the most important bodies for the administration and development of the people. Besides, it strengthens the grassroot democracy due to the participation of the people at the local level.

4.3 Rural Local Bodies in Mizoram

The Panchayati Raj System under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 is a system for rural local self-government in India. While Article 243M of the Act stipulates that the Act is not applicable to Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland.²³ So, the Government of Mizoram introduced 'Village Council' as the lowest (grassroot) form of government in Mizoram. It is the local self-government at the village level, succeeding the traditional chieftainship since 1954. The traditional form of governance under the chief which was practiced in the Lushai Hills from the pre-British era was abolished in 1954. At the same time, a new system of local government namely, Village Council was introduced in the Lushai Hills district of Assam. The Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act, 1953 was approved by the Governor of Assam on 29th November 1953. Consequently, Village Councils were formed in the Lushai Hills

²¹ The scholar interviewed Lalsangzuali (Treasurer, Tuikual South Local Council and is elected for three consecutive terms from women reserved seat) on 28th November, 2024 in her residence at Tuikual South.

²² David Lalthanngura Sailo, *op.cit.*

²³ M.N. Karna, L.S. Gassah & C.J. Thomas. (Ed). (2023). *Power to People in Meghalaya: Sixth Schedule and the 73rd Amendment*. New Delhi: Regency Publication. p.(xviii).

District. The Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act, 1953 (as amended from time to time) has been practiced in the whole state of Mizoram until the formation of Aizawl Municipal Corporation (since 1st July, 2008) for Aizawl city and Lunglei Municipal Council (since 13th January, 2023)²⁴ for urban areas of Lunglei respectively. The villages in the district headquarters still function under the Village Council.

1) Composition & Structure of Village Council

The Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act, 1953 (as adapted and amended from time to time) provides that there shall be a Village Council comprising one or more villages with three to nine members, depending on the number of houses. The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2014 introduced 30% reservation of seats for women in every Village Council. A Village Council shall be composed of members according to the number of houses it contains as specified below (as amended in 2014):

i) For a village not exceeding 200 households, there shall be three (3) elected members, of whom one (1) shall be woman.

ii) For a village with more than 200 households, but not exceeding 500 households, there shall be five (5) members, of whom one (1) shall be woman.

iii) For a village with more than 500 households, but not exceeding 1000 households, there shall be seven (7) elected members, of whom two (2) shall be women.

iv) For a village with more than 1000 households and above, there shall be nine (9) elected members, of whom three (3) shall be women.²⁵

The members of Village Council shall be elected by adult suffrage. The State Election Commission (SEC) holds the responsibility for the conduct of Village Council election in Mizoram. The executive officials of the Village Council are—the President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary (appointed member) and the

²⁴ Lunglei Municipal Council, Organization Structure (Achievement of LMC, *op.cit.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

executive functions of the Village Council are vested to them. The Act provided that if a Village Council having three (3) seats has only two members due to any reasons, the Vice President shall hold the post of Treasurer. Every Village Council, unless sooner dissolved shall continue for five (5) years from the date appointed for its first meeting.²⁶

2) Qualification of Members

A person is qualified to be elected a member of the Village Council if: -

(i) he/she is a member of a scheduled tribe.

(ii) he/she attained the age of 25 years.

(iii) he/she is a voter where s/he seeks election

(iv) he/she is not a member of any other Village Council

(v) he/she is not of unsound mind and stands so declared by a competent Court of Authority

(vi) whether before or after the commencement of this Act he has not been convicted of an offence under the Lushai Hills Autonomous District (Administration of justice) Rules, 1953 or under other Law for the time being in force in India, unless a period of three years has elapsed since his conviction, and if imprisoned since his release from prison

(vii) he/she did not hold any office of profit under the central government or the state government.²⁷

3) Powers & Functions

The powers and functions of the Village Council under the Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act, 1953 (amended from time to time) are as follows: -

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima, Lal Lawmzuali, *op.cit*, p.192.

i) The village council or any officer authorized by the state government allots specific regions for jhums each year, distributing them in accordance with state government-framed laws.

ii) The village council has the power to enforce ‘*Hnatlang*’ (voluntary community service like cleaning the roadside, side drain, etc. by the villagers) in the interest of the public without discrimination based on religion, caste, or class. Non-compliance with ‘*Hnatlang*’ orders is normally fined.

iii) The village council are accountable to report all its functions and decisions made in the Gram Sabha meeting.²⁸

a) Powers and Duties

The Village Council has several powers and duties, some of the important points are: -

i) To formulate village development schemes and supervise development projects allocated by the state government through various agencies.

ii) To assist various government agencies in executing development works in the village.

iii) To undertake development projects independently or at the request of the government.

iv) To convene regular social audit for successful implementation of development works in the village.

v) To assist the state government in public distribution system.²⁹

²⁸ State Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (SIRD&PR), Mizoram. *The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953*.

<https://sirdpr.mizoram.gov.in/uploads/attachments/9b4745448c6fa661644ed732091dc0b4/the-lushai-hills-district-village-councils-acts-1953.pdf>. Accessed on 16th November, 2024.

²⁹ *Ibid*.

b) Power to make rules

Furthermore, the Act empowered the Village Councils with certain rule-making powers related to subjects with the prior approval of the Governor or the state government. Some of the important rules making power are stated as under: -

- i) control, preservation and use of timbers and other forest products except the reserved forests, ordinarily utilised for building purposes.
- ii) maintenance, preservation and improvement of good water supply.
- iii) prevention and control of fire within the village and the village land.
- iv) Sanitation and cleanliness of the village.³⁰

c) Judicial functions

Additionally, the Lushai Hills Autonomous District (Administration of Justice) Rules, 1953 empowered the Village Councils in Mizoram with judicial functions. This Act empowers the Village Council to establish a 'Village Council Court' for the adjudication of minor civil and criminal issues. The Village Council Court has the authority to decide 'civil cases' that only involve tribal people. Moreover, the Village Council Court can adjudicate 'criminal cases' which are also reflected in the Indian Penal Code (now Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita), including—fighting or violence, public nuisance, infliction of physical pain by mistake, restriction and confinement by force, hurting other human beings, robbery, misconduct, trespass, disturbance of peaceful public life due to intoxication. The Village Council Court is empowered to levy a penalty of Rs.500 on the side that loses the case. However, it lacks the authority to impose a term of imprisonment on the losing party.³¹

4.3.1 A Case Study on the Working of Reiek Village Council

Reiek village is under Reiek RD Block, Mamit District. It is selected for study because of two reasons—for its achievement as well as its backwardness. Firstly,

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima & Lal Lawmzuali, *op.cit.*, p.196.

Reiek village is under Mamit District and Mamit District belongs to one of the 115 aspirational districts in India. The aspirational districts are identified from 28 states by the Govt. of India.³² At the same time, Reiek village is one of the most popular tourist hubs in Mizoram. It was declared as the ‘Best Tourism Village of India’ in 2023.³³ Furthermore, it is popular for turmeric production and bee keeping within the state. Moreover, Reiek Village Council was established in 1954 when the Village Councils were set up for the first time in the Lushai Hills.

Reiek village is located approximately 29 kilometres west of the state capital, Aizawl. The village was established in 1917, with inhabitants migrating from the neighbouring villages of Reiek peak. There are different stories about the origin on the name of the village. The most widely accepted story of the term ‘Reiek’ is that it derives from the Darlong word ‘*Teklung*’ which refers to an extremely hard rock present in the region.³⁴ According to Pu C. Lalrozama, there are 475 household in Reiek village. The Reiek Village Council have five members with one appointed Secretary. In the Village Council election 2020, the MNF party won the Reiek Village Council. The Village Council members of the Reiek village during 2020-2025 are as follows: -³⁵

President	: Pu C. Lalrozama, MNF
Vice President	: Pu Zachungnunga, MNF
Secretary	: Pu Vanlalruata, MNF (appointed)
Treasurer	: Pu Rochungnunga, MNF
Member	: 1. Pu Lalnunthanga, ZPM 2. Pi Zarzoliani, MNF (elected trough the reserved seat for women)

³² NITI Aayog. *Aspirational Districts: Unlocking Potential*. <https://cdn.s3waas.gov.in/s3185e65bc40581880c4f2c82958de8cfe/uploads/2018/07/2018082284.pdf>. Accessed on 17th November, 2024.

³³ Malsawmsanga. Reiek village declared Best Tourism Village in India. *DIPR, Govt. of Mizoram*. Dated: 27th September, 2023. <https://dipr.mizoram.gov.in/post/reikek-village-declared-best-tourism-village-in-india>. Accessed on 17th November, 2024.

³⁴ Lalmalsawma Ralte, F. Vanlalmangaihlang & Lalhriatpuii. *Geographical and Socio-Economic Condition: A Case Study of Reiek Village in Mizoram*. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation. Vol. I, Issue-1 (March-April 2020). pp. 43-54. <https://www.allmultidisciplinaryjournal.com/uploads/archives/5FF59A43843D51609931331.pdf>. Accessed on 17th November, 2024.

³⁵ The scholar interviewed C. Lalrozama (President, Reiek Village Council during the interviewed period) on 15th November, 2024 in his residence at Reiek.

The Reiek Village Council functions for the welfare and for the development of the village. The main functions of the Village Council include—formulation of village development schemes, initiation of various land development projects, conservation of water, construction of link roads, etc. For instance, the Village Council formulated various plans to be initiated for the development of their village. Sometimes, schemes like MGNREGA³⁶ are utilized for creation of public property such as construction of water supply tank, construction of internal link roads, etc. Besides, it assisted various government department in executing development works in the village. The Village Council also functions as a nodal agent or implementing agency of various central and state government schemes such as—MGNREGA, PMGSY,³⁷ NSAP,³⁸ etc. The Village Council officials of Reiek village stated that various government departments usually informed the Village Council for initiating schemes and developmental work in their village. According to C. Lalrozama, Zachungnunga³⁹ and Rochungnunga⁴⁰, they did not face much problems in implementing various schemes under the central and state government. They also mentioned that the Village Council monitored various central and state government schemes and programmes implemented in their areas.⁴¹ While the lone woman member Pi Zarzoliani said that sometimes the government departments or agencies especially the BDO's Office initiated development works without informing the Village Council executive. She elaborates that this kind of issue led to delay in implementing the development works as there was clash of interest between the two parties as the Village Council were not informed before the implementation of works.⁴²

³⁶ MGNREGA stands for Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. It aims to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household.

³⁷ PMGSY full form is Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana. It tries to provide all-weather road connectivity to unconnected habitations in rural areas.

³⁸ NSAP stands for National Social Assistance Programme. It aims to provide social assistance benefits, such as pensions for the elderly and support in cases of death or maternity, to poor households across both rural and urban areas.

³⁹ The scholar interviewed Zachungnunga (Vice President, Reiek Village Council during the interviewed period) on 15th November, 2024 in C. Lalrozama's residence at Reiek.

⁴⁰ The scholar interviewed Rochungnunga (Treasurer, Reiek Village Council during the interviewed period) on 15th November, 2024 in C. Lalrozama's residence at Reiek.

⁴¹ C. Lalrozama, Zachungnunga and Rochungnunga, *op.cit.*

⁴² The scholar interviewed Zarzoliani (Member, Reiek Village Council who is elected from women reserved seat) on 15th November, 2024 in her residence at Reiek.

The Village Council used to have regular meeting (twice or thrice in a month) which is called ‘Village Council Sitting’. In the meeting, they discuss the administration and various issues within the village. According to C. Lalrozama, normally they used to have Village Council sitting twice or thrice or more in a month depending on the needs. Besides, the issues of development concerning the whole villagers are discussed in the Gram Sabha⁴³ (village assembly). According to the Village Council leaders in Reiek, the head of the family used to attend the Gram Sabha for discussion of various important issues concerning the village. In Reiek village, they practised that all the Job Card holder or head of the family in the villages are eligible for participating in the Gram Sabha. In the Gram Sabha, they discussed the Annual Action Plan (AAP) for the development work to be carried in the next year. The AAP is prepared by the Village Council and necessary changes can be made in the Gram Sabha. The AAP and other issues addressed in the Gram Sabha are finalized as per the wishes of the majority of the participants. Moreover, after the AAP is issued from the BDO Office, the Gram Sabha is convened to implement the development work in their village.

The Village Council members stated that they usually convened Gram Sabha meeting once in a month. They believed that the turn out of the Gram Sabha is quite satisfactory and it is effective in making decision in the village. The leaders of the YMA believed that Gram Sabha is very important for the village. According to Pu Zolanzuala (Vice President of Reiek YMA), the Gram Sabha is still relevant as it discusses important issues of the village. Besides, the YMA also took advantage of the Gram Sabha by addressing important matters including—environment protection, cleanliness, conservation of rivers, YMA Action Plan, etc. For instance, as the YMA is a community-based organization, their involvement in the society is praiseworthy. They worked for the promotion of Mizo culture, tradition and welfare of the people. At the same time, they fight against social problems and crimes such as drugs dealing and drugs abuse, sale of liquor, alcohol and related problems, robbery, etc. Therefore,

⁴³ The Gram Sabha is the general assembly of all registered voters in a village. It oversees and approves the Gram Panchayat’s budget, audits, and development plans. It promotes transparency, accountability, and community welfare, while empowering villagers in decision-making processes.

the Branch YMA in Reiek are raising awareness campaign and they had the opportunity to publicize their action plan in Gram Sabha. Further, the YMA also consults the participants in making decisions concerning the village administration and culture of the Mizo society.⁴⁴ Another prominent citizen Pu PC Lalhmingliana said that all important matters relating to the village are discussed in the Gram Sabha. He argued that all the participants have the opportunity to speak their opinion and the functioning of Gram Sabha is very democratic in nature.⁴⁵

The Village Council function as an important agency for the government in implementing various central and state government schemes and developmental works. The Village Council served the interest and the needs of the village people. Gram Sabha is functioning as the pure form of grassroots democracy and is still relevant in the village administration. At the same time, there are some challenges faced by the Village Council. Firstly, the powers and functions of the Village Council need to be strengthened to function efficiently. Secondly, the Village Council did not have separate fund for development of their village. So, separate development fund should be provided for the effective functioning of the Village Council. Thirdly, the remuneration of the Village Council (Rs. 1000 for VCP, Rs. 600 for Members) needs to be revised for upholding the status and position of the Village Council member.⁴⁶ It can be noted that the Village Council Court lost its relevance in the contemporary society. According to Pu C. Lalrozama, the Village Council Court still function in their village. However, they trial only minor cases such as—robbery, house boundary issue, etc. He stated that most of the problems in the village are reported to the concerned government authority (like Police) and in the court.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ The scholar interviewed Zolianzuala (Vice President, Reiek Branch YMA) on 15th November, 2024 at Reiek.

⁴⁵ The scholar interviewed P.C. Lalhmingliana [retired High School Headmaster, church elder and President of *Mizoram Upa Pawl* (Mizoram Senior Citizens Association)] on 15th November, 2024 in his residence at Reiek.

⁴⁶ C. Lalrozama, Zachungnunga and Rochungnunga, *op.cit.*

⁴⁷ C. Lalrozama, *op.cit.*

4.4 Autonomous District Council

Besides the urban local bodies and rural local bodies, Mizoram is having Autonomous District Councils under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. With the enforcement of the Constitution of India in 1950, a provision for the administration of tribal areas in the then undivided Assam was enunciated under Article 244 (2) and Article 275 (1). The Lushai Hills was placed under the Sixth Schedule. As a result, the Lushai Hills District Council was inaugurated on 26th April, 1952 at Aizawl. In addition, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (PLRC) with its headquarters at Saiha was inaugurated by Ch. Saprawnga, the then Parliament Secretary, Government of Assam on 23rd April, 1953 at Lunglei.⁴⁸ With the attainment of Union Territory status by the Mizo District as Mizoram on 21st January, 1972, the PLRC was trifurcated into three Regional Councils namely—Pawi Regional Council, Lakher Regional Council and Chakma Regional Council on 2nd April, 1972. The three Regional Councils were upgraded to full-fledged Autonomous District Council within the same month on 29th April, 1972. However, the term ‘Pawi’ and ‘Lakher’ were changed to ‘Lai’ and ‘Mara’ under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 1988 of Indian Parliament. Subsequently, this name has changed to Lai Autonomous District Council and Mara Autonomous District Council since 1988.⁴⁹ At present, there are three Autonomous District Councils in Mizoram namely—Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC), Mara Autonomous District Council (MADC) and Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC). The study on Autonomous District Council is limited to Lai Autonomous District Council.

4.4.1 Lai Autonomous District Council

The Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC) is the largest in terms of geographical area among the three Autonomous District Councils in Mizoram. It was constituted on 29th April, 1972 under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India.

⁴⁸ Jangkhongam Doungel. (2010). *Evolution of District Council Autonomy in Mizoram*. Guwahati: Spectrum Publications. p.8.

⁴⁹ Lai Autonomous District Council. *Brief History of LADC*. <https://ladc.mizoram.gov.in/page/brief-history-of-ladc>. Accessed on 11th November, 2024.

The Council is a replication of the State Legislative Assembly in India. It oversees over 30 departments and has the power to determine language and elementary education. The council has the authority to create laws under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, and its people enjoy special safeguards under Article 371 of the Constitution.⁵⁰ The LADC headquarters is located in Lawngtlai since its establishment. Its sub-headquarters is located at Bualpui ‘Ng’ and divisional headquarters are situated at Diltang, Sangau, Vathuampui, Chawngte ‘P’, Bungtlang South and Lungtian. Besides the Lais, minority tribes such as the Bawms, Pangs, Tlanglaus, Maras, Chakmas, and Brus are also inhabited in the western and southern regions of the LADC territory.⁵¹

Structure of Lai Autonomous District Council

The Government of Mizoram enacted the Mizoram Autonomous District Council (Constitution and Conduct of Business of the District Councils) Rules, 1974 in accordance with the provision in paragraph 2 (6) of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. This rule subsequently served as the guiding framework for governance in the three Autonomous District Councils. In addition, the Government of Mizoram established a separate department in the Secretariat, Government of Mizoram called the District Council & Minority Affairs (DC&MA) Department to oversee the matters pertaining to the three Autonomous District Councils of Mizoram.⁵²

The Lai Autonomous District Council has a total strength of 29 members. Out of which, 25 are elected by the people and four members are nominated by the Governor.⁵³ The qualification for membership of the Autonomous District Council include—

- i) citizen of India
- ii) not less than 25 years of age

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Jangkhongam Doungel (2010), *op.cit.*, p.74.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.74.

⁵³ Lai Autonomous District Council. *Brief History of LADC*, *op.cit.*

iii) he/she is entitled to vote at the election of the Members of District Council (MDC) of that Autonomous District.⁵⁴

The tenure of each District Council, unless dissolved earlier, must continue for five years. The Council has a Chairman and Deputy Chairman to conduct the business for session and presided over its meeting. The District Council has an Executive Committee, which functions similarly to the Cabinet in the state government. The Chief Executive Member (CEM) elected by the MDC's led the Executive Committee. The CEM also proposes MDCs for appointment as Executive Members (EM) to the Governor of Mizoram for approval. The positions of CEM and EM are equivalent to those of Chief Minister and Cabinet Minister of the state government, respectively. Each Autonomous District Council comprises two Secretaries—one for the Executive Committee, referred to as the Executive Secretary, and another for the Legislature, designated as the Legislative Secretary.⁵⁵ The judiciary is also an important organ, representing the mini-government nature of the LADC. It comprises Village Council Courts, two Intermediate District Council Courts, and the LADC Court. These courts can only litigate tribal cases, and cannot litigate if non-tribals are involved. If anyone dissatisfied with a village Council Court's decision, parties can appeal to the Intermediate District Council Court and LADC Court, or the High Court.⁵⁶

Powers & Functions of Lai Autonomous District Council

The Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India empowered the Autonomous District Council extensive legislative, executive, judicial and financial power within their jurisdiction. The power and functions of the District Council is broadly categorized into three main organs such as legislative, executive and judiciary. These organs of the government is functioning autonomously in each

⁵⁴ L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima & Lal Lawmzuali, *op.cit*, p.42.

⁵⁵ Jangkhongam Dounel (2010), *op.cit*, p.75.

⁵⁶ Lai Autonomous District Council. *Brief History of LADC*, *op.cit*.

own Secretariat/building signifies the autonomous powers of the District Council in governing its jurisdiction.⁵⁷

i) Legislative Powers

The District Council has the power to make laws. Under para 3 of the Sixth Schedule, it has the power to enact law on land allotment, jhumming regulation, forest management, agriculture, establishment of town committee, village police administration, appointment and succession of chief or headman, property inheritance, marriage and divorce, social customs, money-lending, and trading by non-scheduled tribes, etc.⁵⁸ There is a provision for the Chairman and Deputy Chairman in the District Council. They are elected by the elected members of the District Council and they headed the legislative branch of the District Council. The Chairman and Deputy Chairman functions like the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. The Chairman has the power to summon and prorogue the District Council. He presides over the meeting of the District Council and his decision to conduct the meeting is final. He admits questions and motions and allocates time for the discussion on business and regulates the proceedings of the Council. He has the power/right to cast vote in case of equality in voting on any issue. In his absence, the Deputy Chairman performs his duties.⁵⁹

The administrative head of legislative organ is known as Secretary, LADC or Legislative Secretary. Its role can be compared with Secretary, Legislative Assembly of the state government or Secretary General of Lok Sabha / Rajya Sabha in the union government. The Secretary is not member of the District Council and assist the Chairman and Deputy Chairman in all legislative affairs and transaction of the LADC. The legislative branch ensures that there is no gap of more than four months in convening the sessions. Further, they send bills for the approval of the Governor after

⁵⁷ Jangkhongam Doungel (2010), *op.cit*, p.104.

⁵⁸ Ministry of External Affairs. *Sixth Schedule*. <https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/pdf1/S6.pdf>. Accessed on 17th November, 2024.

⁵⁹ R.N. Prasad. (1997). Analysis of the Framework and Operation of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. In L.S. Gassah (Ed.), *Autonomous District Council*. (1st Published 1997, pp.54-74). New Delhi: Omsons Publications.

being authenticated by the Chairman. They manage and pay salaries, allowances, and pensions of MDCs and ex-MDCs.⁶⁰

ii) Executive Powers

The District Council under para 6 of the Sixth Schedule has the power to establish, construct or manage primary schools, dispensaries, markets, cattle ponds, fisheries, road and waterways. Also, it has the power to determine the language and the manner in which primary education should be imparted in the primary school under its jurisdiction.⁶¹ The executive function of the District Council is vested in the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee is headed by the Chief Executive Member (CEM). The CEM appointed Executive Member (EM) and allocated specifies subject. They are collectively responsible for all executive orders issued in the name of the Council, similarly to the Chief Minister and Council of Ministers overseeing the state government.⁶²

The administrative functions of the Executive Committee lies with the Executive Secretary. The Executive Secretary shall not be a member of the District Council and is appointed by the CEM. The functioning of the Executive Secretary is comparable as Chief Secretary of a state government or Cabinet Secretary in the union government. The Executive Secretary implements the resolution and decision of the Executive Committee. He is responsible for overseeing all departments within the District Council. He also serves as the main channel of communication between the District Council government and the state government.⁶³ The LADC oversees 30 departments under their jurisdiction.⁶⁴ For example, some of the important departments include—Agriculture, Art & Culture, Education & Human Resources (Primary & Middle School), Finance & Account, General Administration & Control,

⁶⁰ Jangkhongam Doungel (2010), *op.cit*, p.107.

⁶¹ Ministry of External Affairs. *Sixth Schedule, op.cit*.

⁶² Jangkhongam Doungel (2010), *op.cit*, p.108.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p.109.

⁶⁴ Lai Autonomous District Council. *Brief History of LADC, op.cit*.

Information & Public Relations, Land Revenue & Settlement, Public Works, Law & Judicial, Taxation, etc.⁶⁵

iii) Judicial Powers

The District Council under para 4 of the Sixth Schedule has the authority to establish village council courts and District Council Courts in the autonomous areas. They can trial cases or customary laws in which both the parties are tribals.⁶⁶ Accordingly, three-tier courts, namely, Village Council Court, Intermediate District Council Court and District Council Court were set up in LADC. The Lai Autonomous District Council Court is the highest court in the LADC administered area.⁶⁷ However the Courts in District Council do not hear or adjudicate cases involving offenses punishable by death, life imprisonment, or imprisonment for at least five years. The District Council Court serves as the appellate court for all cases and suits tried by the Village Council Courts and the Intermediate District Council Courts. The decision of the District Council Court can be challenged only in the High Court or the Supreme Court of India.⁶⁸ The head of judiciary in the LADC is known as Court President or Recorder. The role of the Court President and Recorder is comparable to the status of the Chief Justice of High Court and the Supreme Court.⁶⁹

4.4.2 Working of Lai Autonomous District Council

The Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC) covers Lawngtlai sub-division and Sangau sub-division of Lawngtlai district. It is an Autonomous District Council for ethnic ‘Lai’ people, earlier known as ‘Pawi’ who reside in south-eastern region of Mizoram. It shares its borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh. It has its headquarters in Lawngtlai town, Lawngtlai District.⁷⁰ According to the Mizoram

⁶⁵ Souvenir Sub-Committee, LADC Golden Jubilee 2022. ‘PURA’: *The official Lai Autonomous District Council Golden Jubilee (1972-2022) Souvenir*. Lawngtlai: LADC Golden Jubilee Celebration Executive Committee.

⁶⁶ Ministry of External Affairs. *Sixth Schedule*, *op.cit.*

⁶⁷ Jangkhongam Doungel (2010), *op.cit.*, p.138.

⁶⁸ R.N. Prasad (1997), *op.cit.*, p.63.

⁶⁹ Jangkhongam Doungel (2010), *op.cit.*, p.104.

⁷⁰ Lai Autonomous District Council, Brief History of LADC, *op.cit.*

Statistical Handbook 2022, Lawngtlai District has a population of 1,17,894 persons.⁷¹ The LADC was constituted on 29th April, 1972 under Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. As stated, Pawi Autonomous District Council (PADC) was the previous name of LADC. The name of ‘Pawi’ has been changed to ‘Lai’ under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 1988 of Indian Parliament.⁷² The name Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC) came into effect from 1st May, 1989.⁷³ The interim government of the then PADC continued to function until first election, with Lalchunga Chinzah serving as CEM. The first election of the then PADC was held in the month of December, 1972 and Ukmang Zathang was elected as the CEM.⁷⁴ The LADC had witnessed 11 District Council elections since 1972. The study focuses on the present 11th Lai Autonomous District Council (2020-till date).

The 11th LADC election 2020 was held on 4th December, 2020 in 25 MDC constituencies. The results were declared on 8th December, 2020. In the election, the MNF swept the election as it managed to win 20 seats. The INC and the BJP secured one seat each, while three independent candidates managed to win the election.⁷⁵ The 11th LADC term (2020-till date) witnessed political instability and frequent change of government. Thus, the 11th LADC term experienced changing of CEM for fifth time since December, 2020. The table (4.2) shows political instability and frequent change of CEM in the 11th LADC term:

⁷¹ Directorate of Economics & Statistic, Mizoram. *Statistical Handbook Mizoram 2022*. Aizawl: Directorate of Economics & Statistic. p.2.

⁷² Jangkhongam DOUNGEL (2010), *op.cit*, p.71.

⁷³ Lai Autonomous District Council, LADC at a Glance, *op.cit*.

⁷⁴ Jangkhongam DOUNGEL (2010), *op.cit*, p.79.

⁷⁵ C. Lalhrualtuanga. 11th Lai Autonomous District Council Inthlanpui 2020 result puan a ni (Result of the 11th LADC Election 2020 declared today). Dated: 8th December, 2020. *DIPR, Govt. of Mizoram*. <https://dipr.mizoram.gov.in/post/11th-lai-autonomous-district-council-inthlanpui-2020-result-puan-a-ni>. Accessed on 22nd June, 2025.

Fig. 4.2: Frequent change of government and CEM in 11th LADC (2020-till date)

Sl. No	Chief Executive Member (CEM)	Party/ coalition who led govt.	Period	Duration
1.	Manghmunga Chinzah	MNF	14.12.2020 - 16.08.2021	8 months & 2 days
2.	V. Zirsanga	MNF	27.08.2021 - 07.03.2024	2 years, 6 months & 8 days
3.	Governor's Rule	No majority	15.03.2024 - 06.05.2024	1 months & 21 days
4.	C. Lalmuanthanga (INC)	United Legislature Party (12 MNF & 1 INC)	07.05.2024 - 12.02.2025	8 months & 21 days
5.	V. Zirsanga	ZPM	27.02.2025 - 14.08.2025	5 months & 18 days
6.	N. Zangura (BJP)	United Democratic Alliance (11 MNF, 2 BJP & 1 outside supports from INC)	15.08.2025 -	Continuing

Sources: Prepared by the Scholar

The first two governments were formed by MNF with Manghmunga Chinzah and V. Zirsanga serving as CEMs. The problem of the LADC erupted when V. Zirsanga was convicted in a graft case and sentenced to four years imprisonment by the Prevention of Corruption Act in January, 2024. Further, with the formation of state government by the ZPM party, many members including independent members switched their side to the ruling ZPM and some in the BJP. At the end, the ZPM who did not have any member in the elections have 13 members.⁷⁶ The third government was formed by the United Legislature Party (ULP) comprising of 12 MNF members and lone INC member with C. Lalmuanthanga (INC) as CEM. The fourth government was again formed with V. Zirsanga as a ZPM government. Finally, the LADC has the

⁷⁶ Ezrela Dalidia Fanai. Mizoram: 9 members of Lai Autonomous District Council join ZPM. Dated: 20th June, 2024. *India Today NE*. <https://www.indiatodayne.in/mizoram/story/mizoram-9-members-of-lai-autonomous-district-council-join-zpm-1032504-2024-06-20>. Accessed on 22nd June, 2025.

fifth government formed by the United Democratic Alliance (UDA) comprising of 11 MNF, two BJP (who join the party recently) and outside support from the INC. Therefore, a new government led by N. Zangura (BJP) as CEM took oath on 8th May, 2025.⁷⁷ It is important to mention here that in the District Council, anti-defection law is not applied. As a result, member of the District Council often changes their party loyalty as per their convenience.

It can be noted here that there is a dispute between V. Zirsanga and N. Zangura on the issue of the legitimacy on the post of CEM. The former group approached the High Court claiming the Governor appointment of N. Zangura as CEM is illegal as CEM can be removed only through no-confidence motion or submitting his/her resignation. While, the latter group argued that V. Zirsanga's government lost majority as floor test cannot be conducted due to the resignation of the Chairman and Dy. Chairman before conducting floor test. The Gauhati High Court stayed the floor test to be conducted against N. Zangura government on 2nd May, 2025.⁷⁸ The Gauhati High Court in its judgment on 8th August, 2025 overruled the appointment of N. Zangura as CEM and reinstalled V. Zirsanga as CEM and to conduct floor test within two weeks. Before conducting floor test, V. Zirsanga resigned from CEM on 14th August, 2025. Consequently, UDA leader N. Zangura was sworn in as CEM on 18th August, 2025. The UDA government led by N. Zangura won the floor test conducted on 22nd August, 2025.⁷⁹

The above table (table 4.2) shows the instability and frequent change of government in the District Council. It affected the functioning of the District Council administration as it hampers the governance and delay the implementation of various

⁷⁷ BJP's N Zangura sworn in as chief of Lai Autonomous District Council in Mizoram. Dated: 8th May, 2025. *Deccan Herald*. <https://www.deccanherald.com/india/mizoram/bjps-n-zangura-sworn-in-as-chief-of-lai-autonomous-district-council-in-mizoram-3530527>. Accessed on 22nd June, 2025.

⁷⁸ HC stays floor test of Mizoram LADC chief amid legal dispute. Dated: 16th May, 2025. *The Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/hc-stays-floor-test-of-mizoram-ladc-chief-amid-legal-dispute/articleshow/121195117.cms>. Accessed on 24th June, 2025.

⁷⁹ LADC ah Chairman thar thlan a ni a, CEM Pu N.Zangura'n fiahna a paltlang (LADC elect new Chairman, CEM N. Zangura win floor test). Dated: 22nd August, 2022. *The Lawngtlai Post*. <https://thelawngtlai-post.blogspot.com/2025/08/ladc-ah-chairman-thar-thlan-ni-cem-pu.html>. Accessed on 25th August, 2025.

developmental works. Andrew Laltlanzara,⁸⁰ Sanghuliana Mualchin⁸¹ and H. Lalruatkima⁸² shared the same view. They argued that political instability is the biggest problem in LADC as it hinders many development projects in LADC. Besides, political instability also affects the moral of the people. It also affects the government servant in executing their works as they need to implement different policies and vision which differ from one ministry to another ministry. While there are some leaders (V. Zirsanga,⁸³ T. Zakunga,⁸⁴ Laltlawmlova Chinzah⁸⁵ and LZ Tluanga⁸⁶) who expressed different opinion for political instability in the District Council. They argued that due to limited fund from the state government, sometimes the District Council do not have other options rather than joining the ruling party at the state government. In addition, the party in the state government offered several promises and to initiate various developmental schemes in the District Council if they joined their party.

Coming to the relevance and significance of the ADC, it is very important for the ethnic minorities as they are safeguarded under the constitutional provision. The LADC is significant for the *Lai* people as ethnic minorities are protected under Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. Among many others, the significance of LADC for the Lai community can be described in two points. Firstly, they have their own local self-government institution for the protection of their land, culture, language, customs, traditions and so on. Party leaders, community leaders and journalist (Pu V. Zirsanga, Pu Lalropuia Chinzah⁸⁷, Pu Sanghuliana Mualchin, Pu T. Zakunga, Pu

⁸⁰ The scholar interviewed Andrew Laltlanzara (EM i/c Middle School, LADC) on 6th December, 2022 at his office chamber in LADC, Lawngtlai.

⁸¹ The scholar interviewed Sanghuliana Mualchin (Chairman, Town Committee, LADC during the interviewed period) on 6th December, 2022 at his office chamber in LADC, Lawngtlai.

⁸² The scholar interviewed H. Lalruatkima (Executive Secretary, LADC during the interviewed period) on 6th December, 2022 at his office chamber in LADC, Lawngtlai.

⁸³ The scholar interviewed V. Zirsanga (Chief Executive Member, LADC during the interviewed period) on 8th December, 2022 at his office chamber in LADC, Lawngtlai.

⁸⁴ The scholar interviewed T. Zakunga (ex-CEM and BJP MDC) on 8th December, 2022 in BJP office at Lawngtlai.

⁸⁵ The scholar interviewed Laltlawmlova Chinzah (Gen. Secretary, Lai District Congress Committee (LDCC) and ex-EM, LADC) on 8th December, 2022 in Congress office at Lawngtlai.

⁸⁶ The scholar interviewed L.Z. Tluanga (Jt. Secretary, LADC) on 6th December, 2022 in his office chamber at LADC, Lawngtlai.

⁸⁷ The scholar interviewed Lalropuia Chinzah (EM i/c Agriculture during the interviewed period) on 6th December, 2022 in his office chamber at LADC, Lawngtlai.

Laltlawmlova Chinzah, Pu H. Lalruatkima, Pu Joseph Lalhmingthanga Chinzah⁸⁸ and Pu L.H. Hauheng⁸⁹) believed that they have their own local self-government in the form of LADC for the protection of their identity

Secondly, scholars and community leaders (Pu Andrew Laltlanzara, Pu Lalropuia Chinzah, Pu H. Rochungnunga,⁹⁰ Pu H.C. Vanlalruatpuia⁹¹ and Pu L.H. Hauheng) also argued that the LADC is important as it creates employment opportunity for the people. They argued that many people got different government jobs in the District Council and improve the living standard of the people. Besides, it helps many people through training and skill development in their profession. The District Council also implemented various state and central schemes and projects for the welfare of the people. Moreover, the LADC is very important for the people as primary education is one of the subjects under LADC. According to L.H. Hauheng (Editor, Lawngtlai Today), imparting *Lai* language in the primary section is very important for the protection of *Lai* culture and language.⁹²

On the other hand, there are various challenges in the functioning of LADC. Firstly, the LADC cannot fulfil all the aspirations and desires of the people. The main reason is due to limited fund and resources from the state government. It is argued that only 3% from the state budget have been allotted to the three ADCs. Out of which, around 90% of the fund allocated to the LADC are used for salaries of the employees. Therefore, they have very limited fund for infrastructural development and for the welfare of the people.⁹³ To solved the issue, some argued that fund allocation should be based on population wise so that more funds can be allotted to LADC. Another problem is the relationship of LADC with the state government. They argued that the state government sometimes create problems in the functioning of the LADC if they

⁸⁸ The scholar interviewed Joseph Lalhmingthanga Chinzah Gen. Secretary, Central Young Lai Association during the interviewed period) on 6th December, 2022 at Aeropagi, Lawngtlai.

⁸⁹ The scholar interviewed L.H. Hauheng (Editor, Lawngtlai Today) on 8th December, 2022 in I&PR office, LADC at Lawngtlai.

⁹⁰ The scholar interviewed H. Rochungnunga (Treasurer, LDCC during the interviewed period) on 8th December, 2022 in Congress Office at Lawngtlai.

⁹¹ The scholar interviewed H.C. Vanlalruatpuia (President, CYLA during the interviewed period) on 6th December, 2022 at Aeropagi, Lawngtlai

⁹² L.H. Hauheng, *op.cit.*

⁹³ V. Zirsanga, Andrew Laltlanzara, Sanghuliana Mualchin, LZ Thuanga, Joseph Lalhmingthanga Chinzah and L.H. Hauheng, *op.cit.*

belong to different political parties. For instance, there is delay in release of fund by the state government even the government at state and LADC belongs to the same party.⁹⁴

Direct funding is also one of the hottest debates in ADCs including LADC because of the issue of delay of fund release. There are some political leaders, government officials and civil society leaders who argued that the Constitution of India does not permit direct funding to all the ADCs. Nevertheless, leaders from the LADC, MADC and CADC work tirelessly to achieve a better status for the District Councils in Mizoram. They argued that the state government is very important in giving recommendations for the ADCs in order to have better political status.⁹⁵ They believed that if the state government give positive recommendation for amending the constitution, direct funding can be achieved by the ADCs. However, there are some groups who claim that everything is possible in politics. They argued that if the Indian Parliament discusses the matter for amendment of the Sixth Schedule, direct funding is possible. They believed that direct funding will improve the working of the Council as the issue of delaying of fund release, insufficient development funds and financial crises will be minimised.⁹⁶ Further, the civil society leaders (H.C. Vanlalruatpuia and Joseph Lalhmingthanga Chinzah) argued that besides the direct funding, they want a better position like Territorial Council for the betterment of LADC.⁹⁷ The above shows that there are different issues on the working of the ADCs.

Jangkhongam DOUNGEL analysed the working of LADC and he concluded that there are different issues. Firstly, the effect of political instability can be seen in administration, developmental works and economy of the region. So, the Parliament needs to amend the Sixth Schedule so that anti-defection law can be applied in the District Council like Parliament and state legislature. Secondly, the significance of the District Council lies in its law-making power. He said that the performance of ADCs (including the LADC) in Mizoram is not remarkable in terms of law making. Despite

⁹⁴ Andrew Laltlanzara, V. Zirsanga, H. Lalruatkima, *op.cit.*

⁹⁵ T. Zakunga, Laltlawmlova Chinzah, LZ Tluanga, Joseph Lalhmingthanga Chinzah, *op.cit.*

⁹⁶ V. Zirsanga, Lalropuia Chinzah, Sanghuliana Mualchin, H. Rochungnunga, H. Lalruatkima, *op.cit.*

⁹⁷ H.C. Vanlalruatpuia, Joseph Lalhmingthanga Chinzah, *op.cit.*

its shortcomings, he argued that the state government will not initiate all the works done by the LADC if the District Council were not established. Thirdly, there is a blame game on the issue of ADC relationship with the state government. He said that both are responsible for their hostile relationship. For instance, the state government may delay fund on one hand, and on the other hand, the ADC are also responsible for not preparing the utilization certificate on time. Fourthly, the issue of direct funding became a political propaganda in the LADC. The demand of direct funding can be achieved only by amending Article 275 (1) which is not likely to happen as it effect the federal structure of the Indian Constitution.⁹⁸

It is learnt that the people of LADC give utmost importance to the working of District Council as it affected them directly in their day-to-day life. As a result, the people of LADC gave more importance to District Council election than MLA or MP Elections. The people and party workers are more active and voters turn out is also higher in the District Council elections.⁹⁹ For instance, in spite of Covid-19 pandemic, the voter turn-out in LADC Election, 2020 is 85.09%.¹⁰⁰ While in the Assembly Election 2023, the voter turn-out in Lawngtlai West A/C and Lawngtlai East A/C is 84.41% and 78.19% respectively.¹⁰¹ The involvement of money power is also higher in District Council election than other elections.¹⁰² While, V. Zirsanga argued that candidates spend more money in MLA elections than MDC elections. For instance, Lawngtlai West Assembly constituency covers more than 60 villages. They spend more money on mobilising party workers, public meeting, house to house campaign, transportation, etc. There is no denying the fact that almost all families demand money from the candidates in District Council elections.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ The scholar interviewed Jangkhongam Doungel (Professor, Mizoram University) on 8th July, 2025 in Mizoram University.

⁹⁹ Andrew Laltlanzara, Lalropuia Chinzah and Laltlawmlova Chinzah, *op.cit.*

¹⁰⁰ State Election Commission, Mizoram. *Voter Turnout, Election to LADC, 2020*. <https://sec.mizoram.gov.in/page/voter-turnout-ge-to-ladc-2020>. Accessed on 29th October, 2025.

¹⁰¹ Election Commission of India. Detailed Result. https://www.eci.gov.in/eci-backend/public/all_files/full-statistical-reports/mizoram/2023/Detailed_Results.pdf. Accessed on 29th October, 2025.

¹⁰² Sanghuliana Mualchin, T. Zakunga, H.C. Vanlalruatpuia and Joseph Lalhmingthanga Chinzah, *op.cit.*

¹⁰³ V. Zirsanga, *op.cit.*

Apart from money power, there are other factors responsible for winning the elections in LADC. It can be argued that personal capabilities, clan factor, family relationship, party affiliation, money power and church denomination all contributed for winning the elections. There are some people who believed that individual capability is the biggest factor for winning the elections.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, it is a combination of various factors. Some people argue that individual capability along with party,¹⁰⁵ some believes personality with church denomination,¹⁰⁶ while some people said that family patronage plays a significant role as he is also elected from his father's constituencies.¹⁰⁷ Lalflawmlova Chinzah argues that the state government also play a crucial role as people want double engine government in the state as well as in the District Council.¹⁰⁸ State level leaders from ADC areas—C. Ngunlianchunga and K. Beichhua—also shared their opinion. They said that church denomination did not have much impact in the ADC areas. C. Ngunlianchunga shared that candidate's personality, party affiliation and money power are the three important factors in winning elections.¹⁰⁹ While K. Beichhua argues that clan or broad family support is significant in elections.¹¹⁰ According to Jangkhongam Dounghel, clan and family relationship are the biggest factors in winning the elections. The people do not look about their political parties or election manifesto. Besides, church denomination also contributed in winning the elections.¹¹¹

The above shows that the LADC is a constitutional body established under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. It provides safeguard to the *Lai* community by protecting their land, cultures, customs, traditions, languages, etc. One of the important functions of the LADC is its law making authority. The law passed by the LADC requires the authentication of the Chairman and the Governor for his

¹⁰⁴ Lalropuia Chinzah, L.H. Hauheng, H. Rochungnunga, R. Lalramfela, L.H. Hauheng, *op.cit*

¹⁰⁵ T. Zakunga, *op.cit*.

¹⁰⁶ The scholar interviewed A. Malsawma (President, Lawngtlai Bazar Branch YLA) on 8th December, 2022 in I&PR Office at LADC, Lawngtlai.

¹⁰⁷ Andrew Laltanzara, *op.cit*.

¹⁰⁸ Lalflawmlova Chinzah, *op.cit*.

¹⁰⁹ The scholar interviewed C. Ngunlianchunga (Vice President, MPCC & MLA from Lawngtlai West since 2013) on 4th July, 2024 at Legislator's Home, Aizawl.

¹¹⁰ The scholar interviewed K. Beichhua (BJP President & MLA, Mizoram) on 23rd September, 2024 at Legislators Home, Aizawl.

¹¹¹ Jangkhongam Dounghel (2025), *op.cit*.

assent. It is also important to mention here that the Acts passed by the state government concerning the District Council can be applied in LADC only with the consent of the District Council.¹¹²

4.4.3 Village Council under Lai Autonomous District Council

The Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India provides that the District Council and the Regional Council can constitute Village Councils and Village Courts within their jurisdiction, and to make laws or rules for the administration of village or justice at the village level. The Village Councils in the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council were constituted in 1955, one year after its establishment in Lushai Hills District. The first Village Council election under the Pawi District Council (now Lai Autonomous District Council) was held in 1974 in 41 villages.¹¹³ There are 99 Village Council under the LADC as per the latest nomination on 27th June, 2024.¹¹⁴ The structure, powers and functions of the Village Council under the LADC remains more or less the same with the Village Council in non-ADC area. The Village Council under LADC are empowered with legislative and judicial powers and have 20 points of duties and functions. While the difference between the Village Council under LADC and Village Council in non-ADC are as follows: -

The Lai Autonomous District Council (Village Councils) (Fourth Amendment) Act, 2023 stated that Village Council shall be composed of members according to the number of houses in the village: -

- i) for a village having 50 to 200 houses, there shall be five (5) members
- ii) for a village having 201 to 600 houses, there shall be seven (7) members

¹¹² Jangkhongam Dounel (2010), *op.cit*, p.182.

¹¹³ H.C. Thanhranga. (2007). *District Councils in the Mizo Hills*. Aizawl: HC Thanhranga. p.333.

¹¹⁴ Mizoram. Schedule of Election to 99 (ninety-nine) Village Councils under Lai Autonomous District Council, 2024. *DIPR, Govt. of Mizoram*. Dated: 12th June, 2023. <https://dipr.mizoram.gov.in/post/schedule-of-general-election-to-99-ninety-nine-village-councils-under-lai-autonomous-district-council-2024-and-by-election-to-mdc-from-12-lawngtlai-chandmary-constituency-under-ladc-2024>. Accessed on 19th November, 2024.

iii) for a village having 601 houses and above, there shall be nine (9) members.¹¹⁵

The Lai Autonomous District Council (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2011 provides that not less than one seat of the total number of seats shall be reserved for women for the time being.¹¹⁶ The members of the Village Council under the LADC are elected on universal adult suffrage. The elections for Village Council were earlier conducted by the Local Administration Department, LADC. However, the State Election Commission (SEC) conducted the elections from 2012-2013 as the SEC is empowered to conduct the local body elections.¹¹⁷ The Fourth Amendment Act, 2023 also stated that there shall be an Executive Body in the first meeting of the Village Council comprising of the President, Vice President and Treasurer for each Village Council. The executive functions of the Village Council shall be vested in the Executive Body. The qualification for membership of the Village Council under the LADC is similar with the prescribed requirement in the Village Council in non-ADC area.¹¹⁸

4.4.4 A Case Study on the Working of Mampui Village Council under LADC

Mampui is a village under Lawngtlai RD Block, Lawngtlai District, Mizoram. It is located 18 KM from the district headquarters Lawngtlai. Mampui is a village with a total population of 964 as per Census 2011. Mampui village had a higher literacy rate of 93% in 2011 census.¹¹⁹ The rationale for selecting Mampui village is that Mampui occupies an important place in the history of Mizo. The villagers claimed that the Mampui chief was the first chief who became Christian in the then Lushai Hills.

¹¹⁵ LADC Acts and Rules. *The LADC (Village Councils) (Fourth Amendment) Act, 2023*. <https://ladc.mizoram.gov.in/uploads/attachments/2024/04/3f6905b6dff35bf7b6ec947f7169e85f/the-ladc-village-councils-fourth-amendment-act-2023.pdf>. Accessed on 19th November, 2024.

¹¹⁶ LADC Acts and Rules. *LADC (Village Councils) (Amendment) Act, 2011*. <https://ladc.mizoram.gov.in/uploads/attachments/2023/09/c6eb315b85d0e15e09b058f7e377007b/ladc-vc-act-2010.pdf>. Accessed on 19th November, 2024.

¹¹⁷ 'PURA': The official Lai Autonomous District Council Golden Jubilee (1972-2022) Souvenir, *op.cit*, p.33.

¹¹⁸ LADC Acts and Rules. *The LADC (Village Councils) (Fourth Amendment) Act, 2023*, *op.cit*.

¹¹⁹ Mampui Population-Lawngtlai, Mizoram. *Population Census 2011 India*. <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/village/271708-mampui-mizoram.html>. Accessed on 20th November, 2024.

Besides, the village is one of the oldest villages in Mizoram. Being a small village in the outskirts of Lawngtlai town, the village had attracted many local tourists due to its natural beauty and its physical feature.¹²⁰

The present Mampui village was set up in 1919 after they shifted for the fourth time. The Village Council was set up in the year 1955 when the Lai chiefs were abandoned in 1954. It has around 200 household in their village. The main occupation of the village is based on agricultural and allied activities. During the study, it has five Village Council members (four unreserved and one seat reserved for women). In the Village Council election 2019, the MNF won one seat and the remaining four seats were won by independent candidates. The MNF and independent members form an executive body. Later, the independent members either join INC and MNF who ever forms Executive Committee in the LADC. The executive body of Mampui Village Council (2019-2024) were as follows-

President : Pu A. Lalhmingsanga (elected as independent, later joined MNF)

Vice President : Pu C. Thangchhinga (elected as MNF)

Secretary : Pi C. Lalsiamkimi (appointed)

Treasurer : Pi Lalramengzami, (elected from women reserved seat as independent, later joined MNF)

Member : 1. Pu A. Lalnelawma (elected as independent, later joined MNF)

2. Pu B. Lalengkhumma (elected as independent, later joined MNF)

The Village Council functions for the welfare of the people as well as for the development of the village under the Autonomous District Council. There are claims and counter claims with regard to the effective functioning of the Village Council for the people. According to Pi Lalramengzami, the Village Council worked tirelessly for the welfare and development of the people. She said that due to the efforts of the Village Council and the District Council, the village has the basic requirement such as health infrastructure (Sub-Centre), educational institution (Primary to High School), public distribution system (Retailer, Water Reservoir) and road connectivity. She

¹²⁰ The scholar conducts telephonic interview to R. Lalhuzauva (MNF party leader in Mampui) on 21st November, 2024.

mentioned that the Village Council did not face a serious challenge in the administration of the village as the people are cooperative and supportive for the development of the village.¹²¹ According to Pu A. Lalhmingsanga, the Village Council President (during the interviewed period), the District Council and the Village Council cannot deliver all the desires and wishes of the people. The village required educational institutions (including higher education), proper water supply, appropriate agricultural road, etc. Among the various reasons to be mentioned, lack of fund is the main problem for the District Council.¹²²

The localities of Mampui village are not happy with the functioning of the District Council and Village Council. According to Pu V. Thantluanga¹²³ and Pu F. Sawmthanga,¹²⁴ the Village Council and District Council are responsible for the lack of infrastructural development. The Village Council did not take strong efforts for the development of the village. Pu C. Biakmawia¹²⁵ and Pu C. Vanlalsiamthara¹²⁶ believed that the state government perform much better in terms of development as compared to the District Council government. They argued that there is no new developmental work initiated in their village as the District Council government did not have fund as almost all the funds are used for their salary. According to B. Sangphira, the District Council also did not do any remarkable work for the village. For instance, the District Council failed to repair the old school building as well as appointing regular teacher even though there is a shortage of teachers in their own village.¹²⁷

¹²¹ The scholar interviewed Lalramengzami (Member, Mampui Village Council during the interviewed period) on 7th December, 2022 in his residence at Mampui.

¹²² The scholar interviewed A. Lalhmingsanga (President, Mampui Village Council during the interviewed period) on 7th December, 2022 in his residence at Mampui.

¹²³ The scholar interviewed V. Thantluanga (senior citizen of Mampui) on 7th December, 2022 at Mampui.

¹²⁴ The scholar interviewed F. Sawmthanga (permanent residence of Mampui) on 7th December, 2022 at Mampui.

¹²⁵ The scholar interviewed C. Biakmawia (church elder and Chairman, Mampui Baptist Church during the interviewed period) on 7th December, 2022 in his residence at Mampui, Lawngtlai.

¹²⁶ The scholar interviewed C. Vanlalsiamthara (Secretary, Mampui Branch YLA) on 7th December, 2022 in his residence at Mampui.

¹²⁷ The scholar interviewed B. Sangphira (retired Middle School teacher) on 7th December, 2022 at Mampui.

At the same time, it is remarkable that the Village Council regularly conducted Gram Sabha (village assembly), which is an important component of local democracy as citizen can participate in the assembly. According to Pu R. Lalhuzauva, almost all major decisions are discussed in the Gram Sabha. The Gram Sabha is attended by job card holder (MGNREGA) from each house in the village. The Gram Sabha approved the village developmental work and formulate action plan for the village. It can be mentioned that the works and activities related to the MGNREGA, village developmental works, etc. required the approval of Gram Sabha. The Gram Sabha is a democratic body as the villagers have the opportunity to express their opinion and visions freely in the assembly. The Village Council normally follows the decision of the Gram Sabha. While, there are some minor cases where the Village Council modify and divert the developmental work without the approval of Gram Sabha.¹²⁸

It can be noted here that there is not much difference between the functioning of the Village Council under non-ADC area and the Village Council under the ADC. However, there are several problems and challenges in the functioning of the Village Council under ADC. The powers and functions of the Village Council under ADC also need to be empowered to bring effective administration in the village. Besides, the District Council also needs to focus on the development of the village as well as the welfare of the people. It is interesting to mention that the people under ADC are more politically aware and are conscious about the political scenario of their concerned area as compared to people in different regions. One example that can be cited is that due to the establishment of ADC, they have separate administration for their own areas. Besides, the elections of ADC directly affect the socio-economic condition of the people. Therefore, the people under ADC gave much importance to the District Council election as compared to the Assembly elections.

¹²⁸ R. Lalhuzauva, *op.cit.*

4.5 Local Government in Meghalaya

Unlike other states, the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India covers the entire state of Meghalaya (except Cantonment and Municipality of Shillong).¹²⁹ However, the study focuses the area covered under the Khasi Hills Autonomous District (KHADC). In the KHADC, there are traditional institutions that are regulated under the ADC with the provision of the Sixth Schedule. The study on traditional institutions emphasis on *syiemship* and durbar system. In the urban local bodies, the Shillong Municipal Board (SMB) in Shillong city is studied.

4.6 Autonomous District Council

The Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India also incorporated the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills and the Garo Hills of the composite state of Assam. As a result, the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council was created in 1951 and was officially inaugurated by the new Governor of Assam, Shri. Jairamdas Daulatram on 27th June 1952 at Jaiaw, Shillong.¹³⁰ Simultaneously, the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council was created in 1951 and was officially inaugurated on 14th April, 1952 at Tura by Bishnu Ram Medhi, the Chief Minister of Assam.¹³¹ Later on, the Jaintia Hills was separated from the Khasi Hills and a separate District Council bearing the name of Jowai Autonomous District Council was established in 1964. With the attainment of full-fledged statehood on 21st January, 1972, the Jowai Civil Sub-Division was upgraded with the name of Jaintia Hills District. Subsequently, Jowai Autonomous District Council was renamed as the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council.¹³² At present, there are three Autonomous District Councils in Meghalaya namely—Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council, Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council and Garo Hills Autonomous District Council.

¹²⁹ Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council. *Home*. <https://khadc.nic.in/index.htm>. Accessed on 27th June, 2025.

¹³⁰ W. Kharkrang, Secretary, KHADC. *Down Memory Lane (1952-2002)*. Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council. https://khadc.nic.in/archive/down_memory_lane.html. Accessed on 11th December, 2024.

¹³¹ Kshirode Marak. (2023). Critical Assessment of the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council. In M.N. Karna, L.S. Gassah & C.J. Thomas (Ed.), *Power to People in Meghalaya: Sixth Schedule and the 73rd Amendment*. (Reprinted 2023, pp.138-155). New Delhi: Regency Publications.

¹³² Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council. *Historical Background*. <https://jhadc.nic.in/historical-background>. Accessed on 11th December, 2024.

4.6.1 Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council

The headquarters of KHADC is in Shillong. The jurisdiction of KHADC extends to five districts in the state, namely—East Khasi Hills District, West Khasi Hills District, South West Khasi Hills District, Ri Bhoi District and Eastern West Khasi Hills District.¹³³ The KHADC has a total strength of 30 members. Out of which, 29 members are elected by the people and one is nominated by the Governor. Only qualified registered voters can vote and contest elections. A non-tribals must reside in a constituency for a period of twelve years to get the right to vote. The term of office for the members is five years. The Sixth Schedule or other Rules do not stipulate a procedure for the removal of members. If a member is disqualified, the matter is referred to the Governor, whose decision is final. The Council has a Chairman and Deputy Chairman to manage the business of the session and presided over its meeting.¹³⁴ The KHADC like other District Councils has an Executive Committee which is headed by Chief Executive Member (CEM) with another Executive Members. In judiciary, the various Courts under KHADC are—Village Court, Additional Subordinate District Council Court, Subordinate District Council Court, Additional District Council Court and District Council Court.¹³⁵

Powers & Functions of Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council:

The KHADC (like other ADCs) has legislative, executive and judicial functions. The powers and functions of the KHADC is more or less the same with the other Autonomous District Council (including the LADC). The legislative, executive and judicial powers of the KHADC are as follows: -

i) Legislative Powers

The KHADC in accordance with the provision of the Sixth Schedule to the constitution has the power to enact laws and regulations, and formulate rules for their

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ V. Venkata Rao, H. Thansanga & Niru Hazarika. (1987). *A Century of Government and Politics in North East India, Volume II-Meghalaya*. New Delhi: S. Chand & Company (Pvt) Ltd. p.172.

¹³⁵ KHADC. *Judiciary*. <https://khadc.nic.in/judiciary.html>. Accessed on 12th December, 2024.

implementation.¹³⁶ The Council is headed by a Chairman and Deputy Chairman who oversees the District Council business session and preside over its meetings.¹³⁷ The legislative power of the KHADC is not different from the power enjoyed by the LADC. The legislative wing has a separate Legislative Secretariat which manages administrative matters related to the legislative functions of the KHADC. The Council hold regular session every four months. The Council is responsible for passing the Annual Budget of the ADC by majority vote. It legislates and enacts laws and regulations on powers conferred by the Sixth Schedule. The bills passed by the Council are sent to the Governor for his assent or approval.¹³⁸ The day-to-day business of the Legislative Secretariat is looked after by officers and staff headed by Secretary (Legislative).¹³⁹

ii) Executive Powers

The executive functions of the KHADC are vested in the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee is headed by CEM with Executive Members. The Executive Committee is responsible to the District Council for all executive orders, policy matters and their exception.¹⁴⁰ It implements the policies and programmes approved by the District Council whose duties are similar to those of the Cabinet of the state.¹⁴¹ The administrative head of the KHADC is called Secretary to the Executive Committee or Executive Secretary (commonly known in other ADCs). At present, the executive wing of KHADC have been clubbed together into seven departments, namely—

i) General Administration Department (Elaka Administration, Town Committee, Establishment, Information Technology Department, Finance and Accounts Department, Right to Information, Arts and Culture, Youth Affairs, Planning)

¹³⁶ Sujit Kumar Dutta. (2002). *Functioning of Autonomous District Councils in Meghalaya*. New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House. p.12.

¹³⁷ Venkata Rao, Barrister Pakem & Niru Hazarika, *op.cit*, p.172.

¹³⁸ KHADC. *Legislative*. https://khadc.nic.in/legislative_sectt.html. Accessed on 12th December, 2024.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁴⁰ Sujit Kumar Dutta, *op.cit*, p.12.

¹⁴¹ V. Venkata Rao, Niru Hazarika, Barister Pakem, *op.cit*, p.174.

(ii) Law Department

(iii) Revenue, Budget & Finance Department (Land, Land Survey and Land Revenue; Taxation/Professional Tax Wing, Trade Department, Water Resources Department, Market Administration, Fishery)

(iv) Forest Administration Department

(v) Education Department

(vi) Civil Works and Development Department, and

(vii) Enforcement Department.¹⁴²

iii) Judicial Powers

In judiciary, the Sixth Schedule under Paragraph 4 and 5 provides administration of justice in Autonomous areas. The ADCs are empowered to establish courts for the trials of cases between the parties belonging to the Scheduled Tribe communities. The District Council Court in each district comprises qualified Judicial Officers known as Judges and Magistrates, appointed by the Executive Committee with the approval of the Governor. The Courts under the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council are constituted under the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District (Administration of Justice) Rules, 1953. There are three Courts under KHADC, such as—

i) Village Courts

ii) Subordinate District Council Courts and the Additional Subordinate District Council Court

iii) District Council Court and Additional District Council Court.¹⁴³

The courts handle tribal litigation cases at various levels. They provide justice in line with traditional customs and usages at a speedy, simple, and affordable rate. The Judges in the Courts at various level function independently without the

¹⁴² KHADC. *Executive*. <https://khadc.nic.in/executive.html>. Accessed on 12th December, 2024.

¹⁴³ KHADC, *Judiciary*, *op.cit.*

interference from the executive. The Judge and Additional Judge of the KHADC have the authority to prosecute offenses punishable with death and life imprisonment. While, the Village Courts are granted the power to try minor offenses. They are not tasked with convicting or sentencing individuals for imprisonment, but instead, they are granted other powers like awarding cost, etc.¹⁴⁴ However, it is important to mention here that any law or regulation passed by the District or Regional Council contradicts the law made by Meghalaya Legislature, it becomes void and the state legislature law prevails. In the meantime, the President retains the authority to issue notifications exempting any Act of Parliament from applicability in Meghalaya.¹⁴⁵

4.6.2 Working of Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council

The first election of the KHADC (the former United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council) was held on 27th March, 1952. The Council consisted of 24 seats of which 18 were elected and six members were appointed.¹⁴⁶ Mr. F. War and Mr. Josingh Rynjah were elected as Chairman and CEM respectively by the newly constituted District Council. It witnessed two District Council elections in 1952 and 1958 before the creation of a separate Autonomous District Council for the Jaintia Hills. The KHADC witnessed 14 District Council elections (including United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District Council).¹⁴⁷ The study focuses on the 13th KHADC (2019-2025).

The 13th KHADC election was held on 27th February, 2019. In the elections, the INC managed to win 10 seats. While the NPP and UDP secured seven seats and six seats respectively. The HSPDP won two seats and the PDF captured one seats. The remaining three seats were won by independent candidates.¹⁴⁸ The 13th KHADC witnessed frequent change of government as well as CEM. The main reason is that the Member of District Council (MDC) from different parties switched their side. Besides, the coalition partner changed their loyalty and support to another party as no party

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ KHADC, Home, *op.cit.*

¹⁴⁶ John F. Kharsing & Bodhi S. Rancee. (2022). *The Khasi States: A Brief Historical Timeline (1771 to 2017)*. Shillong: Author in collaboration with the Tribal Intellectual Collective India. p.28.

¹⁴⁷ W. Kharkrang, *op.cit.*

¹⁴⁸ Big win likely for MDA in Meghalaya Council Poll. *The Times of India*. Dated: 3rd March, 2019. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/shillong/big-win-likely-for-md-a-in-meghalaya-council-polls/articleshow/68240109.cms>. Accessed on 27th June, 2025.

have majority by their own. Thus, the 13th term experienced the change of CEM for fourth time. The term had been extended from 5th March, 2024 to six months. The state government again extended the term from 5th September, 2024 to March 5, 2025. The government made excuses for extending the term as delimitation exercises remains incomplete.¹⁴⁹ The given table below shows the political instability and frequent change of CEM in the 13th KHADC term: -

Fig. 4.3: Frequent change of government and CEM in 13th KHADC (2019-2025)

Sl. No	Chief Executive Member (CEM)	Party/ coalition who led govt.	Period	Duration
1.	Teinwell Dkhar (UDP)	United Democratic Alliance (UDP, NPP, HSPDP, PDF & independent)	07.03.2019 - 20.11.2019	8 months & 13 days
2.	Latiplang Kharkongor (Independent)	United Democratic Forum (INC, 2 rebel NPP, 1 PDF and independent)	22.11.2019 - 07.02.2020	2 months & 16 days
3.	Governor's Rule	No majority	07.02.2020 - 13.03.2020	1 month & 6 days
4.	Tirosstarwell Chyne (UDP)	United Democratic Party (UDP,	24.03.2020 - 19.06.2023	3 years, 2 months & 25 days
5.	Pyniaid Sing Syiem (NPP)	Khasi Hills Democratic Front (NPP & INC)	20.06.2023 - 27.02.2025	1 year, 8 months & 7 days

Sources: Prepared by the Scholar

The above table (4.3) shows that political instability is one of the major problems in the KHADC. The first government was formed by a coalition government

¹⁴⁹ Terms of KHADC, JHADC extended again by six months. *Highland Post*. Dated: 31st August, 2024. <https://highlandpost.com/term-of-khadc-jhadc-extended-again-by-six-months/>. Accessed on 27th June, 2025.

under the same banner of United Democratic Alliance (UDA) who rules the state. It consists of UDP, NPP, HSPDP, PDF and independent members. The coalition government was led UDP leader Teinwell Dkhar as CEM.¹⁵⁰ The UDA government collapsed after eight months as a no-confidence motion was moved against Dkhar's government by Opposition Leader and Congress MDC Lamphrang Blah. The Chairman P.N. Syiem admits the motion and proceed for voting. The voting shows that there was cross-voting from the UDA as two NPP, one PDF and one independent member voted against the ruling. So, the UDA collapsed and they formed a new alliance called United Democratic Front (UDF). While, the UDA disapproved the voting of Chairman P.N. Syiem in favour of UDF criticizing that he violates the rules.¹⁵¹ However, the UDF elected Latiplang Kharkongor, an independent MDC as CEM. This is the first time in KHADC that an independent member has been elected as CEM.¹⁵²

The Executive Committee led by Latiplang Kharkongor collapsed within three months. The UDF government failed to prove majority against the no confidence motion moved by NPP member Pyniaid Sing Syiem. As no party can form Executive Committee, Governor's Rule was imposed in KHADC on 7th February, 2020. Later, the Governor's rule was lifted on 13th March, 2020 to pave way for the formation of a new Executive Committee.¹⁵³ The UDA supported by 20 members formed a new government with Titosstarwell Chyne (UDP) as CEM.¹⁵⁴ The three years old UDA government led by Chyne also lost the majority in the House as the NPP withdrew their support from the UDA government. The development came when Chyne's

¹⁵⁰ Teinwell Dkhar and P.N. Syiem elected CEM and Chairman of KHADC. *The Times of India*. Dated: 8th March, 2019. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/shillong/teinwell-dkhar-and-pn-syiem-elected-cem-and-chairman-of-khadc/articleshow/68316247.cms>. Accessed on 27th June, 2025.

¹⁵¹ KHADC EC collapses after chairman votes with Opp. *The Shillong Times*. Dated: 21st November, 2019. <https://theshillongtimes.com/2019/11/21/khadc-ec-collapses-after-chairman-votes-with-opp/>. Accessed on 27th June, 2025.

¹⁵² Meghalaya: Latiplang Kharkongor elected as CEM of KHADC amid uncertainty. *North East Now*. Dated: 23rd November, 2019. <https://nenow.in/north-east-news/meghalaya/meghalaya-latiplang-kharkongor-elected-as-cem-of-khadc-amid-uncertainty.html>. Accessed on 27th June, 2025.

¹⁵³ Administrator's rule in KHADC revoked to pave way for formation of new EC. *Syllad*. Dated: 13th March, 2020. <https://www.syllad.com/administrators-rule-in-khadc-revoked/>. Accessed on 10th July, 2025.

¹⁵⁴ Chyne elected unopposed as new KHADC chief. *Syllad*. Dated: 24th March, 2020. <https://www.syllad.com/chyne-elected-unopposed-as-new-khadc-chief/>. Accessed on 27th June, 2025.

government failed to prove majority against the no confidence motion moved by NPP member Bajop Pyngrope on 19th June, 2023.¹⁵⁵ The NPP and the Congress formed the Khasi Hills Democratic Front with 20 members led by Pyniaid Sing Syiem (NPP) as CEM and P.N. Syiem (INC) as Dy. CEM.¹⁵⁶ The Executive Committee remains in office till the 14th KHADC election in February, 2025.

The KHADC faced political instability like other District Councils. The main reason for political instability is due to the absence of anti-defection laws in the District Councils. As a result, members of the District Council switched their side frequently to have better political status. P.N. Syiem¹⁵⁷ and Mitchel Wankhar shared the same view.¹⁵⁸ While senior BJP leader Mr. David Kharsati¹⁵⁹ argued that the leaders are responsible for political instability as they are office seekers in the KHADC. The political instability also disrupts the functioning of the KHADC as different leaders and party have different policies and objectives to be implemented. Mr. Pyniaid Sing Syiem¹⁶⁰, Mr. D.G. Syiemiong¹⁶¹ and Mr. H. Syiem¹⁶². Sushmita Sengupta¹⁶³ also shared the same view. According to her, the KHADC do not effectively function as members are always fighting in the KHADC. It hampers the day-to-day administration of the District Council.

¹⁵⁵ Kenny Jyrwa. Meghalaya: Congress to support NPP as KHADC collapse, UDP fails to survive no-confidence motion. *India Today NE*. Dated: 19th June, 2023.

<https://www.indiatodayne.in/meghalaya/story/meghalaya-congress-to-support-npp-as-khadc-collapse-udp-fails-to-survive-no-confidence-motion-600571-2023-06-19>. Accessed on 27th June, 2025.

¹⁵⁶ David Laitphlang. Meghalaya: NPP's Pyniaid Sing Syiem elected unopposed as new CEM of KHADC. *Hindustan Times*. Dated: 21st June, 2023.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/others/meghalaya-npp-s-pyniaid-sing-syiem-elected-unopposed-as-new-cem-of-khadc-101687353171911.html>. Accessed on 27th June, 2025.

¹⁵⁷ The scholar interviewed P.N. Syiem (Dy. CEM, KHADC during the interviewed period) on 31st May, 2024 in his office chamber at KHADC, Shillong.

¹⁵⁸ The scholar interviewed Mitchel Wankhar (EM i/c Revenue, KHADC during the interviewed period) on 19th December, 2022 in his office chamber at KHADC, Shillong.

¹⁵⁹ The scholar interviewed David Kharsati (BJP National Council Member, Meghalaya) on 31st May, 2024 at BJP Office, Shillong.

¹⁶⁰ The scholar interviewed Pyniaid Singh Syiem (CEM, KHADC during the interviewed period) on 6th June, 2024 in his office chamber at KHADC, Shillong.

¹⁶¹ The scholar interviewed D.G. Syiemiong (Secretary to the Executive Committee, KHADC during the interviewed period) on 16th December, 2022 in his office chamber at KHADC, Shillong.

¹⁶² The scholar interviewed H. Syiem (Dy. Secretary, KHADC during the interviewed period) on 16th December, 2022 in his office chamber at KHADC, Shillong.

¹⁶³ The scholar interviewed Sushmita Sengupta (Professor in NEHU) on 5th June, 2024 at NEHU, Shillong.

There are two opinions on the issue of the relevance of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs). One group advocated that the ADCs protect the land, tradition, culture, language, etc. as it is established for the tribals. Many leaders (Pyniaid Singh Syiem, P.N. Syiem, Mitchel Wankhar, Paul Lyngdoh,¹⁶⁴ D.G. Syiemiong, H. Syiem, James Lyngdoh,¹⁶⁵ Ms. Risha¹⁶⁶ and Ms. Lakyntiew Sohkhet¹⁶⁷) believed that with all the limitation, the KHADC is still relevant and important for the Khasi. According to Pyniaid Singh Syiem, the ADCs are still relevant for the tribals as envisioned by its architect Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy. They are empowered with executive, legislative and judicial functions which served as the three pillars for the ADCs.¹⁶⁸ Pi Linda Chhakchhuak argued that the ADCs have the power to make law for the protection of the tribals and they are the backbone of the tribal society.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, Fabian Lyngdoh stresses that the ADCs in Meghalaya have bigger roles than other states (including Mizoram) as the entire state is covered under Sixth Schedule.¹⁷⁰

On the other hand, there are some groups who believes that the ADCs did not serve the interest of the people. Political leaders (Mrs. Ampareen Lyngdoh,¹⁷¹ Mr. A.L. Hek,¹⁷² Mr. Ardent Miller Basaiawmoit,¹⁷³ Mr. Sanjay Das¹⁷⁴ and Mr. David Kharsati) raises their concern about the relevance of ADCs. According to Ampareen Lyngdoh and Ardent Miller, the KHADC did not effectively function as per the expectation of

¹⁶⁴ The scholar interviewed Paul Lyngdoh (Working President, UDP and Minister during the interviewed period) on 5th June, 2024 at Minister's Chamber, Shillong.

¹⁶⁵ The scholar interviewed James Lyngdoh (Vice President, AITC) on 15th December, 2022 at AITC Office, Shillong.

¹⁶⁶ The scholar interviewed Risha (President, Women Wing in AITC) on 15th December, 2022 at AITC Office, Shillong.

¹⁶⁷ The scholar interviewed Lakyntiew Sohkhet (General Secretary, Meghalaya Pradesh Youth Congress) on 19th December, 2022 at Congress Bhavan, Shillong.

¹⁶⁸ Pyniaid Singh Syiem, *op.cit.*

¹⁶⁹ The scholar interviewed Linda Chhakchhuak (freelance journalist, born and raised in Shillong) on 3rd June, 2024 at Malki Cafe, Shillong.

¹⁷⁰ The scholar interviewed Fabian Lyngdoh (ex-Chairman, KHADC) on 19th December, 2022 at AITC Office, Shillong.

¹⁷¹ The scholar interviewed Ampareen Lyngdoh (former Congress leader & NPP Minister during the interviewed period) on 16th December, 2022 at her residence in Shillong.

¹⁷² The scholar interviewed A.L. Hek (MLA from Pynthorunkhrah A/C since 1998 & BJP Minister during the interviewed period) on 1st June, 2024 at his residence, Shillong.

¹⁷³ The scholar interviewed Ardent Miller Basaiawmoit (VPP President and MLA from Nongkrem A/C) on 6th June, 2024 in his residence at Shillong.

¹⁷⁴ The scholar interviewed Sanjay Das (General Secretary, Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee) on 19th December, 2022 in Congress Bhava, Shillong.

the people. They argued that there is no good governance in the ADC to protect the tribals. Journalists, civil society organization leaders and academicians also shared the same view. According to Patricia Mukhim, the KHADC did not serve the interest of the people as they didn't have any resources for development. For instance, the management of primary schools were transferred to state governments which were earlier managed by the ADCs.¹⁷⁵ Donald V. Thabah also argues that the KHADC fails as there are number of non-tribal traders within Shillong.¹⁷⁶ Both praised the functioning of ADCs in Mizoram as compared to ADCs in Meghalaya. Academicians such as—Sushmita Sengupta, H. Srikanth¹⁷⁷ and Batskhem Myrbuh¹⁷⁸ also expressed the challenges faced by KHADC. They argued that the KHADC lack regional agenda, and they function like local body and government officials. They argued that the ADCs are not seriously concerned about their purpose and it seems like it is a playfield for entering politics.

The KHADC also faced differences with the state government in their functioning. Mr. P.N. Syiem and Mr. Mitchel Wankhar said that the relationship between KHADC and state government depends upon the party in power. They argued that sometimes the funds are not released on time from the state government. Pyniaid Sing Syiem and Fabian Lyngdoh argued that there are instances in which the state government disturbs the functioning of the District Council especially when they belong to different parties.¹⁷⁹ Another challenge of the KHADC is the supremacy of the law passed by the state legislature under Para 12 (A) of the Sixth Schedule. Even though the ADCs are empowered with legislative functions, if the law of the District Council is repugnant with the state law, the state law will prevail. This means that the ADCs in Meghalaya need special provision within the Sixth Schedule.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁵ The scholar interviewed Patricia Mukhim (Editor, Shillong Times) on 1st June, 2024 in her residence at Shillong.

¹⁷⁶ The scholar interviewed Donald V. Thabah (General Secretary, Khasi Students Union) on 1st June, 2024 at Khasi Students Union Office, Shillong.

¹⁷⁷ The scholar interviewed H. Srikanth (Professor in NEHU) on 5th June, 2024 at NEHU, Shillong.

¹⁷⁸ The scholar interviewed Batskhem Myrbuh (Founding Member of VPP & Faculty in NEHU) on 5th June, 2024 in his office chamber at NEHU, Shillong.

¹⁷⁹ Pyniaid Sing Syiem, Fabian Lyngdoh, *op.cit.*

¹⁸⁰ Pyniaid Sing Syiem, Ardent Miller, D.G. Syiemiong, H. Syiem, *op.cit.*

Furthermore, the issue of direct funding is also the burning issue in KHADC. There are different opinions on the issue of direct funding. The first group believes that if the Indian Parliament passed the amendment of the Sixth Schedule, direct funding is possible for the ADCs.¹⁸¹ While the second group argued that direct funding is the eternal dreams for the people under the Sixth Schedule. However, it will be very difficult to achieve the desired goals as it requires the initiative of the state government as well as central government.¹⁸² On the other hand, the third group realised the importance of ADCs and said that the ADCs need to be empowered, strengthened and upgraded as per the minds of the people.¹⁸³ H. Srikanth and Sushmita Sengupta argued that today the ADC are losing their relevance due to power tussle between the state government and the ADC. Besides, the District Council is controlled by the rich people.¹⁸⁴ Moreover, Mrs. Patricia Mukhim and Mr. A.L. Hek stated that by looking at the functioning of the ADC, it might be necessary to abolish the District Council in post-statehood era. They argued that dual administration sometimes results in conflict of interest between the leaders and officials.¹⁸⁵

It is argued that the District Council elections did not have a huge impact as compared to Assembly elections. The scholar learnt that all the party leaders, officials, journalist, civil society leaders, academicians argued that the people prioritize Assembly election, followed by District Council election and Lok Sabha election. The involvement of money power is also more in Assembly elections. According to Mrs. Ampareen Lyngdoh, Assembly elections is the master of all elections in the state.¹⁸⁶ It is important to mention that the factors for winning the elections in all the level of elections is more or less the same. Various factors such as individual capability, family, party affiliation, money power and church denomination all contributed in winning the elections. Among them personality factors attributed the most in Meghalaya. Patricia Mukhim said clanship does not contribute much as a majority of the people belong to

¹⁸¹ Mitchel Wankhar, D.G. Syiemiong and H. Syiem, *op.cit.*

¹⁸² Pyniaid Singh Syiem, P.N. Syiem, *op.cit.*

¹⁸³ Linda Chhakchhuak, Donald V. Thabah, *op.cit.*

¹⁸⁴ H. Srikanth, Sushmita Sengupta, *op.cit.*

¹⁸⁵ Patricia Mukhim, A.L. Hek, *op.cit.*

¹⁸⁶ Ampareen Lyngdoh, *op.cit.*

tribal population.¹⁸⁷ According to Linda Chhakchhuak, individual capabilities play an important role in Meghalaya elections. As a result, independent candidates managed to win in every level of elections.¹⁸⁸

4.7 Traditional Institutions in Meghalaya

In Meghalaya, the traditional institutions are still functioning. They are *Syiemships*, *Doloiships*, *Nokmaships* and the Durbars. The offices of *Syiem*, *Doloi*, and *Nokma* in Khasi, Jaintia, and Garo Hills are classified as subordinate officials to the ADCs under the Sixth Schedule. Most of the traditional power and duties have been limited or taken away by the ADCs. The District Council has the authority to regulate the appointment and succession of chiefs and headmen under paragraph 3(i) (g) of the Sixth Schedule. The United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District (Appointment and Succession of Chiefs and Headmen) Act, 1959 and its subsequent amendments allowed chiefs, deputy chiefs, and acting chiefs to be removed, suspended, or even barred from participating in politics and elections if they violated their appointment terms and conditions.¹⁸⁹

There are no written records relating to the functioning of the traditional institutions. It is maintained by the people. The Khasi's traditional political system is influenced by their belief in the *Hynniew Trep Hynniew Skum*.¹⁹⁰ They are considered as the progenitors of the Khasi race where '*trep*' is equivalent to a '*kur*' or clan. In fact, the '*kur*' or clan held the core of all traditional socio-cultural and political institutions. Initially, villages established by different '*kur*' had their village boundary which was co-terminus with the clan boundary. However, exogamous marriages prohibited marrying within one's clan, it led to the breakdown of these boundaries and

¹⁸⁷ Patricia Mukhim, *op.cit.*

¹⁸⁸ Linda Chhakchhuak, *op.cit.*

¹⁸⁹ L.S. Gassah. (2023). The Sixth Schedule and the 73rd Amendment: An Analysis. In M.N. Karna, L.S. Gassah & C.J. Thomas (Ed.), *Power to People in Meghalaya: Sixth Schedule and the 73rd Amendment*. (Reprinted 2023, pp.3 -12). New Delhi: Regency Publications.

¹⁹⁰ '*Hynniew Trep Hynniew Skum*' is a Khasi word which can be translate as 'Seven Huts and Nine Nests'. '*Hynniew Trep Hynniew Skum*' story is a foundational myth for the Khasi people's origin and relationship with the divine. [Origin of the Khasi-The Hynniewtrep Hynniew Skum (Seven Clan). *Indigenous Partnership for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty*. <https://www.theindigenouspartnership.org/origin-of-the-khasi-the-hynniewtrep-hynniewskum-seven-clans>. Accessed on 10th July, 2025].

the emergence of separate village administration across clan boundaries. As the population increased in original villages, some relocated and established new villages, which remained under the overall control of the parent villages. The office of the Basan Raid evolved to address inter-village issues. This led to the formation of Raids as larger territorial units comprising villages and Raid-level institutions like Durbar Raids and Basans. The congregation of such raids eventually led to the establishment of Syiemships. Thus, the Khasi's traditional political system is based on three levels—(i) village (ii) raid and (iii) state.¹⁹¹

At the village level, clans function as a sub-system to the overall system of village administration. Each clan has its own durbar or council, called a *Durbar Kur*. The *Rangbah Kur* or clan headman, is in charge of the *Durbar Kur*. The *Durbar Kur* is responsible to manage the affairs of the clans.¹⁹² In the Khasi tradition, individuals cannot be members of a public political durbar, but the clan as a whole is considered as a group and represented by a person. The public durbar is a platform where one clan has one voice and one vote. Therefore, the *durbar kur* is not a public political durbar, but an informal and private clan council. The *durbar kur* is a kind of a political constituency for sending representatives to the public durbar. Thus, the *durbar kur* cannot be considered as the first tier of the Khasi public durbar.¹⁹³ The local self-government of the Khasi is structured in the form of a three-tier durbar system which include: -

i) the Durbar Hima¹⁹⁴ or State Durbar at the apex

ii) the Durbar Raid or provincial durbar at the provincial level, and

¹⁹¹ Gurudas Das. (2023). Social Change and Traditional Tribal Political Systems in Meghalaya. In M.N. Karna, L.S. Gassah & C.J. Thomas (Ed.), *Power to People in Meghalaya: Sixth Schedule and the 73rd Amendment*. (Reprinted 2023, pp.32 -49). New Delhi: Regency Publications.

¹⁹² Arthur Lyngdoh. *Traditional Village Council (Durbar Shnong) in the Khasi Hills: Continuities and Change*. International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts. Vol.9, Issue No. 4, (April, 2021). <https://ijert.org/papers/IJCRT2104313.pdf>. Accessed on 29th November, 2024.

¹⁹³ Fabian Lyngdoh. *Evolution of the Modern Day Dorbar-Shnong in Khasi Society*. The Shillong Times. (29th October, 2024). <https://theshillongtimes.com/2024/10/29/evolution-of-the-modern-day-dorbar-shnong-in-khasi-society/>. Accessed on 2nd December, 2024.

¹⁹⁴ 'Hima' refers to traditional Khasi state or kingdom. [Meghalaya Tourism. <https://www.meghalayatourism.in/experiences-4/of-folklore-and-history-a-tour-of-hima-khadsaw-phra/>. Accessed on 10th July, 2025].

iii) the Durbar Shnong or village durbar at the village level.¹⁹⁵

Here, in this study, the traditional institutions in the Khasi Hills focuses on village durbar system and *syiemship* because *syiemship* is the overall administration among the traditional institutions. While, the village durbar system is the lowest form of local self-government among the Khasi society as the clan did not involve in the village or community as a whole.

4.7.1 Syiemship

The traditional Khasi political system is not well documented. Its origin can be traced only through traditions and folk tales. In the pre-British era, all Khasi states were independent and free from external domination. The Khasi kingdoms or states were entities in the Khasi hills, consisting of villages under the jurisdiction of *sirdars*, *lyngdohs*, village headmen, and *wahadadars*. These functionaries were directed by the *syiems* of the state in the administration. Villages (*shnong*) under *sirdars* and *basans* maintained administrative affairs, while their own durbar (council) consists of *basans*, *lyndohs*, and headmen.¹⁹⁶

During the time, there were 25 petty Khasi states. Among them, 15 were under the *syiems*, one confederacy jointly administered by *wahadadars*, five under the *sirdars*, and four under the *lyngdohs*. The largest were Khyrim, Myllem, Nongkhlaw, and Nongstoin, with the smallest being Nonglewai. The Khasi political system is unique with no dictatorship. The head of the state was the *syiem*, who was ruled by the 'Durbar', a council of ministers including *lyngdohs*, *sirdars*, headmen, and *wahadadars*. These advisers were essentially the policy-making bodies. The Khasi chief was elected from the first nephew of the chief i.e. the first son of his eldest sister, unlike other hereditary kings. *Lyngdohs* were elected from the *lyngdoh* clan, with people voting within the clan. Headman, *sirdar*, and *wahadadar* were openly elected

¹⁹⁵ Arthur Lyndoh, *op.cit.*

¹⁹⁶ R. Gopalakrishnan. (1995). *Meghalaya: Land and People*. New Delhi: Omsons Publications. p.118.

by the people of the state/locality. The Khasi political system was democratic, with every individual having the right to participate in the Durbar (except women).¹⁹⁷

The different *syiems* exercised varying degrees of powers. They were responsible for the welfare of their subjects and oversee state affairs with the help of Raid Durbars, officials, and Myntris. The *syiem* refrains from intervening in the internal affairs of the village and raid which are autonomous. The *syiem* was the head of the State Durbars and was responsible for legislating, adjudicating, and executing laws in the Khasi state. The Durbar was the supreme authority of the Khasi state, also known as Durbar Hima.¹⁹⁸ The *syiem* as the head of the state performed various administrative, military, religious, ceremonial, and judicial functions. He exercised his power in consultation with Durbar Myntri as desired by the Durbar Hima. The *syiem* was the highest court in the state and trial all disputes at village or Raid levels. It trials serious cases involving severe punishment to his court, with the entire Durbar acting as the jury. The *syiem* did not have land revenue and power to confiscate public and clan property, as it was owned by clans, villages, and individuals. The main sources of income were crown lands, state subscription, market toll, judicial fines, registration fees, etc.¹⁹⁹

4.7.2 Working of Hima Myllem Syiemship

The rationale for selecting Hima Myllem Syiemship²⁰⁰ is that Myllem is the prime Hima under East Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya.²⁰¹ The evolution of Myllem as a state is difficult to describe as there are different stories regarding its origin. One possible explanation can be obtained from oral narratives which talks about the internal conflicts among the elders (*bakhrav*) of Hima Shyllong. The history of Hima Myllem dates back to the pre-colonial period in the Khasi Hills. The oral tradition suggests that

¹⁹⁷ Gurudas Das, *op.cit*, p.36.

¹⁹⁸ R. Gopalakrishnan, *op.cit*, p.123.

¹⁹⁹ Gurudas Das, *op.cit*, p.38.

²⁰⁰ 'Myllem' is a village and also a block headquarters in East Khasi Hills District. 'Myllem Syiemship' refers to a traditional Khasi state or principality that existed before the Indian Constitution. [Clara Bamon. *A Preliminary Study on the State Formation of Hima Myllem*. Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research. Vol.6, Issue. 4, (April 2019) pp.86-90.

<https://www.jetir.org/papers/JETIRBF06017.pdf>. Accessed on 5th December, 2024].

²⁰¹ Sujit Kumar Dutta. (2002), *op.cit*.

the earliest Hima in the Khasi Hills was Hima Shyllong, which was later carved into Hima Myllem.²⁰²

According to Mr. Ainam Manik, the Hima Kyrim and Hima Myllem existed in 1853. At present, Hima Myllem comprises around 1600 villages which is part of the East Khasi Hills and Ri Bhoi District. He said that there is no specific tenure fixed for the *syiem*. If the post of *syiem* lies vacant due to various reason, an eligible descendent filled the nomination. The *syiem* can be elected by *myntris* and *basan* who have the right to vote in the election which are nominated by 48 different clans. The clans (48 clans) select one person each to participate in the election. Out of 48 selected clans, the *syiem* appoint 11 *myntris* (Council of Ministers) to aid and assist in his functioning. The *myntris* remain in office for lifetime unless they resigned from their post. He said that political parties are not involved in the election of *syiem*. Further, the *syiem* are not allowed to have party affiliation and should not participate in party activities.²⁰³

He further said that the main functions for the *syiem* is to protect the indigenous tribes, Khasi law, Khasi inheritance law, kinship, etc. Besides, protection of land, forest and resources became the other important functions. In addition, the *syiem* did not have any remuneration from the government or ADC. They settled the issues and problems raised by the village headmen through discussions, ensuring satisfaction of the people with their judgment. If discussions are insufficient, the *syiem* takes on the judicial mantle and decides cases in accordance with customs, traditions, and age-old law of the people. Later, unresolved issues are transferred to the District Council. The sources of income for the *syiem* include licence fee and rent from markets, toll taxes, etc. The secondary sources of income are the mineral resources and forests. He argued that the *syiem* and the ADC as well as the state government have good and cordial relations. At the same time, they also faced challenges and problems in their functioning. The main challenge is that they did not have fund from the government and they need to utilize their own resources for the welfare of the people.

²⁰² Clara Bamon, *op.cit.*

²⁰³ The scholar interviewed Ainam Manik Syiem (Syiem of Hima Myllem) on 14th December, 2022 in his office at Shillong.

He also added that the people should cooperate the functions of the Hima and a better relations can be maintained between the ADC and the Hima as well as the government.²⁰⁴

4.7.3 Village Durbar

The Sixth Schedule (under para 3) to the Indian Constitution empowers the District Council or Regional Council to establish village durbars or village councils.²⁰⁵ However, the traditional institutions continue to exist in the Khasi society till date. Every Khasi village has its own local assembly known as '*Durbar Shnong*' or village durbar or council. The village durbar consists of the male members of the village, the village elders or '*Basans*'. The head of the village council is called the village headman or '*Rangbah Shnong*' which is elected by the adult male inhabitants of the village irrespective of their clan affiliation. The village headman presides over the village council meeting. The '*Rangbah Shnong*' or village headman manages the village administration in accordance with customs, traditions as well as rules and regulations outlined by the '*Durbar Shnong*'. The village durbar is responsible for preserving and strengthening the traditional customs of the villagers and the society as a whole.²⁰⁶ The durbar system exists in both the urban and rural areas while there is no uniformity regarding the functioning of the durbar.

The present-day villages with '*Durbar Shnong*' are mostly outgrowth settlements of Raids during and after the British rule. The title '*Rangbah Shnong*' is unknown in Khasi oral tradition and colonial documents, and not mentioned in early Khasi writings. The title '*Rangbah Shnong*' is a translation of the British term 'village headmen', which was introduced to refer to the '*Basan*' and '*Lyngdoh*' of the Raids. The Khasi traditional institutions have been established through a matrilineal clan system and religious rituals. The '*Durbar Shnong*' and '*Rangbah Shnong*' are modern grassroots local institutions in Khasi society. It evolved under colonial administrative interventions and Indian constitutional democracy, rather than traditional institutions

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ Meghalaya Institute of Governance. *Capacity and Functioning of the KHADC in Meghalaya, India*. <https://mbda.gov.in/sites/default/files/publication-2.pdf>. Accessed on 10th July, 2025.

²⁰⁶ R. Gopalakrishnan, *op.cit*, p.121.

established since time immemorial. The present day '*Durbar Shnong*' are said to be a Khasi indigenous grassroots local institution. In the past, the '*Durbar Raid*' was once the sole territorial authority within the village. Today, it is the only authority within the village, becoming more powerful, legitimate, and effective than the '*Durbar Raid*' and '*Durbar Hima*' in governing daily life within its jurisdiction.²⁰⁷

The village tradition asserts that the '*Shnong*' and '*Durbar Shnong*' exist independently from the Raid, Hima, or District Council. Despite the constitutional provisions and legal enactments, neither the District Council nor the Durbar Hima could gain territorial authority in the villages. Even with or without the constitutional recognition or '*sanad*'²⁰⁸ from the '*Hima*', the village inhabitant obeys the '*Rangbah Shnong*' who were elected in the durbar. The resolution of the '*Durbar Shnong*' is crucial for the legitimacy of the '*Rangbah Shnong*' in the collective mind of the people. These resolutions are the highest law in the village and cannot be modified by any higher authority like Durbar Raid, Durbar Hima and District Council.²⁰⁹

Functions of village durbar

Traditionally, the village council or village durbar are vested with legislative, executive and judicial powers. Some of the important functions of the village durbar are as follows: -

i) Legislative and Executive function

The *Durbar Shnong* serves as the legislative and executive body responsible for providing basic civic amenities and other matters of common interest to the village's residents.²¹⁰ The village durbar and headman served as development agencies, overseeing collective interests such as sanitation, water supply, health, roads, and education, etc. The durbar and village headman play crucial roles in conflict management at the village level, with the durbar holding legislative power and the

²⁰⁷ Fabian Lyngdoh, *op.cit.*

²⁰⁸ A '*sanad*' was a document granted to Khasi chiefs, confirming their position and authority, while imposing obligations in return for British protection. '*Sanad*' is also used as recognition letter by the village headmen from the Hima. [Linda Chhakchhuak, *op.cit.*]

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ Arthur Lyndoh, *op.cit.*

village headman serving as magistrate and police officer. The village headman, in addition to other duties, also held religious and ceremonial functions in the absence of the village priest. The village headman served as a subordinate executive to the higher political authority, responsible for ensuring that tributes are paid to the *Syiem* by the village community. His loyalty to the concerned *Syiem* is necessary as the *Syiem* need to approve his election which is known as '*sanad*'. As a subordinate executive, he communicated the messages and orders of his superiors to his village people and referred unresolved issues to higher political authorities.²¹¹

Even though the *Rangbah Shnong* or a village headman is not recognized by the District Council, they appreciate the contribution of the *Rahbang Shnong*. However, it cannot be inferred from the legal deeds and *sanad* that the village headman's power has legal weightage. The *sanad* given to the village headman sometimes led him to act independently without the decision of the village durbar. For instance, the village headman can misuse the development funds or projects for their locality without the knowledge of the village durbar.²¹²

ii) Judicial functions

The District Council acknowledged the significance of the village durbar after the enactment of the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District (Administration of Justice) Rules, 1953. The District Councils have established the village courts as the lowest court with the power to trial civil cases. The village court can trial criminal cases related to tribal laws and customs, particularly if the offense is minor.²¹³ The village court handles cases like disputes, theft, rape, assault, etc. The village headman is responsible for enforcing and managing law and order. In this aspect, cases which are complicated or serious are referred to the 'Durbar Hima' or State Council or *Syiem*.²¹⁴

²¹¹ Gurudas Das, *op.cit*, p.36.

²¹² Arthur Lyndoh, *op.cit*.

²¹³ *Ibid*.

²¹⁴ R. Gopalakrishnan, *op.cit*, p.122.

4.7.4 Working of Cleve Colony Village Durbar

Cleeve Colony is the locality in the East Khasi Hills District, Shillong. It is under the Khasi Hills Autonomous District and belongs to the Chiefship of Myllem. Cleve Colony is situated in a calm, posh Shillong area, surrounded by lush pine trees and offers a stunning view. It belongs to 16-East Shillong (ST) Assembly Constituency. Cleve Colony locality is selected because it is situated in the heart of Shillong city. Besides, the locality is an urban area with most of the residents are highly educated. Moreover, the locality is covered by Shillong Municipal Board (SMB). It was once declared as the second cleanest locality in Meghalaya in the year 2014.²¹⁵ Further, they have an effective and active '*durbar shnong*' or village durbar. With the initiative of the village durbar, they are the pioneer in the community led cleanliness programme and proper garbage management system in Shillong.²¹⁶

The functioning of the village durbar largely depends on the '*Rangbah Shnong*' or village headman. The village headman is elected by the council and must be recognized by the *syiem* upon election. He exercises power in accordance with the rules and regulations of the '*syiem*' or Durbar Hima, as well as the advice of the village council.²¹⁷ In some localities, the durbar had elected village headman and his associates for the functioning of the durbar. Likewise, the locality of Cleve Colony has five elected office bearers, namely—

- 1) Headman
- 2) Asst. Headman
- 3) General Secretary
- 4) Asst. General Secretary, and
- 5) Treasurer.

²¹⁵ The Shillong Times. *Wake Up Cleve Colony*. Dated: 21st February, 2014. <https://theshillongtimes.com/2014/02/21/wake-up-cleve-colony/>. Accessed on 2nd December, 2024.

²¹⁶ The Shillong Times. '*Shillong – My Passion*' takes more than words; it demands action. Dated: 10th September, 2019. <https://theshillongtimes.com/2019/09/10/shillong-my-passion-takes-more-than-words-it-demands-action/>. Accessed on 2nd December, 2024.

²¹⁷ R. Gopalakrishnan, *op.cit*, p.122.

Besides, there is an Executive Committee which is the overall in charge of the administration and management of the locality. The Executive Committee also appointed nominated members ranging from government servants, business persons, lawyers, etc. to assist and support the Executive Committee. According to Mr. W.J. Nongrum, the headman and other officials in the durbar are elected by the people from their locality through Gram Sabha. The headman and other officials are elected through voice vote as the people raise their hands in favour of the person they choose. There are no candidates in the election and secret ballot is not used in the election of village durbar. The normal term of the headman and the other officials is three years. The office of the village durbar officials is neither political nor hereditary and the nature of durbar system is voluntary. He also stated that the elected headman requires the approval from the *Hima* which is called '*sanad*'.²¹⁸ At the same time, it is important to mention that there is no uniformity in the election and functioning of village durbar in Meghalaya. Pu Vanlalroa Thangluah said that there are some localities who allow and didn't allow women to participate in the durbar meeting and in the election. He said that there are some localities who used secret ballot and some who used hand's vote. He argued that there are some localities who only elect headman and the headman used to appoint other officials. Whereas, there are some localities who elect headman and all other officials in election. He also stated that the term of village durbar varies from one locality to another locality, ranging from one to three years.²¹⁹

Mr. W.J. Nongrum stated that the durbar system plays a significant role in the administration and the management of the locality. According to him, the village headman looks after the locality, maintain law and order and function as local guardian for the people. Some of the important functions and the role of village headman can be summed up as follows: -²²⁰

1) Issuing of recommendation of birth certificate, character certificate, ration card, gas connection, electoral identity card, income certificate, etc. For instance, any

²¹⁸ The scholar interviewed W.J. Nongrum (Headmen, Cleve Colony, Shillong during the interviewed period) on 14th December, 2022 in his residence at Shillong.

²¹⁹ The scholar interviewed Vanlalroa Thangluah (Receptionist, Shillong Mizoram House who is born and raised in Shillong) on 14th December, 2022 at Mizoram House, Shillong.

²²⁰ W.J. Nongrum, *op.cit.*

individual who wants to take birth certificate or ST certificate, etc. goes to the headman and the headman issues the necessary documents.

2) Issuing of approval letter for house construction. For example, if the people from Shillong want to construct a house, the Meghalaya Urban Development Authority (MUDA) and KHADC are the authorizing agency. Therefore, the MUDA or KHADC demand an approval letter or recommendation from the village headmen of their locality.

3) Issuing of transfer certificate for locality when they want to reside in other locality or villages. For instance, if the resident of one particular locality wants to shift his house, they need the transfer certificate to reside in a new locality.

4) Taking necessary actions with the MLA and MDC for the development of the village / locality. For example, any developmental works initiated from the local MLA and MDC or state government or central government needs the approval of the headmen or durbar.

5) Resolving issues and problems raised by the people. For instance, some residents are having family issue or even land or building construction issue, the headman tries to resolve their problems.

6) Ensuing cleanliness and proper sanitation in the locality. For example, the headmen and durbar organized cleanliness drive and identify sanitation points in their locality. Besides, they manage the monthly contribution from every household for ensuring cleanliness and sanitation in their area.

Mr. Rishot Shanpru said that the Executive Committee led by Headman looks after the welfare of the people. He stated that almost all the internal management in the locality is carried out by the village headman. He argued that the durbar officials used to conduct General Body Meeting like the Gram Sabha but they cannot convene the meeting regularly. The quorum for General Body Meeting is 1/4th of the total adult. In Cleve Colony, the Meeting can be attended only by tribals who attain the age of 18 years (including women). Therefore, the Executive Committee took all the necessary

arrangement and look after water supply, house construction, garbage, sanitation, etc. The locality of the village durbar sometimes donate money for the welfare of the locality.²²¹

Ms. Unichia Sawkmie²²² and Mrs. D. Sawkmie²²³ argued that the durbar system plays a significant role in the functioning of the locality. According to them, the durbar system is inherited from their ancestral period and it is best suited for the society. Mr. Vanlalroa Thangluah stated that the durbar system is still relevant in the Khasi society even though it did not have legal sanctity. He said that the village durbar can easily check infiltration as everyone who moves in and out requires a transfer certificate from the headmen. Besides, all the development works in the locality needs the approval of the village headmen. It is learnt that the party leaders, government officials, citizens, etc. opined that the village durbar system is very relevant for the people of Meghalaya. At the same time, there can be disadvantages in its functioning. One example is that the headmen can monopolize the system for his own benefits and can act in authoritarian manner. Besides, the money contributed by the people can be misused and can be involved in corrupt practices with various schemes and development fund. In addition, there cannot be checks and balance in the Executive Committee if the headmen appoint all his other colleagues. As a result, there are various instances in which the headmen were removed through no confidence and fresh elections were conducted before the expiry of the term.²²⁴

4.7.5 Analysis of Traditional Institutions in Meghalaya

The traditional institutions in Meghalaya particularly in the Khasi Hills have occupied an important place in the society. The traditional institutions hold a significant position in the minds of the people and the society. However, there are claims and counter-claims regarding the effectiveness of the traditional institutions in

²²¹ The scholar interview Rishot Shanpru (Asst. General Secretary, Cleve Colony Durbar during the interviewed period) on 16th December, 2022 in his residence at Shillong.

²²² The scholar interview Ms. Unichia Sawkmie (local residence of Cleve Colony) on 17th December, 2022 in her residence at Shillong.

²²³ The scholar interview Mrs. D. Sawkmie (local residence of Cleve Colony) on 17th December, 2022 in her residence at Shillong.

²²⁴ Vanlalroa Thangluah, *op.cit.*

Meghalaya. Party leaders, government officials, academicians, civil society leaders, journalists also have different opinions. Political leaders like Conrad Sangma²²⁵ and Mr. Paul Lyndoh²²⁶ strongly believe in the existence of traditional institutions. The former argued that the traditional institutions are the feature of grassroot democracy and the government also work for safeguarding and strengthening the traditional institutions. The latter stated that the village durbar plays a significant role in maintaining law and order for the community. He said that the Khasi people value the institution of *syiemship* as a symbol of tradition and culture. According to Ms. Lakyntiew Sohkhet, the community is unable to function effectively without the village durbar especially the village headmen.²²⁷ According to T.T. Haokip²²⁸ and Batskhem Myrbuh, it is unthinkable not to have the durbar system in the Khasi Hills. The people believed in the traditional institution but it is necessary to integrate with the modern system.

The traditional institutions in KHADC functions under the KHADC. According to Mr. Pyniaid Sing Syiem, the existence of traditional institutions is necessary in the Khasi Hills. He further said that the village durbar role in maintaining law and order in the locality is very important.²²⁹ Mr. H. Syiem argued that the District Council in Khasi Hills is responsible for safeguarding and preserving traditional institutions, which are integral to the traditions and customs of Khasi society. However, the District Council also faces a power tussle with traditional institutions, but they recognize their significance and relevance for society.²³⁰ According to Vanlalroa Thangluah, neither the ADC nor the state government do not interfere much in the locality. The ADC governed the locality/ village through headmen and village durbar.²³¹ While Mr. W.J. Nongrum argued that village durbar and the KHADC had

²²⁵ The scholar interviewed Conrad Sangma (National President, NPP and Chief Minister of Meghalaya) on 6th June, 2024 at Chief Minister's Bungalow, Shillong.

²²⁶ Paul Lyndoh, *op.cit.*

²²⁷ Layntiew Sohkhet, *op.cit.*

²²⁸ The scholar interviewed T.T. Haokip (Professor in NEHU) on 5th June, 2024 at NEHU, Shillong.

²²⁹ Pyniaid Singh Syiem, *op.cit.*

²³⁰ H. Syiem, *op.cit.*

²³¹ Vanlalroa Thangluah, *op.cit.*

cordial relations. Besides, the MDC and MLA also recognize the village durbar and work hand in hand for the development of their locality.²³²

On the other hand, there are people who challenge and question the relevance and functioning of the traditional institutions. Ampareen Lyndoh argues that the Khasi people have a strong emotional attachment for the traditional institutions. Whereas, their existence can also hinder the developmental progress leading to confusion and misunderstandings. Sometimes, village headmen may act biasedly, causing controversy within their locality.²³³ Pu Vanlalroa Thangluah and Pu Lalrinawma Ralte²³⁴ (both were born and brought up in Shillong) argued that the village durbar and headmen remain very relevant in the Khasi society. In the meantime, malpractices such as corruption and bribery by headmen prevail during issuing certificates and house permits, etc. Besides, the election of headmen appears peaceful, but political parties are indirectly involved and infighting arises due to their close collaboration with the MDC, MLA, and state government.

Mrs. Patricia Mukhim also stated that there is a need for modernization of traditional institutions like village durbar and *syiemship*. She said that there are some localities who didn't allow the participation of women in the election of headmen. She said that the *syiem* in earlier days was hereditary. Now, the District Council can simply remove the *syiem* if they have conflict in their functioning by making inadequate excuse for their removal. As a result, they can appoint *acting syiem* which devalue the institution of *syiemship*. Therefore, in the modern era, it is necessary to abolish the traditional institutions as it led to confusion and dual administration with the state government.²³⁵ Similarly, Donald V. Thabah argues that traditional *syiems* have a limited role in the modern world, as the District Council and state government supersede their functions. However, he reiterates the significance of village durbar in endorsing development and working for the welfare of the people.²³⁶ Batskhem

²³² W.J. Nongrum, *op.cit.*

²³³ Ampareen Lyndoh, *op.cit.*

²³⁴ The scholar interviewed Lalrinawma Ralte (an employee in State Bank of India, Shillong. He is born and raised in Shillong) on 18th December, 2022 at Madanriting, Shillong.

²³⁵ Patricia Mukhim, *op.cit.*

²³⁶ Donald V. Thabah, *op.cit.*

Myrbuh argued that the institution of *syiemship* needs reforms due to public dissatisfaction with its current functioning, which has led to criticism and diminishing its past glory.²³⁷

According to H. Srikanth, there is conflict between the traditional institutions and constitutional authority (i.e. District Council and state government). The durbar system is strongly embedded with the people and they have not expressed a desire to abolish it.²³⁸ While Sushmita Sengupta said that the traditional institutions (durbar system and *syiemship*) seem like democratic in theory. In reality, they are not fully democratic due to restrictions on women's participation in certain localities. The institution of *syiemship* is also not democratic as it is hereditary. She argues that the traditional institutions have lost relevance in modern society. But the hard fact is that there is a lack of open discussion about their irrelevance and abolition.²³⁹ Contrary to her, Pi Linda Chhakchhuak argues that the Khasi people believed in the durbar system as they are governing at the grassroot level. Similarly, the Khasi people also valued and respected the *syiem* as they represent their traditional system. While, the village durbar system cannot be modernized as it is rooted in tradition, custom and culture. In addition, the Khasi people hesitate to discuss the removal of *syiemship* as it symbolizes their society. However, there are some groups who want to challenge and remove the traditional institutions. Yet, the traditional institutions are crucial for the survival of the tribal society.²⁴⁰

4.8 Urban Local Bodies in Meghalaya

There are three types of urban local bodies in Meghalaya, namely—Municipal Board, Cantonment Board and Town Panchayat. At present, there are 12 urban local bodies in Meghalaya. Out of these, there are six Municipal Board, one

²³⁷ Batskhem Myrbuh, *op.cit.*

²³⁸ H. Srikanth, *op.cit.*

²³⁹ Sushmita Sengupta, *op.cit.*

²⁴⁰ Linda Chhakchhuak, *op.cit.*

Cantonment Board²⁴¹ and five Town Panchayat²⁴² in the state of Meghalaya.²⁴³ It means that all the 11 districts in Meghalaya have urban local bodies except South West Garo Hills district (headquarter in Ampati) which is the smallest in terms of areas. The Jaintia Hills have two urban local bodies—Jowai Municipal Board (West Jaintia Hills district) and Khliehriat Town Panchayat (East Jaintia Hills district). In the Khasi Hills, there are six urban local bodies. They are Shillong Municipal Board and Shillong Cantonment Board in East Khasi Hills district, Nongstoin Town Panchayat (West Khasi Hills District), Mawkyrwat Town Panchayat (South West Khasi Hills district), Nongpoh Town Panchayat (Ri-Bhoi district) and Mairang Town Panchayat (Eastern West Khasi Hills district). In the Garo Hills, there are four Municipal Boards namely—Williamnagar Municipal Board (East Garo Hills district), Tura Municipal Board (West Garo Hills district), Baghmara Municipal Board (South Garo Hills district) and Resubelpara Municipal Board (North Garo Hills district).²⁴⁴

The present study is confined to East Khasi Hills district: the district headquarters i.e. Shillong (which is the state capital). It is the major administrative centre. Besides, it also serves as educational and cultural centre as well as a popular tourist destination. In the East Khasi Hills district, there are two types of urban local bodies, namely Shillong Municipal Board (SMB) and Shillong Cantonment Board. The study focuses on the Shillong Municipal Board as they are responsible for civic administration in the Shillong city. The structure and functioning of Shillong Municipal Board (SMB) is different from Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC). In the case of SMB, there are no elected representative as the SMB is controlled by the bureaucrats or government officials.

²⁴¹ A Cantonment Board in India is a local government body responsible for managing military or para-military cantonments, providing services like water supply, waste management, public health, and education.

²⁴² In India, Town Panchayats are local government bodies responsible for administering small towns and villages with less than 10,000 population, providing basic services like water supply, waste management, and public health.

²⁴³ Local Body Data. *Urban Local Bodies of Meghalaya*. <https://localbodydata.com/urban-local-bodies-list-in-meghalaya-state-17>. Accessed on 18th November, 2024.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

On the other hand, the Shillong Cantonment Board is a type of urban local body for ensuring civic amenities in cantonment areas (military areas). A Cantonment Board is a local government body responsible for managing military or para-military cantonments, providing services like water supply, waste management, public health, and education.²⁴⁵ Another form of urban local body that exist in Meghalaya is Town Panchayat. In India, Town Panchayats is the term used between a village and a city. It is a local body responsible for administering small towns with less than 10,000 population, providing basic services like water supply, waste management, and public health.²⁴⁶

4.8.1 Shillong Municipal Board

The Shillong Municipal Board (SMB) was established by the Meghalaya Municipal Act 1973. The SMB is responsible to execute the provision of civic services and city management. The main objective of the SMB is to provide health, efficient and quality basic services to all citizens. It aims to provide a congenial environment, to bridge the gap between the have and the have nots and ensuring a modern living standard. The mission/vision of the SMB includes the following: -

- i) hygienic services
- ii) regulation of trading licence, hoardings, kiosks
- iii) registration of birth and death
- iv) facilitating upgradation of the means of livelihood and living standards of the urban poor
- v) wholesome and efficient service to all tax payers.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ Directorate General Defence Estates, Ministry of Defence, Govt. of India. *Cantonments*. <https://dgde.gov.in/cantonments/>. Accessed on 27th November, 2024.

²⁴⁶ Local Body Data, Urban Local Bodies of Meghalaya, *op.cit.*

²⁴⁷ Shillong Municipal Board. *Home: About us*. [https://smb.gov.in/index.html#b about](https://smb.gov.in/index.html#b%20about). Accessed on 27th November, 2024.

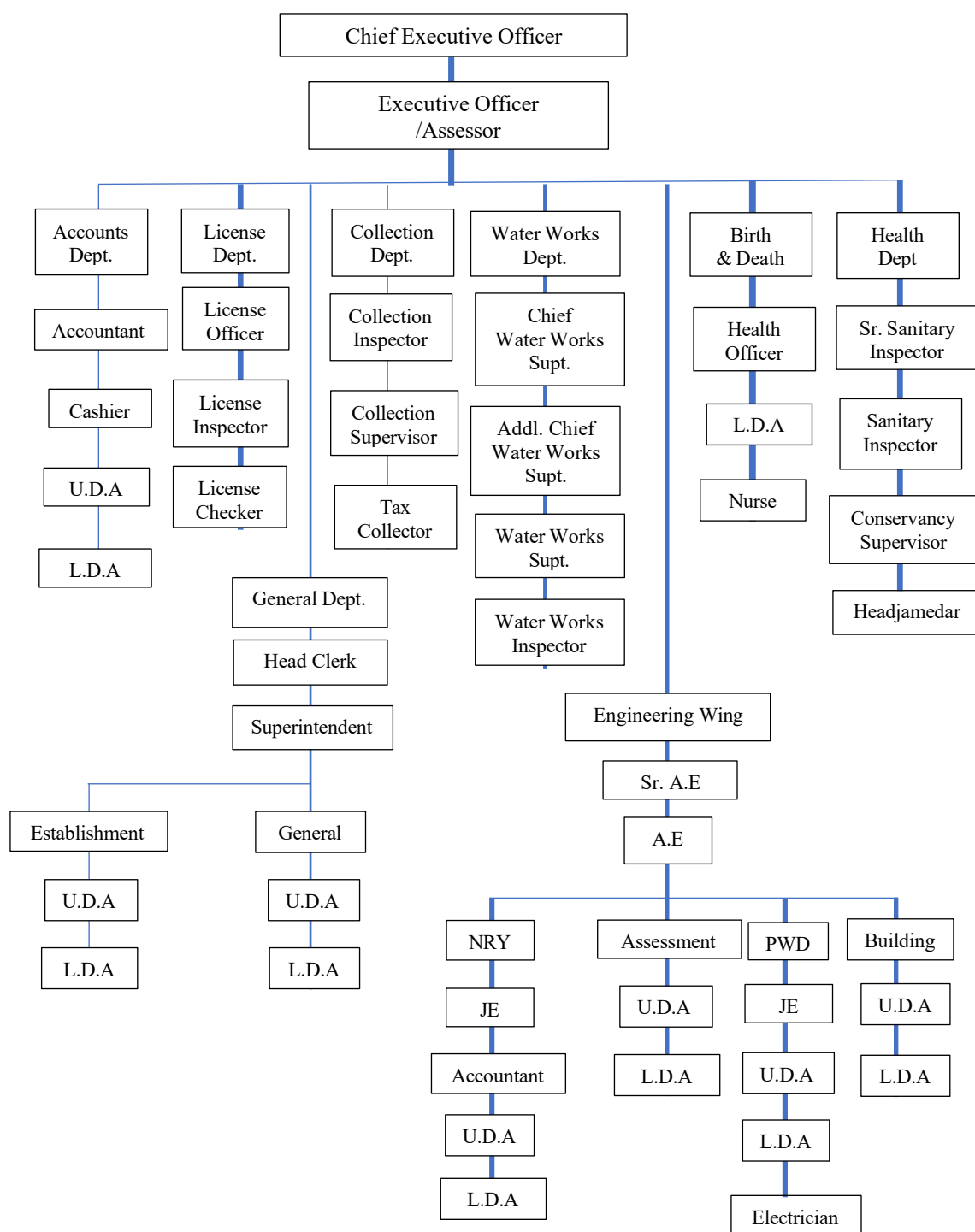
Organizational Structure

The SMB is not a democratic body. It does not have any elected representatives. All the officials of the SMB are government officials. The government appoints administrative and technical officials to run the SMB. It is headed by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who is assisted by Executive Officer/Assessor. The CEO manage and supervise the following departments—(i) general administration (including establishment), (ii) licence, (iii) collection, (iv) accounts, (v) public works, (vi) water works, (vii) births & deaths, (viii) health & conservancy, (ix) Urban Poverty Alleviation cell (UPA) & Nehru Rozgar Yojana (NRY), (x) assessment, and (xi) building.²⁴⁸

The organizational structure of the Shillong Municipal Board (SMB) is given below: -

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Fig. 4.4: Organizational Chart of Shillong Municipal Board



Source: Shillong Municipal Board.

<https://smb.gov.in/index.php/content/index/organisation-chart>

Besides, the SMB has multiple agencies involved in development of urban infrastructure and service delivery. The important line departments for SMB includes—Urban Affairs Department (UAD), Meghalaya Urban Development Authority (MUDA), Meghalaya Urban Development Agency, Public Health Engineering Department (PHED), Public Works Department (PWD), Meghalaya Electricity Corporation Ltd (MeECL), Housing Department, Meghalaya Housing Board, Khasi Hills District Council (KHADC) and the Traditional Institutions. The SMB along with the line departments deliver the urban infrastructure and services in Shillong Municipal Town.²⁴⁹

Functions of the SMB

The Shillong Municipal Board (SMB) has the following functions for the people. The main activities of the SMB can be broadly categorized into two—basic services and other services.

1) Basic services: The basic services include-

- a) solid waste and sanitation management
- b) Maintenance and management of water supply
- c) street lighting

2) Other services: The other services can be classified under the following points-

- a) maintenance and management of municipal markets, stalls, public utilities
- b) regulation of hygienic conditions of food stalls, restaurants, hotels, milk supply, etc
- c) provision of parking space
- d) maintenance of footpaths, lanes, by-lanes, drainage system, public toilets

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

e) improving living standard of urban poor through various components of Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY) and National Slum Development Programme (NSDP).²⁵⁰

4.8.2 Working of the Shillong Municipal Board

As stated above, the SMB did not have an elected representatives like municipalities in other state. In other words, SMB is not a democratic body. There are various factors for it. One of the main reasons is that the Khasi people did not support the elected representatives in the SMB. According to Pi Linda Chhakchhuak, there is not an attempt to convert the SMB into an elected representative body. She said that the Khasi people believed that if the SMB is made an elected body, the various traditional institutions in the state will become irrelevant and insignificant.²⁵¹ Attempts were made to conduct elections in the civic body in Shillong. The first attempt in 1967 (during the composite state of Assam) failed because of opposition from local pressure groups and village headmen. They argued that additional bodies like Municipality and Panchayati Raj have no relevance in the Sixth Schedule area.

The second attempt was when the Supreme Court passed the verdict to hold mandatory elections in 2000 as petition was filed by Non-Tribal Youths Union. The state government issued notification to hold municipal elections but only one person Ananta Dey (Shillong based-businessman) filed the nomination. However, the election cannot be conducted as he was shot dead by suspected HNLC²⁵² militants in November, 2000. The third attempt was in 2010 when the state Cabinet amended the Meghalaya Municipal (Amendment) Act, 2000 to conduct municipal elections. However, elections were not conducted as the authorities considered the situation unsuitable for conducting free, fair and peaceful elections.²⁵³ Mrs. Patricia Mukhim said that the SMB is different as compared to municipality in other states as there are no elected representatives. She said that the SMB covers a small portion of Shillong

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ Linda Chhakchhuak, *op.cit.*

²⁵² Hynniewtre National Liberation Council (HNLC) is a militant group operating in Meghalaya.

²⁵³ Hope for Meghalaya Municipal Elections. *The Telegraph*. Dated: 14th June, 2010.
<https://www.telegraphindia.com/north-east/hope-for-meghalaya-municipal-elections/cid/513245>.
Accessed on 7th July, 2025.

city and they did not have meaningful impact in the civic administration. Besides, the main agenda of SMB is ensuring cleanliness. However, even in cleanliness, they cannot do much because they are not empowered as compared to other municipalities.²⁵⁴

The SMB did not cover the entire city of Shillong. According to Mr. F.B. Chyne, at present there are 38 localities which are under the SMB jurisdiction. The 38 localities under SMB are divided into 27 wards for administrative convenience. He further said that there is a cordial relation between the SMB and the localities under SMB. He mentioned that there is a direct link between the village headmen and the SMB as the village durbar are important for implementing various schemes and programmes.²⁵⁵ According to Mrs. D.G. Majaw, the SMB functions under the state government. The Urban Affairs Department is the nodal department for SMB. The fund of the SMB is provided by the state government. The KHADC did not have direct administration or interfere in the working of SMB.²⁵⁶

The basic services of the SMB are solid waste and sanitation management, maintenance and management of water supply, and street lighting. The SMB aims to develop and maintain proper sanitation all across the city and launch a special drive for cleanliness. It also supports the localities and non-Municipal localities by providing labours, transport and material things.²⁵⁷ With regard to solid waste and sanitation management, the SMB collects the garbage from their administered area. According to Fidiarity Kharumnuid, the SMB had done a good job in waste management in their area (Laitumkhrah). She said that in the Municipal area, the garbage fees are included in the property tax (around Rs. 3000 annually) paid to the SMB by the people.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴ Patricia Mukhim, *op.cit.*

²⁵⁵ The scholar interviewed F.B. Chyne (Executive Engineer, SMB) on 19th December, 2022 at SMB Office, Shillong.

²⁵⁶ The scholar interviewed D.G. Majaw (Head Clerk, SMB) on 19th December, 2022 at SMB Office, Shillong.

²⁵⁷ Shillong Municipal Board, *op.cit.*

²⁵⁸ The scholar conducts telephonic interviewed with Fidiarity Kharumnuid (Research Scholar in Dept. of Political Science, Tripura University) on 8th July, 2025, 11:30 a.m.

According to Unichia Sawkmie (resident of Cleve Colony), the waste is collected thrice a day in their locality.²⁵⁹

The SMB is also responsible for water distribution to all the people within their area. They shall ensure undisturbed supply of water to the consumers, repair and maintain the distribution system.²⁶⁰ According to Fidiarity Kharumnuid, the SMB maintain the records relating to water supply while they paid the bill to the state Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department. Whereas, the non-Municipal areas used to pay their water bill to through village durbar. Besides, the SMB also took initiative in urban development such as installation and repair of street lighting; construction of footpath, retaining walls, drainage system, public toilets etc. They also work for the smooth functioning of traffic flow and safety of pedestrians with the concern authority.²⁶¹

The SMB has collection department which is the backbone of the Municipal Board. The assessment department under SMB calculates taxes and the collection department prepares taxes. The SMB collects taxes on house, sanitation, water, electricity, etc. They are also responsible for issuance of licence to shops and traders and the maintenance of municipal markets, stalls, public utilities, parking lots, hoardings, etc.²⁶² According to Fidiarity, the SMB looks after the local market and stall in their areas. Even though Bara Bazar is under the SMB area, the royalty of the market belongs to the Hima Myllem.²⁶³ They also undertake the responsibility of eviction drive as when necessary arise.²⁶⁴ Recently (on 30th June, 2025) the SMB notification on eviction drive in the city's commercial hub Khyndailad boil tension between the hawkers and the SMB authority.²⁶⁵ Earlier, the SMB used to control the building regulations in Shillong. According to Mrs. DG Majaw (Head Clerk of the SMB), the building regulations used to be implemented by the SMB in earlier days.

²⁵⁹ Unichia Sawkmie, *op.cit.*

²⁶⁰ Shillong Municipal Board, *op.cit.*

²⁶¹ Fidiarity Kharumnuid, *op.cit.*

²⁶² Shillong Municipal Board, *op.cit.*

²⁶³ Fidiarity Kharumnuid, *op.cit.*

²⁶⁴ Shillong Municipal Board, *op.cit.*

²⁶⁵ Tensions boil over during SMB eviction drive of hawkers. *Highland Post*. Dated: 1st July, 2025. <https://highlandpost.com/tensions-boil-over-during-smb-eviction-drive-of-hawkers/>. Accessed on 8th July, 2025.

However, the building regulations in Shillong is now under the supervision of Meghalaya Urban Development Authority (MUDA).²⁶⁶

Mr. Rishot Shanpru praised the work done by SMB. He said that the SMB had done a commendable work by looking their activities. However, there is a room for improvement in waste management so that frequent garbage collection can be done by them.²⁶⁷ Mr. W.J. Nongrum argues that sometimes it led to confusion as the ADC and traditional head (*syiem*) had different functions over the area.²⁶⁸ On the other hand, Ms. Unichia Sawkmie and Mrs. D. Sawkmie (both resident of Cleve Colony) argued that the SMB did not do any commendable job. They are not elected body and are not empowered as compared to other Municipal in different states. They said that the SMB just collects taxes and they function for namesake only.²⁶⁹ While Mr. Vanlalroa Thangluah said that even in non-Municipal areas, the ADC executes waste management through village durbar. Besides, the local MDC and MLA also contribute to the overall development of their constituencies.²⁷⁰

The SMB faces several challenges and shortcoming in its functioning. Mrs. D.G. Majaw said that the main problem is limitation of funds. The SMB heavily relies on the state government. Besides, there is shortage of manpower and other resources which are necessary for the working of SMB.²⁷¹ In addition, Mr. F.B. Chyne argues that more funds as well as more human resource is required in the SMB for its smooth functioning. He further said that administrative reform is necessary and allocation of works need to be upgraded to meet the needs and expectation of the people. He argues that the employees in SMB need to engage in training and capacity building especially in information and technology in the modern era. At the same time, the SMB should enable digital payment of property tax, sanitation tax, water tax, etc. to make convenience for the people.²⁷²

²⁶⁶ DG Majaw, *op.cit.*

²⁶⁷ Rishot Shanpru, *op.cit.*

²⁶⁸ W.J. Nongrum, *op.cit.*

²⁶⁹ Unichia Sawkmie, M. Sawkmie, *op.cit.*

²⁷⁰ The scholar interviewed Vanlalroa Thangluah (Receptionist, Shillong Mizoram House who is born and raised in Shillong) on 14th December, 2022 at Mizoram House, Shillong.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² F.B. Chyne, *op.cit.*

In addition, there is always a power tussle between the SMB and the traditional institutions along with the KHADC. According to Pi Linda Chhakchhuak, the Govt. of India has been trying to implement the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act by expanding the area of SMB to formulate the Greater Shillong Masterplan. However, it was vehemently opposed by the local people as elections cannot take place in the SMB. She said the main reason is that the non-tribals had out-numbered the locals in the electoral list in the Municipal areas. All the residents are eligible to vote in the Municipality. Therefore, the locals do not want the expansion of the SMB as the village durbar already exists. So, the SMB is actually run by the state government officials.²⁷³ Sanbor Tynsong also shared the same view. According to him, sometimes there is a clash especially when it comes to those areas which fall under municipal areas and also areas under the *syiem* (traditional head).²⁷⁴ Fidiriaty Kharumnuid and Vanlalroa Thangluah also shared the same opinion. They argued that the traditional institutions (village durbar) and the people vehemently opposed the proposal of SMB to become an elected body. Besides, the KSU and the HNLC strongly resist the initiation of elections in SMB.²⁷⁵

The above studies show there are similarities as well as difference between the local government in Mizoram and Meghalaya. In the context of urban local bodies, both states have Municipalities for civic management in urban areas. The main difference is that the Aizawl Municipal Corporation has elected body while Shillong Municipal Board is non-elected body and is administered by government officials. In rural local bodies, both states are exempted from the implementation of Panchayati Raj system. Therefore, Mizoram introduced village council system as the lowest form of government at the village level succeeding the traditional chieftainship since 1954. The village council is democratic body as people elect their representatives. Whereas in Meghalaya, the traditional institutions such as *Syiemships*, *Doloiships*, *Nokmanships* and durbars functions under the three Autonomous District Councils (ADCs). However, the traditional institutions are semi-democratic as some of them are

²⁷³ Linda Chhakchhuak, *op.cit.*

²⁷⁴ The scholar conducts telephonic interviewed with Sanbor Tynsong (Faculty in Shillong College) on 8th July, 2025 (8:30 p.m.).

²⁷⁵ Fidiriaty Kharumnuid, Vanlalroa Thangluah, *op.cit.*

hereditary. Besides, there are some places (village durbar) where women are not allowed to participate in the elections. It means that universal adult franchise is not practised in the local body. In the context of ADCs, there are three ADCs each in both states. Both ADCs are established under Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India for the administration of tribal areas. All the ADCs are elected democratically for the protection of the tribal communities and their land. While the main difference is that the ADCs under Meghalaya covers the entire state (except Municipalities and Cantonment Board) while the ADCs under Mizoram covers only two revenue districts (Lawngtlai and Siaha).

Chapter-V

Working of Democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya: A Comparative Study

The fifth chapter compares the political parties, elections and local democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya. There are various political parties (both national and state level parties) functioning in these two states. In Mizoram, there are four parties [two each from the national—the BJP and Congress (I)—and state parties—the MNF and ZPM], which dominate the politics of the state. Actually, only three parties [Congress (I), MNF and ZPM] ruled the state of Mizoram in the post statehood era. Whereas, in Meghalaya no party forms a government of its own. All the governments formed in Meghalaya are coalition in nature during the same time. Generally, all the elections in Meghalaya were contested individually by various political parties. In other words, there was no pre-poll alliance during the elections but entered into post-poll alliances to form government in Meghalaya. In Mizoram, elections are comparatively free and fair compared to other states due to the participation of civil society organization supported by the churches. Civil society organizations are actively participated in the elections of Mizoram. The civil society participated in all the elections including the local body elections. Whereas, in Meghalaya, the role of the civil societies is very less and insignificant. The local democracy in Mizoram is more democratic than the local bodies functioning in Meghalaya. The details are discussed below.

5.1 Political Parties in Mizoram and Meghalaya

There are different political parties in Mizoram and Meghalaya. Almost all the national parties exist in both the states. But the Indian National Congress (INC) and regional parties dominate the electoral politics of the states. In the context of Mizoram, the political parties that are active in the state are—the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Indian National Congress (INC), the Mizo National Front (MNF) and the Zoram Peoples Movement (ZPM). While in Meghalaya, the political parties that are active in the state are—the BJP, the INC, the National Peoples Party (NPP) and the United Democratic Party (UDP).

5.1.1 Origin of Political Party

Before the establishment of political party, social organizations came into existence in both the states. In Mizoram, the first ethnic based social organization—Young Lushai Association (later changed to Young Mizo Association) was set up in 1935. The formation of political organizations came only in the mid 1940's in Mizoram. The first political party namely, the Mizo Common People Union (later on Mizo Union) was formed on April 9, 1946 in the Lushai Hills.¹ Whereas, in Meghalaya, before the formation of political parties, different socio-cultural organisations were established in the state. For instance, the Jaintia Durbar (the oldest organisation in the North East), the Khasi National Durbar (KND) and the Garo National Conference (GNC) were formed in 1900, 1923 and 1945 respectively.²

Later, all the three organizations engaged in more political activities and even contested the elections. The GNC was later converted into a political party and they fought the Assembly election for the first time in 1998.³ However, the first regional political party in the state namely the All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) was formed in the year 1960. Before the formation of APHLC, a political party known as the Eastern Indian Tribal Union (EITU) was formed in the Lushai Hills in 1957. The EITU was used as a political platform of the hill districts to pressurize the demand for statehood.⁴ It can be noted here that a political party in Mizoram was formed in the pre-independence era. While, in the context of Meghalaya, political organizations came into exists in the post-independence period.

5.1.2 Constitution of Political Party

The political parties in Mizoram shared some common characteristics in their constitution. For instance, the common principles of political parties in Mizoram

¹ P. Lalnithanga. (2006). *Political Development in Mizoram*. Author: Aizawl. p.14.

² V. Venkata Rao, Barrister Pakem & Niru Hazarika. (1987). *A Century of Government and Politics in North East India, Volume II-Meghalaya*. New Delhi: S. Chand & Company (Pvt) Ltd. p.189-191.

³ Kailash Chandra Das. *Assembly Elections in Meghalaya: A Historical Insight*. IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science. Vol. 20, Issue. 6 (June, 2015). pp.82-91.
<https://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol20-issue6/Version-5/L020658291.pdf>. Accessed on 5th June, 2025.

⁴ K.M. Zakhuma. (2001). *Political Development in Mizoram from 1946 to 1989: A study with special reference to Political Parties in Mizoram*. Aizawl: Zakhuma. p.81.

include—democracy, secularism, socialism, unity and integrity of the country. Besides, they (except BJP) promised to safeguard and promote the customs and tradition of different Mizo tribes and work for the benefits of the son of the soil. In addition, all the political parties (except-BJP) attempted to work for the re-unification of Mizo who resides in different places under one administrative umbrella.

Similarly, political parties in Meghalaya also have common features in their constitution. Like Mizoram, the political parties in Meghalaya (except UDP) also shared common principles such as—democracy, secularism, socialism, unity and integrity of the country. Besides, they did not have common characteristics. It means that the issue of unification movement, protecting the custom and tradition of indigenous tribes as advocated by political parties in Mizoram are not found in the constitution of political parties in Meghalaya.

5.1.3 Organizational Structure of Political Party

There are similarities as well as difference in the organizational structure of political parties in Mizoram. The General Assembly is the apex body in the hierarchical structure of political parties in Mizoram (except BJP). It means that the General Assembly is the highest decision body of the political parties in Mizoram. The common organizational structure includes Executive Committee, Elected Office Bearer, District Committee, Block Committee, Group Committee and Unit Committee. Besides, they have frontal organizations of youth, women and elders. Moreover, some of the common cell/committee/ departments are—election, media & publicity, legal, vigilance, policy & research, kisan (farmer), etc.

In the context of Meghalaya, there are similarities as well as difference in the organizational structure of political parties. For instance, the General Assembly or General Body is the highest decision making body of the political parties (except BJP). The hierarchical structure of parties includes—Central Executive Committee, State Executive Committee, District Executive Committee, Block (Circle) Executive Committee, Polling Station (Primary Unit) Committee. However, the hierarchical structure differs from party to party. Political parties in Meghalaya have frontal organizations such as youth and women wing. Besides, different parties have

cells/committees/departments such as—media, communication, legal, manifesto, election, farmer, minority, etc.

It can be noted that the General Assembly is the highest decision-making body in all the parties. Sometimes, it is difficult to convene General Assembly even once in a year as it involves a large number of party workers and leaders throughout the state. Therefore, each constitution authorised the next committee/body in a party to make decision in the party. Normally, a majority of the decision is taken by these committees in both states. Moreover, the national as well as regional parties in both states have women and youth frontal organizations. Further, the parties in both states have established different committees or department to strengthen the functioning of their party.

5.1.4 Functioning of Political Party

In the context of Mizoram, political parties are well disciplined as compared to other states. For example, political stability is there in every Ministry except the first MNF Ministry led by Laldenga. It means that parties can complete their tenure without changing their leaders. According to Adam Saprinsanga, the political parties in Mizoram are well disciplined and well organized with compared to other states.⁵ Every political party has internal and external challenges. They argued that external challenges are manageable as parties have different opinions and policies. While internal challenges are also part of every organization.⁶ The internal challenges are to be resolved by the party leaders as unsolved problems can hinder the functioning of the party.⁷

On the other hand, there are more regional and national parties functioning in Meghalaya. According to T.T. Haokip⁸ and H. Srikanth,⁹ Meghalaya is the birth place

⁵ The scholar interviewed Adam Saprinsanga Halliday (Editor, Frontier Despatch) on 24th September, 2024 in his residence at Chaltlang, Aizawl.

⁶ The scholar interviewed Vanlalthmuaka (BJP President, Mizoram) on 5th July, 2024.

⁷ The scholar interviewed Lallianchunga (Faculty, Mizoram University & General Secretary, Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee) on 11th November, 2024 in his office chamber at Mizoram University.

⁸ The scholar interviewed T.T. Haokip (Professor in NEHU) on 5th June, 2024 in his office chamber at NEHU, Shillong.

⁹ The scholar interviewed H. Srikanth (Professor in NEHU) on 5th June, 2024 at NEHU, Shillong.

of regional political parties. Different regional parties in the state emerged due to personal aspirations in politics. According to Sushmita Sengupta, the regional parties do not have much different agendas, but they cannot be unified among themselves.¹⁰ Political parties in Meghalaya also experienced internal and external challenges. According to Conrad Sangma, every political party is having internal as well as external challenges. However, it is important for the leaders to address the challenges by understanding the sentiments of the people as well as party workers.¹¹

The functioning of political parties as a ruling and opposition party is different. Political party is more active when they are ruling the state than as an opposition party. Besides, the ruling party usually has more competitors in party elections as compared to opposition party. Furthermore, political party leaders in both states agreed that every political party is facing internal as well as external problems. It can be mentioned that criticizing the activities of ruling party on the ground of governance, economic issue, political issue, etc. are part of external challenges. It did not hamper the functioning of the parties as it created unity to fight against the opposition parties. While, the internal challenges such as leadership crisis, competing for candidature in elections, etc. hampers the functioning of political parties. Besides, it is an arduous task for leaders to combat the internal challenges as it can lead to disunity and division within the party.

5.1.5 Party Leadership

There are similarities in the functioning of political party and their leadership in Mizoram. In Mizoram, almost all political party leaders (except BJP) enjoyed their leadership for a longer period of time. For instance, the INC leader Lal Thanhawla had been serving as the Congress President in Mizoram for nearly five decades (1973-2021).¹² Similarly, the MNF President Pu Zoramthanga has been serving as President

¹⁰ The scholar interviewed Sushmita Sengupta (Professor in NEHU) on 5th June, 2024 in her office chamber at NEHU, Shillong.

¹¹ The scholar interviewed Conrad Sangma (National President, NPP and Chief Minister of Meghalaya) on 6th June, 2024 at Chief Minister's Bungalow, Shillong.

¹² Tora Agarwala. Former Mizoram CM Lal Thanhawla to retire as state Congress chief after five decades. *The Indian Express*. Dated: 15th November, 2021. <https://indianexpress.com/article/north-east-india/mizoram/mizoram-lal-thanhawla-retire-politics-7622768/>. Accessed on 19th July, 2025.

since 1990 (35 years) after the death of the founder President Laldenga.¹³ In the same way, the incumbent Chief Minister Pu Lalduhoma had been the President of Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) since 2000 till the merger of the ZNP into new political alliance, i.e. the Zoram Peoples Movement (ZPM) in 2017. While the BJP leaders do not hold leadership position for two or three terms as compared to other party leaders. As a result, the party had nine Presidents since 1996 as the party constitution did not allow for an individual to hold the position for three/four terms.¹⁴

Whereas in Meghalaya, individual leaders did not dominate political parties as compared to Mizoram. For instance, the INC had five President since 2005. This shows that the Congress party in Meghalaya is not dominated by a single leader. Similarly, the other national party—the BJP follows the change of leadership for every three years. According to David Kharsati, the tenure of the BJP leadership is three years. After the expiry of the term, the party conducted election or re-appointed leaders after three years.¹⁵ While the case of UDP and NPP is different from the INC and the BJP. The UDP since its inception in 1997 had only three Presidents (EK Mawlong, Dr. Donkumar Roy and Metbah Lyngdoh). The party changed their President only after their leader passed away.¹⁶ Similarly, the NPP also had only two President since its inception in 2013. The incumbent President Conrad Sangma replaced his father P.A. Sangma after the latter demise in 2016.¹⁷

5.1.6 Inner Democracy of Political Party

Political parties in Mizoram and Meghalaya claim that they have inner democracy. They argue that elections are held as per the constitution of the party. However, the party constitution also permits that leaders can be appointed at various

¹³ Zoramthanga to continue as MNF President. *The Print*. Dated: 4th March, 2024. <https://theprint.in/india/zoramthanga-to-continue-as-mnf-president/1988342/>. Accessed on 19th July, 2025.

¹⁴ The scholar interviewed C. Lalneihkimi (Office Assistant in Mizoram BJP Office since 1993) on 19th September, 2024 at State BJP Headquarters, Aizawl.

¹⁵ The scholar interviewed David Kharsati (BJP National Council Member, Meghalaya) on 31st May, 2024 at State BJP Headquarters, Shillong.

¹⁶ UDP to decide on new leader next week. *Syllad*. Dated: 1st August, 2019. <https://www.syllad.com/udp-to-decide-on-new-leader-next-week/>. Accessed on 19th July, 2025.

¹⁷ Rining Lyngdoh. Conrad comes into his own. *The Telegraph*. Dated: 7th March, 2018. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/north-east/conrad-comes-into-his-own/cid/1443649>. Accessed on 19th July, 2025.

levels of organization. Therefore, parties normally extend the incumbent term instead of conducting elections especially on the election year. Besides, instead of having elections, the party decision makers used to make party official candidates to avoid infighting within the party.

Meanwhile, people think that there is no inner democracy inside the party. For example, Adam Sapirinsanga Halliday argues that political parties in Mizoram do not have inner democracy in the strict sense because the same leader used to dominate the party for long period of time. Further, no party wants to conduct elections by having a strong contender within the party. Therefore, a party usually appoints leaders instead of contesting among the leaders at various levels.¹⁸ Lallianchhunga also shared the same view. According to him, the biggest challenges in party administration is absence of democracy. He said that party leaders try to stabilize their leadership as they control the party organization. Even though elections are conducted, it is very difficult to change leaders as they have strong supporters at different level of organization.¹⁹ According to H.C. Vanlalruata, political parties conduct elections only as formalities and convention. He argued that internal democracy is very difficult to practise inside the party as party leaders seeks to stabilize their leadership tenure for longer period.²⁰

In the context of Meghalaya, different sections of the people (the civil society leaders, academicians and journalists) expressed that there is no inner democracy in the political parties. According to Donald V. Thabah, the existence of strong regional party led to infighting within the party for party leadership. As a result, there are no hard elections in the state as party leaders switched their side from one party to another.²¹ According to Patricia Mukhim, that there is no hard election within the party as appointing leaders are common in the state.²² Batskhem Myrbuh also shared the

¹⁸Adam Sapirinsanga Halliday, *op.cit.*

¹⁹ The scholar interviewed Lallianchhunga (Faculty, Mizoram University & General Secretary, Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee) on 11th November, 2024 at Mizoram University

²⁰ The scholar interviewed H.C. Vanlalruata (Correspondent in the Times of India) on 25th September, 2024 in his residence at Salen Veng, Aizawl.

²¹ The scholar interviewed Donald V. Thabah (General Secretary, Khasi Students Union) on 1st June, 2024 at Khasi Students Union Office, Shillong.

²² The scholar interviewed Patricia Mukhim (Editor, Shillong Times) on 1st June, 2024 in her residence at Shillong.

same view. According to him, some political parties used to conduct elections. But appointing leaders is very common among political parties in the state.²³ According to Linda Chhakchhuak, political parties usually do not have regular elections. Instead, leaders are mostly appointed at different levels of party organizations.²⁴

5.2 Elections in Mizoram and Meghalaya

Mizoram and Meghalaya were initially parts of the undivided Assam before forming separate states. Mizoram attained statehood in the year 1987 while Meghalaya was upgraded to full-fledged state in 1972. In the post-statehood period, Mizoram experienced nine Assembly elections while Meghalaya experienced eleven Assembly elections. The study is limited to the last two Assembly elections held in the year 2018 and 2023 respectively. Also, it compares the elections in Mizoram and Meghalaya on the themes of—role of civil society in elections, election manifestos, election campaign, Assembly elections in 2018 and 2023. It also finds out the similarities as well as difference in elections between the two states.

5.2.1 Role of Civil Society in Elections

Elections in Mizoram are unique as compared to other states due to the participation of churches and civil society organizations. For example, the role of the Mizoram People Forum (MPF) is significant in the state. It is the largest forum formed by different churches and civil society leaders for ensuring clean, free and fair elections in the state. The role played by the MPF in elections includes—signing of *Thawhhona Thuthlung* (agreement between political parties and MPF) containing—expenditure of candidates, election campaigns, regulations on house-to-house campaign and common platform. On the polling day, it volunteers to monitor the election process, helping the election officials, assisting the old and disabled and the voters by giving voters slip to cast their votes easily.²⁵

²³ The scholar interviewed Batskhem Myrbuh (Founding Member of VPP & Faculty in NEHU) on 5th June, 2024 in his office chamber at NEHU, Shillong.

²⁴ The scholar interviewed Linda Chhakchhuak (freelance journalist, born and raised in Shillong) on 3rd June, 2024 at Malki Cafe, Shillong.

²⁵ The scholar interviewed Rev. Lalramliana Pachuau (General Secretary, MPF Gen. Hqrs) on 25th October, 2024 at MPF Office, Aizawl.

There are many supporters of the MPF while there are people who think that MPF should not participate in elections. The supporters of MPF argue that electoral malpractices such as buying and selling of votes and poll violence reduced in the state due to the involvement of MPF.²⁶ While others argued that the ECI outline Model Code of Conduct (MCC) to be implemented throughout the country and it is not correct to have separate guidelines in the form of agreement.²⁷ According to Lianhleia, the MPF cannot take legal actions against the violators. Besides, the MPF is not effective throughout the state as there are several churches and organization who did not want to join the MPF especially the Baptist Church of Mizoram.²⁸

Whereas in Meghalaya, the civil society organization or the churches do not participate much in the election as compared to Mizoram. One of the main reasons for the non-involvement of civil society is that Meghalaya is inhabited by three major tribes (Jaintia, Khasi, Garo). They have their own regional interest and there is no strong civil society organization which can represent the interest of the state. Party leaders, academicians, journalists and civil society organization leaders argued that the church does not directly participate in the elections. Instead, they appeal to their members to offer prayers so as to choose wisely and for ensuring free and fair elections. It means civil society does not get involved in the electoral process of Meghalaya. According to Linda Chhakchhuak, churches do not directly participate themselves in the elections. However, sometimes, they have hidden agendas so that their members or their followers can be elected.²⁹

The civil society does not directly (or indirectly) participate in the elections. According to David Kharsati, the civil society did not directly participate in the elections. However, they have a hidden agenda and they tried to influence or mobilize their people so that their purpose can be delivered.³⁰ Besides the civil society, the traditional institution in the state such as village durbar also played a significant role.

²⁶ The scholar interviewed Malsawmliana (General Secretary, Central YMA and Professor, Govt. T. Romana College on 24th September, 2024 at Govt. T. Romana College, Aizawl.

²⁷ H.C. Vanlalruata, *op.cit.*

²⁸ The scholar interviewed Lianhleia (Vice Chairman, Communication Dept, MPCC) on 23rd September, 2024 at Congress Bhavan, Aizawl.

²⁹ Linda Chhakchhuak, *op.cit.*

³⁰ David Kharsati, *op.cit.*

According to Paul Lyngdoh, the village durbar played a crucial role in influencing the people as the administration and management of locality largely depends on the village durbar.³¹ Ardent Miller Basaiawmoit also shared the same view regarding the participation of church and civil society in elections. While, he has different opinion with regards to the village durbar. He argues that the village durbar officials do not have direct influence in elections as they are non-political body to look after a particular locality.³²

5.2.2 Election Manifesto

In Mizoram, political parties fought the elections on the party flagship programme which differ from time to time. The flagship programme or policies were popularized during the election campaign. It can be argued that the voters focus particularly on the flagship programme than the manifesto during elections. The main reason is that political parties try to attract or woo the voters through their flagship programme. Whereas in Meghalaya, it can be argued that Meghalaya Assembly elections did not witness contesting the election on party's flagship programme. In other words, it is very rare to find the initiation or implementation of flagship programme of a party.

In the context of Mizoram, the party flagship programmes in Mizoram are land-based programmes and mainly focus on agricultural workers and rural poor. For instance, Garden Colony under People's Conference Ministry; Land Use Policy or New Land Use Policy under Congress Ministry;³³ Jhum Control Policy, *Mizoram Intodelhna Project* (project for self-sufficiency)³⁴ and Socio-Economic Development Policy³⁵ under MNF Ministry. Likewise, the present ZPM Ministry announced 'Hand

³¹ The scholar interviewed Paul Lyngdoh (Working President, UDP and Minister during the interviewed period) on 5th June, 2024 at Minister's Chamber, Shillong.

³² The scholar interviewed Ardent Miller Basaiawmoit (VPP President and MLA from Nongkrem A/C) on 6th June, 2024 in his residence at Shillong.

³³ James L.T. Thanga. *Land Use Policies in the state of Mizoram*. Journal of Economic & Social Development, Vol. - XVI, No. 1 & 2, (December, 2020). pp.55-65.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351969786_. Accessed on 15th October, 2024.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Mizo National Front. *MLA Election Manifesto 2018*. Aizawl: Media & Publicity Department, MNF General Headquarters.

Holding Policy’ as its flagship programme.³⁶ The policies and programmes initiated by the state governments are co-terminus and are short-lived. It also faced financial constraint in implementing policies as the state government heavily relies on the funding of the central government. The civil society leaders, academicians and journalists are of the opinion that the various flagship programmes initiated in Mizoram are not satisfactory as they can be regarded as ‘populist policy’ to attract the voters. People (Malsawmliana, Chinkhanmanga Thomte,³⁷ Adam Sapirinsanga Halliday, HC Vanlalruata) believed that all the flagship programmes did not contribute much in the socio-economic development of the state till date.

Whereas in Meghalaya, even though political parties have written their aims and objectives in their own manifesto, it is difficult to implement a single party flagship programme as Meghalaya has always experienced a fractured mandate. As a result, different political parties formed a coalition government. The coalition partner in the government framed a ‘common minimum programme’ to be implemented during their term. Therefore, it is not possible to implement one flagship programme due to coalition government.

Coming to the effectiveness of election manifesto, party leaders, civil society leaders, academicians and journalists in both states shared different opinion. In the context of Mizoram, the supporters of election manifesto argued that the voters give their mandate on the basis of their promise and commitment which are outlined in their manifesto. Zodintluanga Ralte,³⁸ F. Lalnunmawia,³⁹ Tawnluia⁴⁰ and K. Sapdanga⁴¹ shared the same view. According to HC Vanlalruata, the basic issues of party manifestos are more or less the same. The people give their mandate based on the party

³⁶ Zoram People’s Movement. *The Manifestos of the Zoram People’s Movement*. Aizawl: The Zoram People’s Movement General Headquarters.

³⁷ The scholar interviewed Chinkhanmanga Thomte [General Secretary, Mizo Zirlai Pawl (Mizo Students Association)] on 23rd September, 2024 in MZP Office at Aizawl.

³⁸ The scholar interviewed Zodintluanga Ralte (ex-Congress Minister who represent Thorang A/C from 2003-2023) on 18th April, 2023 in his residence at Durtlang, Aizawl.

³⁹ The scholar interviewed F. Lalnunmawia (ex-MNF MLA & Professor in Mizoram University) on 19th April, 2023 in his residence at Chawnpui, Aizawl.

⁴⁰ The scholar interviewed Tawnluia (Sr. Vice President, MNF & Dy. Chief Minister during interviewed period) on 24th May, 2024 in his office chamber at New Secretariat Complex, Aizawl.

⁴¹ The scholar interviewed K. Sapdanga (Working President, ZPM during the interviewed period & present Home Minister) on 3rd February, 2023 at his residence in Aizawl Venglai, Aizawl.

they trusted to form the government.⁴² On the contrary, there are other group who opined that manifestos did not have impact in election as people didn't read the manifesto. Lal Thanzara,⁴³ Vanlalhlana,⁴⁴ Vanlalhmuaka, K. Beichhua,⁴⁵ Malsawmliana, Chinkhanmanga Thomte⁴⁶ and Adam Sapirinsanga Halliday shared the same view. According to Adam Sapirinsanga Halliday, the voters are not much aware of election manifestos. He said that the manifesto did not have impact in the elections if the anti-incumbency wave is strong.⁴⁷

In the context of Meghalaya, there are certain groups who believe that the people gave mandate by looking at the promises and objectives outlined in their manifesto. Metbah Lyngdoh,⁴⁸ Ms. Risha,⁴⁹ and Mr. James Lyngdoh⁵⁰ believed that election manifestos have impact in the election. They reiterated that the voters choose their representatives by reading their manifesto and their promises made for the people. While there are other groups who believed that election manifesto did not have meaningful impact in the state as the people did not read properly about the manifesto. Timothy D. Shira,⁵¹ Ampareen Lyngdoh,⁵² Ms. Lakyntiew Sohkhet,⁵³ A.L. Hek,⁵⁴ Sanjay Das⁵⁵ and David Kharsati⁵⁶ shared the same view. They argued that a majority

⁴² H.C. Vanlalruata, *op.cit.*

⁴³ The scholar interviewed Lal Thanzara (President, Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee) on 28th June, 2024 at his residence in Zarkawt, Aizawl.

⁴⁴ The scholar interviewed Vanlalhlana (Education Minister in ZPM Ministry & Faculty in Pachhunga University College) on 5th February, 2023 at his residence in Ramhlun North, Aizawl.

⁴⁵ The scholar interviewed K. Beichhua (BJP President & MLA, Mizoram) on 23rd September, 2024 at Legislators Home, Aizawl.

⁴⁶ Chinkhanmanga Thomte, *op.cit.*

⁴⁷ Adam Sapirinsanga Halliday, *op.cit.*

⁴⁸ The scholar interviewed Metbah Lyngdoh (UDP President & Assembly Speaker during the interviewed period) on 14th December, 2022 at Speaker's Chamber, Shillong.

⁴⁹ The scholar interviewed Ms. Risha (President, Women Wing in AITC) on 15th December, 2022 at AITC Office, Shillong.

⁵⁰ The scholar interviewed James Lyngdoh (Vice President, AITC) on 15th December, 2022 at AITC Office, Shillong.

⁵¹ The scholar interviewed Timothy D. Shira (MLA since 1978 & Dy. Speaker during the interviewed period) on 15th December, 2022 at Dy. Speaker's Chamber, Shillong.

⁵² The scholar interviewed Ampareen Lyngdoh (former Congress Minister & NPP Minister during the interviewed period) on 16th December, 2022 at her residence in Shillong.

⁵³ The scholar interviewed Ms. Lakyntiew (General Secretary, Meghalaya Pradesh Youth Congress) on 19th December, 2022 at Congress Bhavan, Shillong.

⁵⁴ The scholar interviewed A.L. Hek (MLA from Pynthorunkhrah A/C since 1998 & BJP Minister during the interviewed period) on 1st June, 2024 at his residence, Shillong.

⁵⁵ The scholar interviewed Sanjay Das (General Secretary, Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee) on 19th December, 2022 in Congress Bhava, Shillong.

⁵⁶ David Kharsati, *op.cit.*

of the population (nearly 90%) did not critically analyse or realise the importance of election manifesto in the election. Patricia Mukhim, Linda Chhakchhuak and Donald V. Thabab also expressed that people are fed up of manifestos and people do not read and remember manifesto as it lacks critical analysis.

5.2.3 Election Campaign

There are similarities as well as difference in the campaign strategies or issues addressed by political parties in both the states. The most common and conventional means of strategies such as house-to-house campaign, street campaign, public rally, distribution of pamphlets and manifesto's, etc. are found both in the states. Nowadays, campaigning through social media and other means of media became popular and influential in attracting the voters. Besides, the common electoral strategies that are found both in the states are below: -

Firstly, elections are fought on issue basis in both the state. However, the issues in both the states are not similar. In the context of Mizoram, the party mainly contest and win the elections on flagship programmes. Whereas in Meghalaya, the issue is addressed in the three level of elections (Lok Sabha, state Assembly and District Council) are diverse and had uniqueness in their own. The common issues include the border issues, demand for implementation of ILP, developmental issue, corruption issues, unemployment issue, security issue and good governance.

Secondly, the strategies and issues address in the rural and urban area are different. In the rural areas, the focus is on party wave as the rural areas heavily rely on the benefit of the ruling perks. It also focuses on rural economy, agricultural products, connectivity issue, etc. While in the urban areas, the main focus is on developmental agenda and candidates' personality. In the context of Meghalaya, door-to-door campaign is more effective in urban areas. In rural areas, door-to-door campaign is not possible and public rally or pocket meeting become popular.⁵⁷

Thirdly, the involvement of money power is found in both the states. In Mizoram, the elections in Mizoram are peaceful and the involvement of money power

⁵⁷ Metbah Lyngdoh, *op.cit.*

is very low as compared to other states. However, the use of money power is higher as compared to earlier days. K. Beichhua, Lallianchhunga and L.T. Kima Fanai⁵⁸ shared the same view. In Meghalaya, money power plays a big role in elections. There are some leaders who argued that the use of money power in the state is very low as compared to other North Eastern states.⁵⁹ Whereas, Patricia Mukhim argued that the involvement of money power is very high like in the case of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland. She said that money power attributed the most in winning the elections in Meghalaya.⁶⁰

Fourthly, religion (here Christianity in both states) also plays an important role in elections. As the majority of the people in the states belongs to the Christian community, church plays a significant role in winning the elections. In the context of Mizoram, for instance, the Presbyterian church⁶¹ strongly opposed the selling of liquor by the Congress Ministry (2013-2018). According to Congress leaders (Zodintluanga, C. Lalpianthanga⁶² and F. Lalmangaia⁶³), the party lost the Assembly election 2018 as the church openly criticized the selling of liquor by the government. In the context of Meghalaya, party leaders, academicians and journalists also expressed the importance of religion in elections. They argued that religion or church is among the three important factors in elections. The other two factors are—individual capabilities and party affiliation.⁶⁴

The above shows that there are similarities in both the state regarding electoral strategies. At the same time, there are different strategy and issues also. Firstly, political parties in Mizoram used to have joint platform or common platform with the initiatives of the MPF. It is a platform where all the candidates can express their vision and manifesto within the restricted framework. While in Meghalaya, the

⁵⁸ The scholar interviewed L.T. Kima Fanai (General Secretary, MNF) on 19th September, 2024 at MNF Gen. Hqrs. Office, Aizawl.

⁵⁹ Ms. Lakyntiew Sokhlet, Nicky Nongkhlaw, *op.cit*

⁶⁰ Patricia Mukhim, *op.cit*.

⁶¹ Presbyterian church is the largest denomination in Mizoram.

⁶² The scholar interviewed C. Lalpianthanga (General Secretary, Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee) on 23rd September, 2024 at Congress Bhavan, Aizawl.

⁶³ The scholar interviewed F. Lalmangaiha (General Secretary, Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee) on 23rd September, 2024 at Congress Bhavan, Aizawl.

⁶⁴ A.L. Hek, David Kharsati, Batskhem Myrbuh, H. Srikanth, Patricia Mukhim, *op.cit*.

concept of pocket meeting is very popular in the state. In pocket meaning, two-three villages gathered in one place and had campaign meeting as one Assembly constituencies comprises of many villages. Secondly, party leaders also play a crucial role in elections. Nowadays, voters are much enthusiastic of the leaders or who will be the next Chief Minister. This was evident in the Mizoram Assembly elections, 2023. While in Meghalaya, party leaders or Chief Ministerial candidate did not have much impact in elections. The reason is that Meghalaya always experienced fracture mandate (except first Assembly) as political parties unable to have majority by their own.

Thirdly, the elections in Mizoram are basically a team work. There are various factors in winning the Assembly elections in Mizoram. Among them candidate personality, candidate's educational qualification, party affiliation, church affiliation, etc. Besides, the grassroot workers particularly at the unit and block level leaders are very important in Mizoram.⁶⁵ Whereas in Meghalaya, there are various factors in winning elections like Mizoram. However, individual popularity plays a significant role in elections. It can be argued that in the post-1990s, a candidate's personality plays the biggest role in winning the elections. As a result, there are few independent candidates who get elected in every election.⁶⁶

5.2.4 Assembly Elections in Mizoram and Meghalaya (2018)

Mizoram and Meghalaya had Assembly elections in the year 2018. The 8th Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election was held on 27th November 2018⁶⁷ while the 10th Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly elections was held on 27th February, 2018.⁶⁸ In Mizoram, there were six political parties (BJP, INC, NPP, MNF, NPP, PRISM).⁶⁹ Whereas there were fourteen political parties [AITC, BJP, INC, NCP, HSPDP, NPP, UDP, AAP, LJP, GNC, KHNAM, NEINDP, PDF, RPI (A)] in

⁶⁵ Lal Thanzara, Tawnluia, *op.cit.*

⁶⁶ Metbah Lyngdoh, Paul Lyngdoh, Ms. Lakyntiew, James Lyngdoh, Ms. Risha, Linda Chhakchhuak, H. Srikanth & Raphael Massor, *op.cit.*

⁶⁷ Chief Electoral Officer, Mizoram. (2019). *General Election to Mizoram Legislative Assembly 2018: Mizoram Votes 2018*. Mizoram: Chief Electoral Officer. p.122.

⁶⁸ Election Commission of India. *Announcement of Schedule for the Elections to the Legislative Assemblies of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura*. <https://old.eci.gov.in/files/file/4539-announcement-of-schedule-for-general-elections-to-the-legislative-assemblies-of-meghalaya-nagaland-and-tripura-2018-english>. Accessed on 23rd October, 2024.

⁶⁹ Chief Electoral Officer, Mizoram, *op.cit.*

Meghalaya.⁷⁰ There were 209 total candidates (191 male and 18 female) in Mizoram. Among them, there were 63 (including 38 ZPM) independent candidates.⁷¹ On the other hand, there were 361 total candidates (329 male and 32 female) in Meghalaya with 85 independent candidates.⁷²

In the election, there was no pre-poll alliance in Mizoram. Earlier, the ZPM was already formed as a political party in 2017 which was an agglomeration of six social and political organizations. Whereas, there was also pre-poll alliance in Meghalaya. The Regional Democratic Alliance (RDA) was formed in 2017 eyeing on Meghalaya Assembly election 2018. The RDA comprises the three regional parties—UDP, HSPDP and GNC.⁷³ There was no post-poll alliance in Mizoram as the MNF win by an absolute majority. While Meghalaya entered into post-poll alliance due to the fracture mandate as it used to be in the state. The coalition government known as Meghalaya Democratic Alliance was born in the state.⁷⁴ The coalition government was led by the NPP.⁷⁵ The government in both the states completed their term.

5.2.4 (i) Main Issues of the Election

In the Mizoram Assembly election 2018, the ruling party (the Congress) and its main rival (the MNF) were the main contender. The strength of the new political alliance i.e. the ZPM was unknown as Mizoram always experienced two corner contests in the Assembly elections. Whereas in Meghalaya, the ruling Congress party and the new political party in the state i.e. the NPP were the main contender. The NPP, a new political party (only one month) won two seats in Assembly election 2013.

⁷⁰ Election Commission of India. *Meghalaya Legislative Election 2018*. <https://old.eci.gov.in/files/file/3694-meghalaya-general-legislative-election-2018/>. Accessed on 27th October, 2024.

⁷¹ Chief Electoral Officer, Mizoram, *op.cit.*

⁷² Election Commission of India, Meghalaya Legislative Election 2018, *op.cit.*

⁷³ Regional Democratic Alliance formed. *The Shillong Times*. Dated: 21st October, 2017. <https://theshillongtimes.com/2017/10/21/regional-democratic-alliance-formed/>. Accessed on 25th July, 2025.

⁷⁴ The MDA comprises of NPP (19 MLA), UDP (6 MLA), PDF (4 MLA), HSPDP (2 MLA), BJP (2 MLA) and one independent candidate

⁷⁵ NPP to govern Meghalaya, with a little help from its friends. Alliance, cabinet formulas here. *India Today*. Dated: 4th March, 2018. <https://www.indiatoday.in/assembly-elections-2018/meghalaya-assembly-election-2018/story/npp-in-power-in-meghalaya-with-a-little-help-from-its-friends-alliance-cabinet-formula-s-here-1181783-2018-03-04>. Accessed on 27th October, 2024.

However, within a short period of time, the NPP became one of the emerging political parties and became the main contender in 2018.

Elections are contested on various issues in both the states. In Mizoram, the ruling INC fought the election as it promises to continue its flagship programme (NLUP) and its economic policy (NEDP).⁷⁶ While, the MNF popularized SEDP as their flagship programme with a focus on agricultural workers by distributing financial assistance to Rs. 3 lakhs each.⁷⁷ Whereas, the ZPM fought the election by raising the slogan ‘*Kalphung Thar*’ (New System). The party challenged both the INC and MNF for the uneven development of the state. The ZPM raised the catchphrase ‘non-Congress, non-MNF’ in 2018.⁷⁸ Whereas in Meghalaya, the ruling Congress party attempted to retain power despite a strong anti-incumbency against Mukul Sangma’s government. The Congress fought the election by promising health insurance covering up to Rs. 5 lakhs and its attempt to create 3 lakh jobs for the youth.⁷⁹ On the other hand, the NPP attempts to formulate an Economic Development Policy, State Agriculture and Horticulture Policy and Youth Policy for all-round development of the state.⁸⁰ While, the new regional alliance RDA aims to form non-Congress and non-BJP government in the state. The leaders of the UDP expressed that even though UDP was the constituent member of NEDA, they argued that NEDA was a political platform for the development of the North East and not for pre-poll alliances.⁸¹

5.2.4 (ii) Performance of the party

The result of the 8th Mizoram State Legislative Assembly was declared on 11th December, 2018 and the overall voter turnout was 81.61%. Out of the 209 candidates, 97 forfeited their deposit. In the election, the MNF won the election with

⁷⁶ Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee. *Election Manifesto 2018 MLA Election*. Aizawl: Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee.

⁷⁷ Mizo National Front, *MLA Election Manifesto 2018*, *op.cit.*

⁷⁸ Zoram People’s Movement, *The Manifestos of the Zoram People’s Movement*, *op.cit.*

⁷⁹ Indian National Congress. *Manifesto: Legislative Assembly Election, Meghalaya 2018*. Shillong: General Secretary, Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee.

⁸⁰ National People’s Party. *People’s Document 2018*. Shillong: Kupar Blah, General Secretary, National People’s Party, Meghalaya State.

⁸¹ Regional parties to form govt in Meghalaya: UDP chief. *The Indian Express*. Dated: 28th January, 2018. <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/regional-parties-to-form-govt-in-meghalaya-udp-chief-5042118/>. Accessed on 27th July, 2025.

absolute majority. It managed to win 26 out of 40 seats. The ruling party i.e. the Congress managed to win only five seats. The Congress seats declined by 29 seats from 34 seats in 2013.⁸² Whereas in Meghalaya, the result of the 10th Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly election was declared on 3rd March, 2018. The total voter's turnout was 15,56,641 which constituted 86.78%. Among 361 candidates, 211 candidates forfeited their deposit. In the election, the state again witnessed fractured mandate as no party cross the half way by its own. The Congress emerged as single largest party but failed to form a government as the NPP led coalition government was born.⁸³ The performance of political parties in the Assembly elections 2018 is analysed as under: -

Firstly, the Mizoram Assembly again witnessed absolute majority by single party since statehood era. Even though almost all the exit poll predicts hung assembly for the first time in the state,⁸⁴ the MNF swept the election. The electoral mandate of MNF in 2018 election was not a new phenomenon in the state politics. The two parties—the Congress and the MNF ruled the state since 1984. The two parties shared power by rotating among them after two terms (ten years) in a cyclical manner since 1989. Whereas in Meghalaya, the Assembly election again experienced a fractured mandate (except the APHLC in 1972). However, the NPP emerged as second largest party and led the coalition government within a short span of its existence. The NPP led coalition government of Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA) was set up for the first time in the state.

Secondly, the Congress party in Mizoram put their best effort to win the elections for third consecutive term.⁸⁵ However, it failed miserably as it won only five seats. Moreover, the BJP agenda of 'Mukt Congress' was successful as Mizoram was

⁸² Chief Electoral Officer, Mizoram, *op.cit*, p.9.

⁸³ Election Commission of India. Meghalaya Legislative Election 2018, *op.cit*.

⁸⁴ Exit polls predict hung assembly in Mizoram. *The Times of India*. Dated: 8th December, 2018. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/exit-polls-predict-hung-assembly-in-mizoram/articleshow/66990945.cms>. Accessed on 30th May, 2025.

⁸⁵ Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty. The Battle for Mizoram-Meet the Contenders. *The Wire*. Dated: 27th November, 2018. <https://thewire.in/author/sangeeta-barooah-pisharoty>. Accessed on 28th July, 2025.

the last bastion for the Congress in North East.⁸⁶ While in Meghalaya, the ruling Congress emerged as the single largest party in the election but it failed to form a government. Before, it failed to form government in Goa and Manipur despite becoming the single largest party.⁸⁷ Moreover, this was the first time the Congress in Meghalaya was not sharing power with other parties.

Thirdly, the BJP for the first time opened their account (Tuichhawng A/C) in Mizoram after contesting the Assembly elections consecutively since 1993. Though they tried their best with full dedication from the top BJP leaders, Mizoram remains unique as the BJP won only one seat from minority area. Besides, many argued that the lone BJP legislator Dr. B.D. Chakma won on his personal capacity as he was a former Congress CEM and Minister.⁸⁸ Whereas in Meghalaya, the BJP secured two seats and its vote share raise from 1.27% in 2013 to 9.6% in 2018.⁸⁹ Even though the BJP leaders show their utmost efforts, there was a limit for the saffron party in the Christian dominated states. However, they found one Cabinet berth as NPP are constituent partners in the NEDA.

Lastly, the MNF formed a stable government and completed five years under Pu Zoramthanga as Chief Minister. In fact, governments in Mizoram always experienced stable government and completed their term except the first MNF Ministry led by Pu Laldenga. On the other hand, Chief Minister Conrad Sangma was not in the election race as he represented Tura in Lok Sabha. However, he emerged as the unanimous choice of the coalition partner as the UDP stated that they can join the

⁸⁶ Mizoram results: North East now 'Congress-Mukt', CM loses both seats. *The Times of India*. Dated: 12th December, 2018. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/guwahati/mizoram-assembly-election-results-mnf-sweeps-mizoram-north-east-now-congress-mukt/articleshow/67053374.cms>. Accessed on 30th May, 2025.

⁸⁷ Meghalaya Election results 2018: Hung Assembly, Parties eye post-poll alliances. *Business Today*. Dated: 3rd March, 2018. <https://www.businesstoday.in/latest/economy-politics/story/meghalaya-election-results-2018-congress-single-largest-party-bjp-hopes-pinned-alliance-248340-2018-03-03>. Accessed on 28th October, 2018.

⁸⁸ Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty, *op.cit.*

⁸⁹ David Laitphlang. Congress single largest in Meghalaya, but NPP could cobble up the numbers to rule. *Hindustan Times*. Dated: 3rd March, 2018. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/congress-single-largest-in-meghalaya-but-npp-could-cobble-up-the-numbers-to-rule/story-sDI5rPdoxqqpQzUzbZht9K.html>. Accessed on 7th June, 2025.

coalition only led by Conrad Sangma as Chief Minister. As a result, a coalition government headed by Conrad Sangma completed their five years term.

5.2.5 Assembly Elections in Mizoram and Meghalaya (2023)

The 9th Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election was held on 7th November, 2023⁹⁰ whereas the 11th Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly election was held on 27th February, 2023.⁹¹ Five political parties (AAP, BJP, INC, MNF and ZPM) were in the election fray in Mizoram.⁹² While, there were 13 political parties [AITC, BJP, INC, NPP, HSPDP, PDF, UDP, JD(U), GNASURKP, GNC, RPI, RPI (A), VPP] in Meghalaya.⁹³ A total number of 174 candidates (156 male & 18 female) including 27 independent candidates were in the election fray in Mizoram.⁹⁴ While, there were 369 candidates (333 male and 36 female) in Meghalaya including 44 independent candidates.⁹⁵

In Mizoram, there was a pre-poll alliance as the INC formed Mizoram Secular Alliance (MSA) with two regional parties—the MPC and the ZNP.⁹⁶ The MPC and the ZNP declined as a majority of them had already merged with the ZPM. Besides, no candidates from these two parties contested in the elections. Whereas in Meghalaya, there was no pre-poll alliance as all the coalition partners in Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA) fought the election in their own.⁹⁷ There was no post-poll alliance in

⁹⁰ Election Commission of India. *Mizoram Legislative Election 2023: Statistical Report*. <https://www.eci.gov.in/mizoram-legislative-election-2023-statistical-report>. Accessed on 16th October, 2024.

⁹¹ Election Commission of India. *Election to Legislative Assemblies of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura, 2023*. <https://www.eci.gov.in/ae-2023-meghalaya>. Accessed on 28th October, 2024.

⁹² Mizoram Legislative Election 2023: Statistical Report, *op.cit.*

⁹³ Election Commission of India. *Meghalaya General Legislative Election 2023*. <https://old.eci.gov.in/files/file/14873-meghalayaexcluding-ac-23/>. Accessed on 28th October, 2024.

⁹⁴ Mizoram Legislative Election 2023: Statistical Report, *op.cit.*

⁹⁵ Meghalaya General Legislative Election 2023, *op.cit.*

⁹⁶ Ahead of polls, Congress forms Mizoram Secular Alliance to take on BJP. *Business Standard*. Dated: 21st August, 2023. https://www.business-standard.com/elections/mizoram-elections/ahead-of-polls-congress-forms-mizoram-secular-alliance-to-take-on-bjp-123082100381_1.html. Accessed on 25th July, 2025.

⁹⁷ Prena Katiyar. Meghalaya polls: Political parties shun pre-poll alliances, but keep the door open for post-poll tie-ups. *Economic Times*. Dated: 18th February, 2023. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/elections/assembly-elections/meghalaya/meghalaya-polls-political-parties-shun-pre-poll-alliances-but-keep-the-door-open-for-post-poll-tie-ups/articleshow/98049643.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst. Accessed on 25th July, 2025.

Mizoram as the ZPM party swept the election. Whereas in Meghalaya, political parties entered into post-poll alliance due to the fractured mandate. As a result, the NPP led MDA-2⁹⁸ was set up again with Conrad Sangma as the Chief Minister for his second innings.⁹⁹ Till date, both the ZPM government in Mizoram and NPP led MDA coalition government ruled the state administration in both states.

5.2.5 (i) Main Issues of the Election

The Mizoram Assembly election 2023 was a triangular fight between the ruling MNF and its traditional rival party—the INC and the ZPM. The three political parties contested in every constituency without having any alliance. It can be argued that this is the first time Mizoram is witnessing a strong fight from three corner. Whereas in Meghalaya, the coalition partner in Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA) such as the NPP, BJP and RDA fight against each other. The Congress which emerged as the single largest party in 2018 with 21 seats was not the main contender this time. The party was devastated as 12 MLAs led by Mukul Sangma left and joined the Trinamool Congress. Earlier, the Congress loses three MLAs as Martin M. Danggo resigned and bye election was necessitated due to the death of two Congress leaders.¹⁰⁰ Later, the remaining five Congress MLAs also support the NPP led MDA government.¹⁰¹ As a result, the party fielded new face in the Assembly election 2023. However, the main contender was the ruling NPP and the AITC led by Mukul Sangma.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ MDA-2.0 comprises of NPP (26 MLA), UDP (11 MLA), BJP (2 MLA), HSPDP (2 MLA), PDF (2 MLA) and two independent MLA.

⁹⁹ Conrad Sangma to return as Meghalaya CM, UDP and PDF pledge support to NPP. *Financial Express*. Dated: 6th March, 2023. <https://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/meghalaya-conrad-sangma-led-national-people-party-gets-the-support-of-udp-pdf-coalition-number-stands-at-45/3000631/>. Accessed on 29th July, 2025.

¹⁰⁰ Meghalaya: Congress loses main opposition status, TMC gains big in 2021. *Business Standard*. Dated: 27th December, 2021. https://www.business-standard.com/article/politics/meghalaya-congress-loses-main-opposition-status-tmc-gains-big-in-2021-121122700446_1.html. Accessed on 29th July, 2025.

¹⁰¹ Indrajit Kundu. Meghalaya: 5 remaining Congress MLAs announce to join BJP-backed MDA. *India Today*. Dated: 8th February, 2022. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/five-congress-mlas-announce-to-join-npp-nda-meghalaya-1910352-2022-02-08>. Accessed on 29th July, 2025.

¹⁰² Sumir Karmakar. NPP is fighting against friends and rivals in Meghalaya. *Deccan Herald*. Dated: 18th February, 2023. <https://www.deccanherald.com/elections/npp-is-fighting-against-friends-and-rivals-in-meghalaya-1192672.html>. Accessed on 29th July, 2025.

In Mizoram, the ruling MNF was criticised for neglecting their flagship programme i.e. the SEDP. While their leaders claimed the Covid-19 pandemic as the main factor. Therefore, they promised to concentrate the SEDP in the new Ministry.¹⁰³ While, the INC attempt to reform the state through their new flagship policy ‘*Tang Puihna*’ (helping or assisting hard work). This is the first time the Congress did not initiate NLUP as its flagship programme.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, the ZPM raised the same slogan ‘*Kalphung Thar, Mipui Sawrkar*’ (New System, People’s Government). Besides, it promised to implement its flagship programme ‘*Bana Kaih*’ (Hand Holding Policy).¹⁰⁵ Whereas in Meghalaya, the ruling NPP focuses on youth and employment issue of the state. Among them, it attempts to create 5 lakh jobs and employment opportunities through various scheme.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, the INC focuses mainly on jobs, education and health care. It also promises to create 4 lakh new jobs and livelihoods in the next five years.¹⁰⁷ While the UDP focuses on employment, agriculture, health and economic growth. It also aims to ensure clean and corruption-free government, effective, fair, and impartial government.¹⁰⁸

5.2.5 (ii) Performance of Political Parties:

The ECI first notified the date for counting of votes for Mizoram on 3rd December, 2023. As the proposed counting of votes happened to be Sunday, there was a strong opposition from civil society organizations, church leaders, political parties and different student’s organizations against the ECI decision and they requested to change the counting dates. As a result, the ECI changed the counting date to 4th

¹⁰³ Mizo National Front. *Election Manifesto 2023*. Aizawl: Election Department, MNF General Headquarters.

¹⁰⁴ Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee. *Manifesto 2023 General Election*. Aizawl: Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee.

¹⁰⁵ Zoram People’s Movement. *2023 General Election Manifesto*. Aizawl: ZPM General Headquarters, Aizawl, Mizoram

¹⁰⁶ National People’s Party. *People’s Document: Vision 2023-2028*. Shillong: F.L. Mawlong, General Secretary, National People’s Party, Meghalaya State Unit, Shillong.

¹⁰⁷ Indian National Congress. *Meghalaya Congress Manifesto 2023*. Shillong: Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee.

¹⁰⁸ United Democratic Party releases manifesto for February 27 polls. *Ukhrul Times*. Dated: 18th February, 2023. <https://ukhrultimes.com/united-democratic-party-releases-manifesto-for-february-27-polls/>. Accessed on 24th October, 2024.

December, 2024 (Monday).¹⁰⁹ Thus, the result of the 9th Mizoram State Legislative Assembly was declared on 4th December, 2023 and the overall voter turnout was 82.26%. Out of 174 candidates, 68 candidates forfeited their deposit.¹¹⁰ In the election, the ZPM dethroned the MNF as the former managed to win 27 out of 40 seats. Whereas in Meghalaya, the 11th Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly election was declared on 2nd March, 2023 and the total voter turnout was 85.09%. Among 369 candidates, 211 candidates forfeited their deposit.¹¹¹ In the election, the state again experienced a fractured mandate as political parties fail to secure the magic number. The ruling NPP emerged as the single largest party and managed to form the coalition government for the second term. The performance of political parties in the 2018 Assembly elections:-

Firstly, the Mizoram Assembly again witnessed an absolute majority by a single party as the ZPM swept the election. Even though almost all the exit poll predicts hung assembly for the first time, the victory of ZPM is remarkable because for the first time a non-MNF and a non-Congress government is formed in the state.¹¹² Besides, Mizoram has a new Chief Minister Lalduhoma, a retired IPS turned politician. Earlier, there were only three Chief Ministers in post-statehood period, namely Laldenga (MNF), Lal Thanhawla (INC) and Zoramthanga (MNF). While in Meghalaya, the Assembly election 2023 again witnessed fractured mandate as no political party secured absolute majority.¹¹³ The NPP emerged as the single largest party in Meghalaya and formed a coalition government. Meghalaya has 12 Chief Ministers including Conrad Sangma. Out of them, only five Chief Ministers can complete their five years term, such as—D.D. Pugh (APHLC), B.B. Lyngdoh

¹⁰⁹ Mizoram Assembly Elections: Election Commission defers vote counting to December 4. *The Hindu*. Dated: 2nd December, 2023. <https://www.thehindu.com/elections/mizoram-assembly/mizoram-assembly-elections-election-commission-postpones-vote-counting-to-december-4/article67595381.ece>. Accessed on 16th October, 2024.

¹¹⁰ Mizoram Legislative Election 2023: Statistical Report, *op.cit.*

¹¹¹ Meghalaya General Legislative Election 2023, *op.cit.*

¹¹² Debanish Achom. No Clear Winner in Mizoram, Hung Assembly Likely: NDTV Poll of Polls. *NDTV*. Dated: 30th November, 2023. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/no-clear-winner-in-mizoram-hung-assembly-likely-predict-2-exit-polls-4621718>. Accessed on 30th July, 2025.

¹¹³ Sumir Karmakar. Lone battle' for too many parties spur fear of fractured mandate in Meghalaya. *Deccan Herald*. Dated: 23rd February, 2023. <https://www.deccanherald.com/elections/lone-battle-for-too-many-parties-spur-fear-of-fractured-mandate-in-meghalaya-1194197.html>. Accessed on 30th July, 2025.

(APHLC/HPU/UDP), E.K. Mawlong (UDP), Flinder Anderson Khonglam (Independent), Donkupar Roy (UDP) and Conrad Sangma (NPP).¹¹⁴

Secondly, the MNF which is one of the oldest regional parties in the region broke the electoral trend in Mizoram as it failed to retain power for two consecutive terms. Since 1989, the government has changed between the MNF and the Congress after every ten years. However, the MNF lost the elections to the ZPM. Whereas, the UDP which is one of the strongest regional parties in Meghalaya secured 11 seats. They became the second largest party in the state and important constituent partner in the coalition government. Moreover, the UDP became a constituent member in all coalition government except in the ninth Meghalaya Legislative Assembly (2013-2018). They had been in coalition government for 18 years (till date they are part of the government).

Thirdly, the Congress party who dominated the electoral politics of Mizoram had been decimated as the party managed to win only one seats. This was the worst ever electoral performance of the party since its establishment in the state. Similarly, the Congress party in Meghalaya who ruled the state for the longest period of time had been diminished as it retained only five out of 60 seats. It was the worst ever performance of the Congress party in the state Assembly election.¹¹⁵ As of now, the Congress loses all the five MLAs as three of its MLAs joined NPP in September 2024. Moreover, another MLA Saleng A. Sangma was elected as MP in 2024 and the lone MLA Ronnie V. Lyngdoh recently joined the ruling NPP on 30th July, 2025. Thus, Meghalaya is the third state in the North East without any Congress legislator following Nagaland and Sikkim.¹¹⁶

Lastly, the BJP in Mizoram increased its seat from one to two as it won the Siaha A/C and Palak A/C. It means that the BJP dominated Siaha district as it managed

¹¹⁴ Sacnilk. *List of Chief Ministers of Meghalaya*.

https://www.sacnilk.com/news/List_of_Chief_Minister_of_Meghalaya. Accessed on 5th June, 2025.

¹¹⁵ Meghalaya Election Results-Full Statistical Report, *op.cit*.

¹¹⁶ Congress party loses representation in Meghalaya assembly after its last legislator, Ronnie, joins NPP. *The New Indian Express*. Dated: 30th July, 2025.

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2025/Jul/30/congress-party-loses-representation-in-meghalaya-assembly-after-its-last-legislator-ronnie-joins-npp>. Accessed on 30th July, 2025.

to capture both seats. Similarly, the BJP in Meghalaya also retained two out of 60 seats. It can be argued that both BJP legislators A.L. Hek and Sanbor Shullai won the election on their personality factor as they are elected sometimes as INC and sometimes as BJP candidates. The reason is that the former represented his constituency for the sixth term while the latter was elected from his constituency since 2013.¹¹⁷

5.3 Local Democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya

The types of local government in Mizoram and Meghalaya are different. In Mizoram, the grassroot institutions are established with constitutional provision and they are democratic bodies. Whereas in Meghalaya, the local government are semi-democratic institution due to the existence of the traditional institutions in the state. For instance, in the Khasi Hills, the traditional institutions such as ‘*durbar shnong*’ or village durbar and ‘*syiemship*’ or traditional chiefship still exist under the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council.

5.3.1 Urban Local Bodies

The urban local bodies set up in Mizoram and Meghalaya is different. In Mizoram, the Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) is responsible for civic administration in Aizawl. It was established on 1st July, 2008 under the Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007. Whereas in Meghalaya, Shillong Municipal Board (SMB) and Shillong Cantonment Board are the two urban bodies in Shillong. The SMB was established by the Meghalaya Municipal Act 1973.¹¹⁸ It was responsible for civic services and city management in Shillong city while Cantonment Board is a local government body responsible for managing military or para-military cantonments.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Kenny Jyrwa. Meghalaya BJP leader from South Shillong slams AL Hek for projecting himself as the next CM. *India Today NE*. Dated: 6th February, 2023. <https://www.indiatodayne.in/elections/meghalaya-assembly-elections-2023/story/meghalaya-bjp-leader-from-south-shillong-slams-al-hek-for-projecting-himself-as-the-next-cm-508396-2023-02-06>. Accessed on 10th June, 2025.

¹¹⁸ Shillong Municipal Board. *Home: About us*. <https://smb.gov.in/index.html#b> about. Accessed on 27th November, 2024.

¹¹⁹ Directorate General Defence Estates, Ministry of Defence, Govt. of India. *Cantonments*. <https://dgde.gov.in/cantonments/>. Accessed on 27th November, 2024.

There are some similarities between the AMC and the SMB. Firstly, the AMC and SMB are responsible for providing civic amenities and hygienic services in their jurisdiction. The services include solid waste and sanitation management; streetlighting; maintenance of public places like parks/gardens; maintenance of footpaths, lanes, by-lanes, drainage system, public toilets; parking space, etc. Secondly, both the AMC and SMB are also authorised to collect taxes. The AMC is authorised to collect tax and non-tax revenue. They also collect property tax within their jurisdiction.¹²⁰ Similarly, the Collection Department under SMB collects all types of taxes, administration fee, composition fee, mutation fee, etc. Among the tax collected includes house tax, sanitation tax, water tax and lighting tax.¹²¹ Thirdly, the AMC and the SMB have the authority on trade licence within their jurisdiction. They issue trading licenses or shop licenses and are responsible for maintenance and management of municipal markets and stalls. Lastly, there are several branches or wings or cells within the AMC and the SMB. The AMC has 15 branches/wings/cells¹²² while the SMB has 11 departments.¹²³ Among them, the common organizations include establishment and general administration, license, building, engineering, finance and accounts.

There are differences between the AMC and the SMB. Firstly, the AMC is an elected democratic body. The Mayor is the executive head of the AMC and the Executive Council exercises all executive powers. While the day-to-day administration of the AMC is carried out by a bureaucratic staff headed by Municipal Commissioner.¹²⁴ Whereas the SMB is not an elected body. It does not have any elected representatives. All the officials of the SMB are government officials. It is headed by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The CEO is assisted by Executive Officer/Assessor. The CEO manages and supervises different departments under the SMB.¹²⁵ Secondly, the AMC is divided into 19 Wards and each Ward is represented

¹²⁰ Aizawl Municipal Corporation. <https://amcmizoram.com/>. Accessed on 11th November, 2024. Aizawl Municipal Corporation.

¹²¹ Shillong Municipal Board, *op.cit.*

¹²² Aizawl Municipal Corporation, *op.cit.*

¹²³ Shillong Municipal Board, *op.cit.*

¹²⁴ L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima & Lal Lawmzuali. (2024). *Government and Politics of Mizoram*. Guwahati: South-Eastern Book Agencies. p.226.

¹²⁵ Shillong Municipal Board, *op.cit.*

by an elected Corporator and their tenure is five years.¹²⁶ While the SMB did not cover the entire Shillong city. According to F.B. Chyne, there are 38 localities which are under the SMB jurisdiction which are further divided into 27 wards for administrative convenience.¹²⁷

Thirdly, there are three organizational structures within the AMC—the Board of Councillors, Ward Committee and Local Council.¹²⁸ While in Meghalaya, there is no other structure like the AMC. The SMB is responsible for the civic administration in the municipal area in Shillong. Fourthly, there are 18 subjects in Municipalities under the Twelfth Schedule to the Constitution. The state government already transferred 15 subjects to the AMC.¹²⁹ Whereas in Meghalaya, as the SMB is not a democratic elected institution, it is not under the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act. However, there are 11 departments functions under the SMB.¹³⁰ Lastly, the AMC are empowered with building regulation like other Municipalities in different cities.¹³¹ Whereas, the SMB did not have authority in building regulations. According to D.G. Majaw, the SMB are empowered with building regulation in earlier days. Nowadays, the building regulation is under Meghalaya Urban Development Authority (MUDA).¹³²

5.3.2 Rural Local Bodies

The Panchayati Raj System under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 is a system for rural local self-government in India. While Article 243M of the Act stipulates that the Act is not applicable to Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland.¹³³ Therefore, the Government of Mizoram introduced ‘Village Council’ as the lowest (grassroot) form of government in Mizoram. It is the local self-government at the

¹²⁶ Aizawl Municipal Corporation, *op.cit.*

¹²⁷ The scholar interviewed F.B. Chyne (Executive Engineer, SMB) on 19th December, 2022 at SMB Office, Shillong.

¹²⁸ Aizawl Municipal Corporation, *op.cit.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Shillong Municipal Board, *op.cit.*

¹³¹ Aizawl Municipal Corporation, *op.cit.*

¹³² The scholar interviewed D.G. Majaw (Head Clerk, SMB) on 19th December, 2022 at SMB Office, Shillong.

¹³³ M.N. Karna, L.S. Gassah & C.J. Thomas. (Ed). (2023). *Power to People in Meghalaya: Sixth Schedule and the 73rd Amendment*. New Delhi: Regency Publication. p.(xviii).

lowest / village level, succeeding the traditional chieftainship since 1954. The villages in the district headquarters still function under the Village Council¹³⁴ (except AMC and Lunglei Municipal Council). Whereas in Meghalaya, the state adapted the traditional socio-political institutions such as *Syiemships*, *Doloiships*, *Nokmaships* and the Durbars in the three Autonomous District Councils.¹³⁵ In the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC), the local self-government is structured in the form of a three-tier durbar system such as—(i) the Durbar Hima¹³⁶ or State Durbar at the apex, (ii) the Durbar Raid or provincial durbar at the provincial level, and (iii) the *Durbar Shnong* or village durbar at the village level.¹³⁷ The ‘*durbar shnong*’ or village durbar is the lowest form of government in rural as well as urban areas.

There are similarities as well as differences in the structure and functioning of the village council in Mizoram and ‘*durbar shnong*’ or village durbar in Meghalaya. The similarities in the village council and village durbar are:- firstly, the village council and village durbar are the lowest forms of administration in both the states. Both are essential for effective local governance, enhancing developmental work, dispute settlement, etc. The village durbar is responsible for preserving and strengthening the traditional customs of the villagers and the society as a whole.¹³⁸ Secondly, the village council and the village durbar have different functions and duties to perform. Among them, formulation of development schemes, implementing various projects, overseeing collective interests such as sanitation, water supply, health, roads, and education, etc. Besides, they also function as nodal agents or implementing agency of various central and state government schemes. For instance, the village council

¹³⁴ Lallianchhunga. *A Comparative Study of Village Councils in Mizoram and Panchayati Raj Institutions: A Critical Appraisal*. Senhri Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies. Vol.3, No.2, (July-December, 2018). Pp.33-44.

¹³⁵ L.S. Gassah. (2023). The Sixth Schedule and the 73rd Amendment: An Analysis. In M.N. Karna, L.S. Gassah & C.J. Thomas (Ed.), *Power to People in Meghalaya: Sixth Schedule and the 73rd Amendment*. (Reprinted 2023, pp.3 -12). New Delhi: Regency Publications.

¹³⁶ ‘*Hima*’ refers to traditional Khasi state or kingdom. [Meghalaya Tourism. <https://www.meghalayatourism.in/experiences-4/of-folklore-and-history-a-tour-of-hima-khadsaw-phra/>. Accessed on 10th July, 2025].

¹³⁷ Arthur Lyngdoh. *Traditional Village Council (Durbar Shnong) in the Khasi Hills: Continuities and Change*. International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts. Vol.9, Issue No. 4, (April, 2021). pp.2453-2456. <https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2104313.pdf>. Accessed on 29th November, 2024.

¹³⁸ R. Gopalakrishnan. (1995). *Meghalaya: Land and People*. New Delhi: Omsons Publications. p.121.

oversees the implementation of various developmental works and function as the nodal agency. Similarly in Meghalaya, the MDC or MLA had to take prior approval from the village headmen in order to implement or construct any development activities within their locality.¹³⁹

Lastly, the importance of village council and village durbar in administration of justice is noteworthy. In the context of Mizoram, the Lushai Hills Autonomous District (Administration of Justice) Rules, 1953 empowered the village councils in Mizoram with judicial functions. The village council established Village Council Court for the adjudication of minor civil and criminal issues such as fighting or violence, public nuisance, robbery, misconduct, trespass, disturbance of peaceful public life due to intoxication, etc.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, the District Council in Meghalaya acknowledged the significance of the village durbar after the enactment of the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District (Administration of Justice) Rules, 1953. As a result, the District Councils have established the village courts as the lowest court with the power to trial civil cases. The village court can trial criminal cases related to tribal laws and customs, particularly if the offense is minor. The village court handled cases like disputes, theft, rape, assault, etc.¹⁴¹

Apart from similarities, there are differences between the village council and the village. Firstly, the traditional institution was discontinued in the state of Mizoram. Earlier, chieftainship was the only form of administration in the Lushai Hills. In 1954, the traditional institution of chieftainship was abolished when the Lushai Hills District Council was established in 1952. Consequently, the village council system was introduced in the state as the lowest form of administration.¹⁴² On the other hand, the traditional institutions in Meghalaya exist in the state under the ADCs. For instance, the Khasi traditional institution of *syiemship*, *raid* and *durbar shnong* continued under the KHADC.¹⁴³ Secondly, the village council in Mizoram were established under the Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act, 1953. The village council system has been

¹³⁹ Linda Chhakchhuak, *op.cit.*

¹⁴⁰ L.H. Chhuanawma, Lalthakima & Lal Lawmzuali, *op.cit.*, p.196.

¹⁴¹ Arthur Lyngdoh, *op.cit.*

¹⁴² Lallianchhunga, *op.cit.*

¹⁴³ L.S. Gassah, *op.cit.*

functioning in the whole state.¹⁴⁴ Whereas in Meghalaya, the village durbar is a non-statutory body. Neither the state government nor the District Council exercise effective regulation on the functioning of the ‘*durbar shnongs*’ whose rules vary from one village to the other.¹⁴⁵

Thirdly, the nature and structure of the village council and the village durbar is also different. For instance, in the village council, the people elect their representative as they contest the election. While the village durbar is a kind of voluntary platform and people do not contest in the election. According to Vanlalroa Thangluah, sometimes there is a strong contest for the election of village durbar as they are very powerful in the administration of their locality.¹⁴⁶ In addition, the number of members in village council differ from one village to another depending on the village population. Besides, there is a qualification prescription for village council as well as remuneration and their tenure is five years. While in village durbar, there is no such kind of qualification, remuneration and their term differ from one locality to another.

Lastly, the village council in Mizoram is a democratic body as the people elect their representatives through universal adult suffrage. Besides, the Village Council has executive body such as—the President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary (appointed member) in which the executive functions of the Village Council are vested upon.¹⁴⁷ While in Meghalaya, the village durbar is not purely democratic as there are some places where only adult males participate in the durbar meeting and in the election.¹⁴⁸ The village durbar is headed by ‘*rangbah shnong*’ or village headmen and other officials. The nature of officials in village durbar also differs from localities.

¹⁴⁴ Lallianchhunga, *op.cit.*

¹⁴⁵ Fabian Lyngdoh. Reforming and Streamlining the Role of the Dorbar Shnong. *The Shillong Times*. Dated: 12th November, 2024. <https://theshillongtimes.com/2024/11/12/reforming-and-streamlining-the-role-of-the-dorbar-shnong/>. Accessed on 2nd August, 2025.

¹⁴⁶ The scholar interviewed Vanlalroa Thangluah (Receptionist, Shillong Mizoram House who is born and raised in Shillong) on 14th December, 2022 at Mizoram House, Shillong.

¹⁴⁷ State Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (SIRD&PR), Mizoram. *The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953*.

<https://sirdpr.mizoram.gov.in/uploads/attachments/9b4745448c6fa661644ed732091dc0b4/the-lushai-hills-district-village-councils-acts-1953.pdf>. Accessed on 16th November, 2024.

¹⁴⁸ Sushmita Sengupta, *op.cit.*

According to W.J. Nongrum, the Cleve Colony village durbar is headed by village headmen who is assisted by Asst. Headmen, General Secretary, Asst. General Secretary and Treasurer.¹⁴⁹

5.3.3 Autonomous District Council

The Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India under Article 244 (2) and Article 275 (1) established a provision for the administration of tribal areas in the then undivided Assam.¹⁵⁰ As a result, there are 10 Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura. The Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India safeguards the tribal communities in the Northeastern India. It provides protection in land, forest resources and allowed them autonomy in social and political development.¹⁵¹ Besides, it empowered the ADCs to make laws and regulations on all matters relating to the customs, culture, traditions and practices of the tribal people, language, identity of the minorities, etc.¹⁵²

There are three ADCs each in Mizoram and Meghalaya. The study on ADC in Mizoram is limited to the Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC). Similarly, the study on ADC in Meghalaya is confined to the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC). There are similarities as well as differences in the structure and functioning between the two ADCs. The similarities between the LADC and KHADC are: - Firstly, both were established under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. The Sixth Schedule envisaged the protection of tribal people in the North Eastern states. Although both Councils did not fulfil all the desires of the people, both institutions serve the interest of the people in protecting their customs, culture, traditions, language, identity, land, forest, etc. Secondly, the structure in the two ADCs is more or less the same. The qualification for membership in both ADCs remain the same. Besides, the Sixth Schedule provides the same administrative set up with the

¹⁴⁹ The scholar interviewed W.J. Nongrum (Village headmen, Cleve Colony, Shillong) on 14th December, 2022 in his residence at Shillong.

¹⁵⁰ Jangkhongam DOUNGEL. (2010). *Evolution of District Council Autonomy in Mizoram*. Guwahati: Spectrum Publications. p.6.

¹⁵¹ B. Datta Ray. (2023). The Seventy Third Amendment Act, 1992 and the state of Meghalaya. In M.N. Karna, L.S. Gassah & C.J. Thomas (Ed.), *Power to People in Meghalaya: Sixth Schedule and the 73rd Amendment*. (Reprinted 2023, pp.13-21). New Delhi: Regency Publications.

¹⁵² Jangkhongam DOUNGEL (2010), *op.cit*, p.104.

Executive Committee headed by Chief Executive Member (CEM) and the Executive Member (EM). Further, there is also Chairman and Deputy Chairman in the House to conduct the business for session and presided over its meeting. The tenure for LADC and KHADC is five years.¹⁵³

Thirdly, the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India empowered the Autonomous District Council extensive legislative, executive, judicial and financial power within their jurisdiction. The powers and functions of both ADCs is more or less the same (except primary education is not under KHADC). The legislative branch is headed by Legislative Secretary in both ADCs. The executive functions in both ADCs are vested in the Executive Committee which is headed by the Executive Secretary (in LADC) or Secretary to the Executive Committee (in KHADC). It is important to mention that there are 30 departments under the LADC¹⁵⁴ while the executive wing of the KHADC can be clubbed together in seven departments.¹⁵⁵ In judiciary, the head of judiciary in the LADC is known as Court President or Recorder¹⁵⁶ while the District Council Court in the KHADC comprises qualified Judicial Officers known as Judges and Magistrates.¹⁵⁷ Fourthly, the LADC and KHADC also faced challenges with the state government in their functioning. The common problems faced by the ADCs is delayed in releasing of funds from the state government. It is also found that this kind of problem is common if the ruling party belonging to the state and ADC is different.

Lastly, political instability is another common feature found in the functioning of both ADCs. In the context of LADC, the present 11th LADC term (2020-till date) experienced political instability as the CEM have been changed for five times including imposition of Governor's Rule before the expiry of the term. Similarly, the KHADC also experienced the change of CEM for four times and imposition of

¹⁵³ Lai Autonomous District Council. Brief History of LADC. <https://ladc.mizoram.gov.in/>. Accessed on 12th December, 2024.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council. *Executive*. <https://khadc.nic.in/executive.html>. Accessed on 12th December, 2024.

¹⁵⁶ Jangkhongam Doungel (2010), *op.cit*, p.104.

¹⁵⁷ Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council. *Judiciary*. <https://khadc.nic.in/judiciary.html>. Accessed on 12th December, 2024.

Governor's Rule in the outgoing 13th KHADC term (2019-2025). It is argued that political instability affected the administration of the LADC and KHADC as it hampers the normal day-to-day administration and delay the implementation of various developmental works. Fifthly, the issue of direct funding is another hot debate in the ADCs. There are different opinions expressed by party leaders, officials, journalists, academician and civil society leaders. According to Jangkhongam DOUNGEL, the demand of direct funding can be achieved only by amending Article 275 (1) which is not likely to happen as it affects the federal structure of the Indian Constitution.¹⁵⁸

Apart from the similarities, there are also differences in the structure and working of LADC and KHADC. Firstly, the origin of ADCs in Mizoram and Meghalaya began in 1952. In the context of Mizoram, the Lushai Hills District Council (later Mizo District Council) and Pawi Lakher Regional Council (PLRC) established in 1952 and 1953 respectively covered the entire state.¹⁵⁹ At present, there are three ADCs in Mizoram, namely—Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC), Mara Autonomous District Council (MADC) and Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC). The three ADCs in Mizoram cover only the ethnic minorities area in southern region at the two revenue districts of Lawngtlai and Siaha District. Whereas in Meghalaya, the ADCs were created in the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills and the Garo Hills of the composite state of Assam in 1952.¹⁶⁰ At present, there are three Autonomous District Councils in Meghalaya namely—Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council (JHADC), Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC) and Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC). In Meghalaya, the three ADCs cover the entire state except the Municipality and Cantonment Board.

Secondly, the composition of members in both ADCs is also different. For instance, the LADC has a total strength of 29 members. Out of which, 25 are elected

¹⁵⁸ The scholar interviewed Jangkhongam DOUNGEL (Professor, Mizoram University) on 8th July, 2025 at his office chamber in Mizoram University.

¹⁵⁹ Lai Autonomous District Council, Brief History of LADC, *op.cit.*

¹⁶⁰ W. Kharkrang, Secretary, KHADC. *Down Memory Lane (1952-2002)*: https://khadc.nic.in/archive/down_memory_lane.html. Accessed on 11th December, 2024.

by the people and four members are nominated by the Governor.¹⁶¹ While in Meghalaya, the KHADC has a total strength of 30 members. Out of which, 29 members are elected by the people and one is nominated by the Governor.¹⁶² Thirdly, the LADC enjoys executive power over primary education. It also has the power to determine the language and the manner in which primary education should be imparted in the primary school under its jurisdiction.¹⁶³ Whereas the KHADC at present did not have authority on primary education even though they have the jurisdiction over primary education. According to Patricia Mukhim, the KHADC transfers the primary education to the state government as it lacks fund for the management of primary schools.¹⁶⁴ Fourthly, the structure of judiciary in both Councils is also different. In LADC, the judiciary have four set up such as—Village Council Courts, two Intermediate District Council Courts and the LADC Court.¹⁶⁵ Whereas in the KHADC, it comprises of five set up, namely—Village Court, Additional Subordinate District Council Court, Subordinate District Council Court, Additional District Council Court and District Council Court.¹⁶⁶

Fifthly, the village council under the ADCs in Mizoram had their own Acts, Rules and Regulations which suited the tradition, customs and culture of the people of the Autonomous District Councils. However, the village council with an elected body is also the lowest form of government under the ADCs in Mizoram.¹⁶⁷ While in Meghalaya, all the tribal chiefs and headmen are placed under the jurisdiction of the ADCs. It means that the traditional institutions in Meghalaya are under the control of ADCs.¹⁶⁸ For instance, the traditional chief i.e. *syiem* gave recognition letter to the village headmen which is known as ‘*sanad*’. However, the main difference between

¹⁶¹ Lai Autonomous District Council. Brief History of LADC, *op.cit.*

¹⁶² Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council, Judiciary, *op.cit.*

¹⁶³ V. Venkata Rao, H. Thansanga & Niru Hazarika. (1987). *A Century of Government and Politics in North East India, Volume III-Mizoram*. New Delhi: S. Chand & Company (Pvt) Ltd. p.190.

¹⁶⁴ Patricia Mukhim, *op.cit.*

¹⁶⁵ Lai Autonomous District Council. Brief History of LADC, *op.cit.*

¹⁶⁶ Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council, Judiciary, *op.cit.*

¹⁶⁷ State Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (SIRD&PR), Mizoram. *The Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Act, 1953*.

<https://sirdpr.mizoram.gov.in/uploads/attachments/9b4745448c6fa661644ed732091dc0b4/the-lushai-hills-district-village-councils-acts-1953.pdf>. Accessed on 16th November, 2024.

¹⁶⁸ B. Datta Ray, *op.cit.*

the village council and village durbar is that the former is a democratically elected body while the latter is a semi-democratic body as women are not allowed to participate in some localities.¹⁶⁹ Lastly, the people in LADC give much importance to District Council election than MLA and Parliament elections. Whereas in KHADC, the people give priority to MLA elections followed by District Council and Parliament elections. The study found that there is no single factor for winning elections in LADC and KHADC. There are different factors like—personal capabilities, family relationship, party affiliation, money power and church denomination to win the elections in the ADCs. The issue of clan can be one of the most important factors in LADC while personality factors attributed the most in KHADC.

¹⁶⁹ Sushmita Sengupta, *op.cit.*

Chapter-VI

Conclusion

Democracy is considered the best form of government in the world. It is a form of government where citizens directly or indirectly elect their representatives to govern their country. The concept of democracy originates from the Greek philosophers. The term ‘democracy’ originates from the Greek words— ‘demo’ meaning people and ‘*kratien*’ meaning ruling power, referring to a government where the power lies with the people. The term democracy has been defined in various ways. One of the famous definitions of democracy is coined by Abraham Lincoln as ‘the government of the people, by the people, and for the people’. In a parliamentary democracy, elections serve as a political mechanism for shaping and advancing the political opinions and consciousness of the people. The principle of holding regular and genuine elections through universal suffrage is a crucial aspect of democracy. In the elections, candidates normally contested as a representative of a political party. Political parties are one of the most important institutions of democracy. They are considered the ‘lifeblood of democratic politics.’ Moreover, the local democratic institutions are crucial for strengthening democratic framework, as they allow the citizens to participate directly or indirectly in governance at the local level.

Democracy can be categorized into two—direct or pure democracy and indirect or representative democracy. Direct or pure democracy is practicable in a small population as it allows citizens to directly participate in public decision-making. Ancient Athens was the first to successfully practice direct democracy in the world. In modern times, indirect or representative democracy has become the most prevalent form of democracy in modern times. It allows people to elect representatives periodically and forms the government. Democracy, whether direct or indirect, is widely considered as the most effective form of government.

India follows the indirect or representative form of democracy. The development and survival of democracy in India can be accredited to the legacy of British imperialism in the country. The British rule in India has a lasting influence on the country’s political, social and economic systems. The adoption of a democratic

system was a significant act of faith, based on the belief in the universal validity of parliamentary democracy and the people's capacity to operate it. Nowadays, India as the world's largest democracy claimed herself as the "mother of democracy". India aims to prove to the world that democracy has been rooted in Indian culture since ancient times. India is often credited for its success as the largest functional democracy in the world.

The working of democracy is possible in India due to various political leaders who serve the country through political parties. The emergence of political parties in India can be traced back to the period of freedom movement. In the late 19th century, different socio-economic organizations in India were established to challenge the British administration. For instance, the first organization i.e. the Zamindari Association was established in 1837. It was formed by Bengali landholders who aimed to safeguard their rights from encroachment. Subsequently, the Indian National Congress (INC) was established in 1885 as the first political party in India. The INC dominated, guided and initiated the freedom struggle as a mass movement rather than a political party. In the post-independent era, political parties continue to play a crucial role as they played during the British period.

The political parties in Mizoram and Meghalaya were established during the British era. Before the establishment of political party, social organizations came into existence in both the state. For instance, the erstwhile Lushai Hills district was prohibited from any kind of political activities. The first political activity began only in 1925 when Telela and his friends met the Superintendent. The formation of political organizations came only in the mid 1940's. In Mizoram, the origin of political party can be traced back to the formation of the first ethnic based social organization—Young Lushai Association (later changed to Young Mizo Association) in 1935. The leaders of YMA rejected the idea of converting YMA into a political party. Later, the first political party i.e. Mizo Common People Union (later on Mizo Union) was formed on April 9, 1946. Similarly in Meghalaya, different socio-cultural organisations were established in the state before the formation of an organised political party. The socio-cultural organisations such as Jaintia Durbar (1900), Khasi National Durbar (1923) and Garo National Council (1945) were forerunners in the

formation of political parties in the state. However, the first regional political party in the state namely the All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) was formed in the year 1960.

The study found that the political parties in both states shared common characteristics in their constitution. For instance, the common principles of political parties in both states (except UDP) include—democracy, secularism, socialism, unity and integrity of the country. The constitution of national parties such as BJP and INC is similar in both states. However, the Congress (I) in Mizoram have been given functional autonomy by the All India Congress Committee (AICC) President Smt. Indira Gandhi since 1978. Moreover, the constitution of regional parties in Mizoram and Meghalaya are quite similar as they both focus the regional agenda in these states. Besides, the political parties in Mizoram (except BJP) promises to safeguard and promote the customs and traditions of different Mizo tribes and work for the benefits of the son of the soil. In addition, the political parties in Mizoram (except-BJP) attempts to work for the unification of Mizo who resides in different places under one administrative umbrella. However, such kind of unification movement, protecting the custom and tradition of indigenous tribes as advocated by political parties in Mizoram are not visible in the constitution of political parties in Meghalaya.

The political parties in Mizoram and Meghalaya have many common organizational structures. In the case of national parties, the organizational structure of BJP and INC are similar. Likewise, the organizational structure of regional parties in both the states also did not differ much. In all the political parties, the General Assembly is the highest decision-making body. The hierarchical structure of political parties follows the same pattern with the local unit as the lowest structure of the organization. Moreover, the national as well as regional parties have women and youth frontal organizations. While in Mizoram, all political parties have *Upa Wing* (elders wing) which is not available in Meghalaya. Further, the parties in both states have established different committees, cells or departments to strengthen the functioning of their party.

With regard to the party's functioning and inner democracy, it is learnt that the political parties in both states face internal as well as external challenges. They believed that external challenges are easily manageable while internal challenges hamper the functioning of the party. Leaders of the political parties in both states claim that they have inner democracy within their parties. However, the study found that inner democracy is not practiced in reality as party leaders want to stabilize their leadership and dominate the party organization for a longer period of time. Therefore, appointing leaders become a norm instead of conducting elections by having strong contender within the party.

There are similarities as well as difference in the party leadership between the two states. The study reveals that most of the political leaders in Mizoram (except the leaders of the BJP) usually ruled their party for long periods of time. For example, Lal Thanhawla (INC), Zoramthanga (MNF) and Lalduhoma (ZNP) dominated the party organization as they ruled the party for two to five decades. Similarly, parties in Meghalaya such as UDP and NPP hardly changed their leaders. Since its inception in 1997, the UDP only had three Presidents while the NPP had only two Presidents since 2013. The similarity between the two is that they changed their President only after their incumbent leaders passed away. Whereas, the Congress in Meghalaya experienced rotation of leadership as compared to Congress party in Mizoram. However, the BJP leaders in these states normally did not continue the party Presidentship more than one term.

Coming to the electoral politics, Mizoram began its electoral politics little ahead of Meghalaya. The electoral politics of the Lushai Hills begin with the formation of the District Conference in 1946. Prior to 1946, every locality in the Lushai Hills was under the chief. Later, the Lushai Hills District Advisory Council was established in 1948. Subsequently, the District Advisory Council was upgraded to the status of District Council and the first Lushai Hills District Council election was held on 1952. The Lushai Hills District was changed to Mizo Hills District in 1954. During the period, the Mizo Union dominated the electoral politics of the Lushai Hills. The Mizo Hills District had been allotted three seats in the Assam Legislative Assembly since 1952. They got their first representation in the Indian Parliament in the fifth Lok Sabha

term (1971-1977). The Mizo Hills District Council under the Assam government was elevated to the status of Union Territory on 21st January, 1972. Mizoram experienced four Union Territory Assembly Election till the signing of 'Memorandum of Settlement' between the MNF and the Government of India on 30th June, 1986. Mizoram was upgraded to the status of a full-fledged statehood and became the 23rd state of the Indian Union on 20th February, 1987.

In the context of Meghalaya, the Jaintia's, the Khasi's and the Garo's had their own traditional political institutions which varies among the tribes. Later on, the British suzerainty was established in the Khasi Hills in 1838, followed by the Jaintia Hills in 1862 and Garo Hills in 1882, resulting in the administration under the Chief Commissioner of Assam. During the period, the entire region was represented by one nominated seat in the Legislative Council of Assam since 1920. However, the electoral politics of the state of Meghalaya begin with the formation of District Councils (then undivided Assam). The Autonomous District Councils were first introduced in 1952 in the then United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District and Garo Hills District. The Jowai sub-division (now Jaintia Hills District) was later established in 1964 (but actual functioning was started in 1967) by bifurcating the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District namely Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC) and Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council (JHADC). Later on, an autonomous state of Meghalaya within the state of Assam was formed by the Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act, 1969 comprising the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District and Garo Hill District. When the North East Reorganization Act of 1971 came into force in 1972, Meghalaya was upgraded to full-fledged state of India.

The above shows that Mizoram and Meghalaya were initially parts of the undivided Assam before graduating to a full-fledged state. Both the states were a part of Assam till 1972. Mizoram experienced nine Assembly elections while Meghalaya experienced eleven Assembly elections since statehood era. During elections, the churches and civil society organizations participated actively in the elections of Mizoram. For instance, the Mizoram People Forum (MPF) is an election watchdog formed by different churches and civil society leaders for ensuring open, free and fair elections in the state. The MPF and political parties signed '*Thawhhona Thuthlung*'

agreement. It includes the election guidelines of Do's and Don'ts to be followed during election period. They keep a strict vigil before and during the election. Besides, they open their offices/help desk on the polling day for providing assistance to the old, disabled and voters. There are some groups who appreciate the work done by MPF as the buying and selling of votes and unnecessary expenditure of candidates is reduced. While there are critiques who disapprove the participation of church in election. On the other hand, the study found that the churches and civil society organizations in Meghalaya do not directly participate in elections. However, it is learnt that the churches and civil society leaders sometimes have hidden agenda by mobilizing the people to fulfil their objectives.

In the election, every political party enters the election with its own manifesto to woo voters. The study reveals that election manifesto in these states do not play a crucial role in winning the elections. In the context of Mizoram, the voters focus particularly on the flagship programme as elections were contested on party flagship programme. It is also learnt that the party flagship programmes in Mizoram are mainly land based programme such as—Garden Policy, Jhum Control Policy, New Land Use Policy, Mizoram *Intodelhna* Project (project for self-sufficiency), Socio-Economic Development Programme and Hand Holding Policy. The different flagship programmes focus on the agricultural worker and rural poor. It is observed that the flagship programmes in Mizoram are co-terminus and short lived with the change of government. Besides, the government faced financial constraint as the state heavily rely on central government funding. Whereas in Meghalaya, it is difficult to implement single party manifestos as the state always experienced fracture mandate except the first Assembly in 1972. It is found that coalition government is the norm rather than the exception in the state. As a result, the coalition partner in the government framed 'common minimum programme' to be implemented during their term. Therefore, it is not possible to implement individual party manifesto due to the absence of majority in the Assembly by a party.

Election campaign occupies an important place in elections. The study found the similarities as well as the difference between the two states. The most common and conventional means of campaign are engaged in these states. It includes house-to-

house campaign, street campaign, public rally, distribution of pamphlets and manifestos. Nowadays, campaigning through social media and other media platform becomes increasingly popular and influential in attracting voters. The study found that elections in both states are fought on issue basis. In the context of Mizoram, the party mainly contest and win the elections on flagship programmes. Whereas in Meghalaya, the issues addressed in local bodies, District Council, State Assembly and Lok Sabha elections are different. Similarly, the issues addressed in various levels of elections are also different in Mizoram. Besides, the strategies and techniques of campaigning in rural and urban areas is also different. It is also learnt that the involvement of money power and religion (here Christianity and church denomination in both states) also play an important role in winning the elections. However, there are different campaign strategies in these states. For instance, Mizoram experienced joint platform or common platform initiated by the MPF in which the candidates address the gathering under the supervision of MPF. While in Meghalaya, pocket meeting is popular in which two or more villages gather in one place to listen to the electoral speech by the candidates and political leaders. The study found that winning an election depends on various factors. It is a combination of individual capacities, party affiliation and party leaders or Chief Ministerial candidate (in recent elections) are crucial in winning the elections. Whereas in Meghalaya, it is found that an individual's personality attributed the most in winning the elections. As a result, there are few independent candidates who got elected in every election.

In the post-statehood period, Mizoram faced nine Assembly elections while Meghalaya experienced eleven Assembly elections. In the context of Mizoram, there are only three parties who ruled the state since statehood, namely—the INC, the MNF and the ZPM. The INC and the MNF shared power on rotational basis after every ten years since 1989: from 1989-1998 by the Congress, 1998-2008 by the MNF, 2008-2018 by the Congress and from 2018 till 2023 by the MNF. However, the trend was changed in the last Assembly election 2023 by the ZPM. Whereas in Meghalaya, the state always experienced a fractured mandate except in the first Assembly in 1972 led by the APHLC. As a result, coalition government becomes the norm as no party gets a

majority in the elections. Thus, different political parties joined together and formed a coalition government.

Coming to the Assembly Elections in 2018, the 8th Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election was held on 27th November 2018 while the 10th Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly elections was held on 27th February, 2018. In Mizoram, there was no pre-poll alliance while a pre-poll alliance known as Regional Democratic Alliance (RDA) was formed in Meghalaya. In Mizoram, the ruling party (the Congress) and its main rival (the MNF) were the main contenders as the strength of the new political alliance i.e. the ZPM was unknown. Whereas in Meghalaya, the ruling Congress party and a new political party i.e. the NPP were the main contenders. Elections were contested on various issues in both the states. In Mizoram, different political parties fought the elections on flagship programmes such as NLUP (INC), SEDP (MNF) and the ZPM raised the slogan of '*Kalphung Thar*' (New System) and 'non-Congress, non-MNF government'. Similarly, political parties in Meghalaya also fought the election with a promise to create 3 lakhs job by the INC, the NPP promised to formulate economic development policy and the RDA aims to forms non-Congress and non-BJP government.

The result of Mizoram State Legislative Assembly Election was declared on 11th December 2018 while the result of Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly Election was announced on 3rd March, 2018. In Mizoram, the MNF swept the election and forms government under Zoramthanga. The electoral mandate of MNF in 2018 election was not a new phenomenon as the INC and MNF shared power by rotating among them after two terms (ten years) in a cyclical manner since 1989. Whereas in Meghalaya, the Assembly election again experienced fractured mandate. However, the NPP emerged as second largest party and led the coalition government under the banner of Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA) led by Conrad Sangma. The Congress party lost their dominance in both the states. The Congress in Mizoram was decimated as it retains only five seats from 34 seats in 2013. While in Meghalaya, the Congress emerged as the single largest party but it fails to form government in the state. This was the first time the Congress in Meghalaya was not in power by aligning with other parties. It is observed that the BJP for the first time opened their account in

Mizoram after consecutively contesting the Assembly elections since 1993. Whereas in Meghalaya, the BJP won two seats and got one Ministerial berth in the coalition government. The MNF government and the MDA government led by NPP completed their normal tenure of five years.

Again, elections were held in both state in the year 2023. The 9th Mizoram State Legislative Assembly election was held on 7th November, 2023 whereas the 11th Meghalaya State Legislative Assembly election was held on 27th February, 2023. In Mizoram, there was a pre-poll alliance as the Congress party formed Mizoram Secular Alliance (MSA) with the two regional parties—MPC and ZNP. While there was no pre-poll alliance in Meghalaya. The Mizoram Assembly election 2023 witnessed a triangular fight between the ruling (MNF) and its traditional rival party (the INC) and the ZPM. Whereas in Meghalaya, the coalition partner in MDA such as the NPP, BJP and RDA contested against each other. In Mizoram, different flagship programmes such as SEDP by MNF, '*Tang Puihna*' (helping or assisting hard work) by the INC and '*Bana Kaih*' (Hand Holding Policy) by the ZPM were popularized during the election. Whereas in Meghalaya, various issues and agenda were raised by different political parties. Some of them are—the INC promised to create 4 lakh new jobs and livelihoods, creation of 5 lakh jobs and employment opportunities by the NPP and the UDP promised to provide emphasis on agriculture, health and economic growth.

The Mizoram Assembly Election 2023 result was announced on 4th December, 2023 while Meghalaya Assembly Election 2023 result was declared on 2nd March, 2023. In Mizoram, the new regional force i.e. the ZPM won by an absolute majority and form government under Lalduhoma. The victory of ZPM is remarkable as the dominance of Congress and MNF in state politics came to an end. Moreover, Mizoram has a new Chief Minister after the dominance of Lal Thanhawla and Zoramthanga for 35 years in the post-statehood period. On the other hand, Meghalaya again witnessed fracture mandate in the Assembly election. The NPP led coalition government MDA-2.0 was formed again under Conrad Sangma. There were 12 Chief Ministers in Meghalaya including the incumbent Conrad Sangma. The two regional parties—the MNF and the UDP—occupies an important place in the electoral politics of both states. While the MNF fails to retain power for two consecutive terms in 2023,

they ruled Mizoram for 16 years. Similarly, the UDP had been in coalition government for 18 years (till date they are part of the government). The study found that the INC in both states have been decimated in the elections. They managed to win only one seat in Mizoram while they retain five seats in Meghalaya. This was the worst ever electoral performance of the party since its establishment in both the state. The Congress party in Mizoram and Meghalaya ruled the state for the longest period of time. In Mizoram, the Congress dominated the electoral politics as they ruled for 22 years and three months since Union Territory era.

The study reveals that the Assembly elections in Mizoram always secured majority (sometime simple majority) by a party. And the government in Mizoram always experienced stable government except for the first MNF Ministry in 1987. The MNF Ministry led by Pu Laldenga collapsed as it lost majority due to intra-factionalism within the MNF party. The MNF government led by Laldenga was the only Ministry which could not complete five years. Besides, there is no change in the post of Chief Minister within the Assembly term. While in Meghalaya, the state always witnessed fractured mandate in the Assembly election. Therefore, post-poll alliance is necessary to form the coalition government. The study reveals that coalition politics led to instability in the government as political parties frequently switch their support to one political party to another. Within one Assembly term, the coalition government is led by different political parties and different Chief Ministers. For instance, the state witnessed the changing of Ministry or Chief Minister for four times for the 8th Assembly election (2008-2013). This kind of political instability is yet to experience in Mizoram.

Also, it is learnt that changing of Chief Minister within the same party is very common in the state of Meghalaya. For example, the seventh Assembly (2003-2008) experienced the change of Chief Minister for three times—D.D. Lapang (for two times) and J.D. Rymbai, even though they belong to the same party (the Congress party). The instability of government also results in the imposition of President's rule twice in the state. It is interesting to mention that an independent MLA Flinder Anderson Khonglam once became Chief Minister of Meghalaya. It is observed that among the 12 Chief Ministers, only four Chief Ministers—Capt. Williamson Sangma,

S.C. Marak, Mukul Sangma and Conrad Sangma can complete five years. At the same time, the state has never experienced mid-term poll despite the frequent change of government.

Coming to the local democracy, the local government in both the states are distinct from one another. Mizoram has elected democratic grassroot institutions, while Meghalaya has a semi-democratic local government due to the existence of traditional institutions in the state. The local governments in Mizoram are broadly classified into three—urban local bodies, rural local bodies and the Autonomous District Council. Whereas the local governments in Meghalaya are broadly classified into Autonomous District Council, traditional institution and urban local bodies.

In the context of urban local bodies, there are two types of urban local bodies in Mizoram such as—Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) in Aizawl city and Lunglei Municipal Council (LMC) in Lunglei. The other nine administrative district did not have Municipalities in Mizoram. The AMC started functioning from 1st July, 2008 under the Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007. The AMC is responsible for managing the civic management of Aizawl city with an elected representative. The Local Council which is also an elected body serves as the lowest form of government in urban areas. With the establishment of Municipalities, all the Village Council in Mizoram are converted to Local Council. Whereas in Meghalaya, there are three types of urban local bodies namely—Municipal Board, Cantonment Board and Town Panchayat. At present, there are 12 urban local bodies in Meghalaya, namely—six Municipal Board, one Cantonment Board and five Town Panchayat. There are two types of urban local bodies in Shillong namely—Shillong Municipal Board (SMB) and Shillong Cantonment Board. The SMB established under the Meghalaya Municipal Act 1973 are responsible for civic administration in the municipal area of Shillong city. Similarly, the Shillong Cantonment Board is also a type of urban local body for ensuring civic amenities in cantonment (military) areas.

The study found that there are similarities as well as difference between the two urban local bodies. Firstly, it is observed that the AMC and the SMB have common functions such as civic amenities and hygienic services. The services include—solid

waste and sanitation management; streetlighting; maintenance of public places like parks/ gardens; maintenance of footpaths, lanes, by-lanes, drainage system, public toilets; parking space, etc. Secondly, the AMC and SMB have the power to collect taxes. The AMC collects tax and non-tax revenue and property tax. Similarly, the SMB collect house tax, sanitation tax, water tax and property tax. Thirdly, both are empowered to issue trade licence within their jurisdiction. They issue trading licenses or shop licenses and are responsible for maintenance and management of municipal markets and stalls. Lastly, the various functions under the AMC and SMB are implemented by different department, wing or cell. For instance, the AMC have 15 departments/wings/cell while the SMB has 11 department for managing various functions in their jurisdictions. In other words, AMC has more power and functions than SMB.

The study also found that there are differences between the two bodies. Firstly, the AMC is an elected body. The Mayor is the executive head of the AMC and the Executive Council exercises all executive powers. Whereas the SMB is not a democratic body and it does not have any elected representatives. All the office holders in the SMB are government officials. Secondly, it is observed that the AMC covers the entire Aizawl city. It is divided into 19 wards with six wards reserved for women. While the SMB did not cover the entire Shillong city and covers only 38 localities. It is further divided into in to 27 wards for administrative convenience. Secondly, the AMC has three organizational structure such as—Board of Councillors, Ward Committee and Local Council. All the three organs are empowered with various functions for the administration of urban affairs in Aizawl city. Whereas the SMB itself is responsible for the civic administration of the municipal area in Shillong city. Lastly, the study found that the AMC is empowered with the regulation of building like other Municipalities while the SMB did not have the authority to regulate building.

In the context of rural local bodies, the two states are exempted from the implementation of Panchayati Raj Institutions in rural local bodies. In Mizoram, the government introduced ‘Village Council’ as the lowest (grassroot) form of government. The Village Council is the local self-government at the village level, succeeding the traditional chieftainship since 1954. The Lushai Hills District (Village

Council) Act, 1953 (as amended from time to time) has been practiced in the whole state of Mizoram until the formation of AMC (since 2008) for Aizawl city and LMC (since 2023) for urban areas of Lunglei respectively. The Village Council under the Autonomous District Councils had their own rules and regulations and remain as the lowest form of grassroot administration. The number of members in the village council varies from the population of one village to another. There is an executive body in the village council with the President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary (appointed) who exercised different powers and duties including judicial power.

The state of Meghalaya is also exempted from the implementation of Panchayati Raj system. As a result, Meghalaya aligns the traditional socio-political institutions in local government. The traditional institution such as *Syiemships*, *Doloiships*, *Nokmaships* and the Durbars are adapted under the Autonomous District Councils. In the Khasi Hills, traditional political system has three layers—(i) village (ii) raid and (iii) state. The study on traditional institutions emphasises on durbar hima or state durbar which is known as *syiemship* as it is responsible for the overall administration of the traditional institutions. The institution of *syiemship* is not elected body as the *syiem* is inherited from the ruling clan. While the *durbar shnong* (village durbar) is the lowest form of administration in the urban and rural areas. The *durbar shnong* is elected by the people while some localities do not allow the participation of women. The *durbar shnong* is a kind of voluntary body and people do not contest in the election. In reality, sometimes there is a strong contest for the election of village durbar as they are very powerful in the administration of their locality. The functioning of village durbar differs from one locality to another as it is a non-statutory body and there is no uniform regulation on their functioning. The head of the village durbar is *rangbah shnong* or village headmen who is assisted by some other office bearer in the locality.

The study found that there are supporters and opposers to the effectiveness of traditional institutions in Meghalaya. One group advocates the significance of traditional institutions as they are deeply ingrained in the society and are regarded as the symbol of their identity. Whereas another group challenges their existence as the society needs to be modernized as women are not allowed to participate in some

localities. Moreover, sometimes their power is misused in the society and there is also power tussle between the elected body (ADCs and state government) and the traditional institutions.

The study observed the similarities between the village council and the traditional institutions. Firstly, the village council and village durbar constitute the lowest form of grassroot administration in both the states. They perform different functions and duties. Some of them are formulation of development schemes, implementing various projects, overseeing collective interests such as sanitation, water supply, health, roads, and education, etc. Besides, they also function as nodal agent or implementing agency of various central and state government schemes. All the development schemes and projects require the prior approval of the village council and village durbar within their localities. Both are essential for effective local governance, enhancing developmental work and dispute settlement. Secondly, the role of the village council and village durbar in administration of justice is remarkable. They are empowered with judicial functions and established Village Council Court for the adjudication of minor civil and criminal cases.

The study also found that there are differences between the village council and village durbar, even though both are the lowest form of government in their respective states. Firstly, the traditional institutions such as chieftainship (in erstwhile Lushai Hills) were discontinued with the establishment of village council in Mizoram. Whereas in Meghalaya, the traditional institutions such as *syiemship* exist in the state under the regulations of Autonomous District Councils. Secondly, the village council in Mizoram is a democratic body as the people elect their representatives through universal adult suffrage. The executive body of the village council led by President exercise all the important functions in which the village council are vested upon. While in Meghalaya, the village durbar is not purely a democratic institution as there are some places where only adult male participates in the election. The village durbar is headed by village headmen with other functionaries in the locality.

In the context of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs), the ADCs are established for the administration of tribal areas in the then undivided Assam. It was

established under Article 244 (2) and Article 275 (1) of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. As a result, there are 10 Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) set up in four states (Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura). The District Councils has a Chairman and Deputy Chairman to conduct the business for session and presided over its meeting. It has an Executive Committee, which functions similarly to the Cabinet in the state government. The Executive Committee is led by the Chief Executive Member (CEM) with Executive Member (EM). The positions of CEM and EM are equivalent to those of Chief Minister and Cabinet Minister of the state government, respectively. The tenure of ADC is five years. They are empowered with executive, legislative and judiciary within their jurisdiction. The Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India safeguards the tribal communities in the Northeastern India. It provides protection in land, forest resources and allowed them autonomy in social and political development. Besides, it empowered the ADCs to make laws and regulations on all matters relating to the customs, culture, traditions and practices of the tribal people, language, identity of the minorities, etc.

In Mizoram, the Lushai Hills District Council (later Mizo District Council) and the Pawi Lakher Regional Council (PLRC) was inaugurated in 1952 and 1953 respectively. However, with the upgradation of Mizo Hills to the Union Territory status, the Mizo District Council was abolished in 1972. The PLRC was trifurcated into the three ADCs namely Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC), Mara Autonomous District Council (MADC) and Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC). The three ADCs cover only two revenue districts of Mizoram, namely—Lawngtlai and Siahia. On the other hand, the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council and the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council were officially inaugurated on 1952. Later on, Jowai Autonomous District Council (later Jaintia Hills ADC) was carved out from the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills ADC in 1964. As a result, there are three ADCs in Meghalaya, namely—Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC), Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council (JHADC) and Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC) and it covers the entire state (except Municipality and Cantonment Board).

The ADCs are functioning as per the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution but the powers and functions are not same. The LADC has a total strength of 29 members. Out of which, 25 are elected by the people and four members are nominated by the Governor. It administers 30 departments and has the power to determine language and elementary education. While the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC) has a total strength of 30 members. Out of which, 29 members are elected by the people and one is nominated by the Governor. The executive wing of the KHADC can be clubbed together in seven departments. The main purpose of the District Council is the promotion and protection of tribal people in the North Eastern states. The study found that the LADC and KHADC did not fulfil all the desires and aspirations of the people, however, both institutions serve the interest of the people in protecting their customs, culture, traditions, language, identity, land and forest.

The study found that LADC enjoys executive power over primary education. It has the power in determining the language and the manner in which primary education is imparted in the primary school. Whereas in KHADC, it does not have the authority on primary education. It is observed that the structure of judiciary in both ADCs is different. The LADC has four set up such as Village Council Courts, two Intermediate District Council Courts and the LADC Court. Whereas in KHADC, it has five set ups namely the Village Court, Additional Subordinate District Council Court, Subordinate District Council Court, Additional District Council Court and District Council Court.

Moreover, the village council under the ADCs in Mizoram has their own Acts, Rules and Regulations which suited the tradition, customs and culture of the people. Besides, the village council with an elected body is the lowest form of government under the ADCs in Mizoram. Whereas in Meghalaya, the traditional institutions are placed under the jurisdiction of the ADCs. It means that the traditional institutions in Meghalaya are under the control of ADCs. It is observed that the traditional chief i.e. *syiem* gave recognition letter to the village headmen which is known as '*sanad*'. The study reveals that the people in LADC give more priority to the District Council election than MLA and Parliament elections. Whereas in KHADC, it is observed that the people give more importance to MLA election followed by District Council and

Parliament elections. The study also found that there are various factors for winning elections in LADC and KHADC. The common factors are personal capacities, family relationship, party affiliation, money power and church denomination. The issue of clan can be one of the most important factors in LADC while personality factors attributed the most in KHADC.

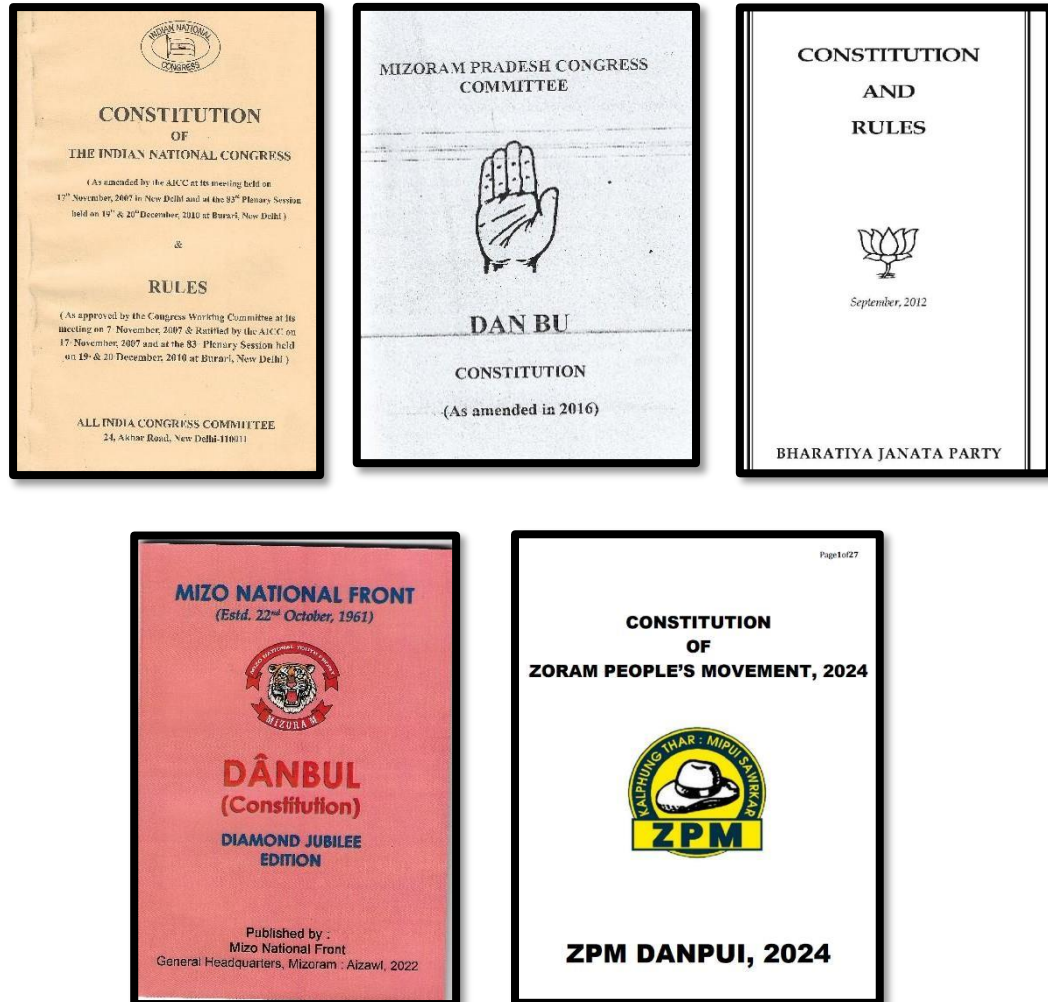
The LADC and KHADC also faced challenges in their functioning. The study found that both ADCs faced power tussle with the state government. The common problems faced by the ADCs is delayed in releasing the funds from the state government. It is found that this kind of problem is common in all the ADCs if the party belonging to the state and ADC is different. Political instability is another common feature found in the functioning of the ADC. The study reveals that the 11th LADC term (2020-till date) and the 13th KHADC term (2019-2025) experienced political instability as the CEM have been changed five times including imposition of Governor's Rule before the expiry of the term. It is learnt that political instability hampers the functioning of the ADCs in these states. The issue of direct funding is another hot topic. There are different opinions about the direct funding among the party leaders, officials, journalists, academician and civil society leaders. However, the demand of direct funding can be achieved only by amending Article 275 (1) which affects the federal structure of the Indian Constitution. Therefore, it is observed that the demand of direct funding from the Centre to the ADC is not going to be granted in the near future until and unless the provisions of the Sixth Schedule is amended.

From the above, it can be concluded that democracy is one of the most popular concepts of government in the modern world. It is considered as the most legitimate and desirable political system in the world as it ensures that power rest with the people, directly or through elected representatives. India is a good example of a democratic society as well as democratic government. In the working of democracy, political parties play a crucial role and are known as the 'life blood of democracy'. Political parties engage in all sphere of life including social, religion, economic and political activities. The political parties in Mizoram and Meghalaya like in other parts of India lead the society. Political parties in these states function in a similar manner. They contested in the elections and formed the government by the wining party or parties

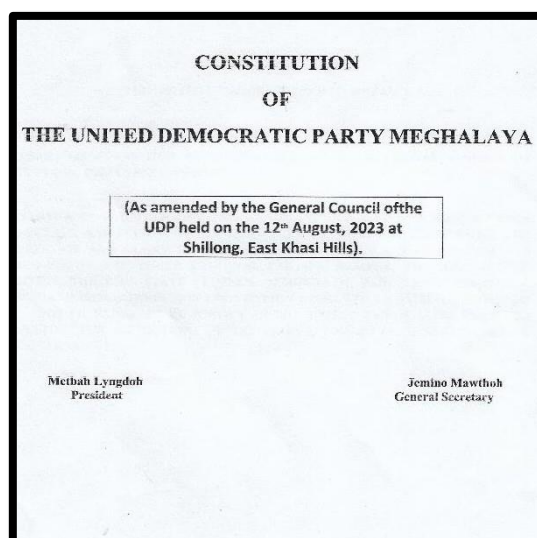
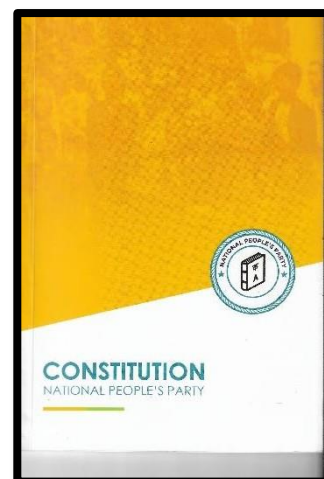
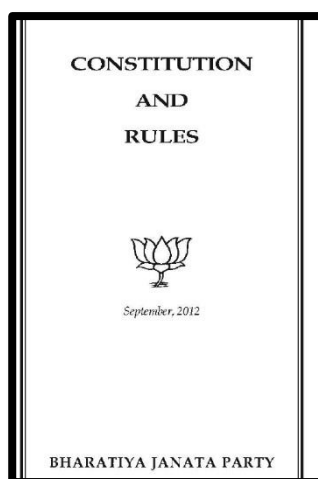
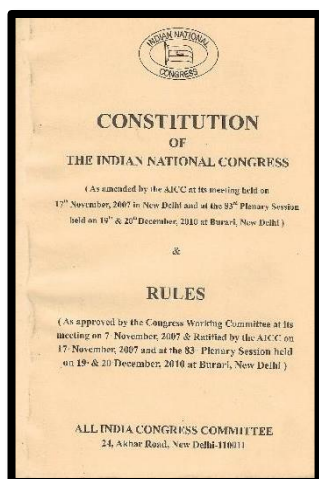
(by forming pre-poll or post-poll alliances). In terms of stability of government, Mizoram is performing better (more stable) because all the governments (in the post-statehood era—from 1987) completed their normal tenure of five years except the first government led by Laldenga. While in Meghalaya, only four governments (out of 24 governments) can complete their normal tenure of five years (in the post-statehood era—from 1972) without changing the Chief Minister. It means that political parties in Mizoram are more disciplined than Meghalaya as change of party leaders or Chief Minister has not happened in Mizoram. In these states, there are ADCs (three each) working under the Sixth Schedule along with the urban and rural local bodies. In the working of local democracy, all the local bodies in Mizoram (rural and urban) are elected by the electorate and one-third of the seat are reserved for women. Whereas in Meghalaya, the local democracy (urban bodies and traditional institutions—*Syiemship* and village *durbar*) are semi-democratic body as traditional institutions are still functioning in the state. In some village *durbar*, only male participate in the *durbar* meeting and also in the elections. In other words, women are not eligible to participate in some *durbar shnong* (village *durbar*). It means that universal adult franchise is not practice in all the local body. In short, the working of democracy in Mizoram is better than Meghalaya in terms of stability of government (at the state level) and also more democratic in nature particularly in the functioning of local democratic bodies.

APPENDICES

Appendix-1: Constitution of Political Parties in Mizoram



Appendix-2: Constitution of Political Parties in Meghalaya



**Appendix-3: 'Thawhhona Thuthlung'—Agreement Sign between Mizoram
People Forum and Political Parties in Mizoram in 2023 (in Mizo
Dialect)**

**MPF LEH POLITICAL PARTY-TE
THAWHHONA THUTHLUNG**



Mizoram chhunga inthlanna hrang hrang atan hian Mizoram People Forum leh Political Party-ten Thawhhona Thuthlung kan siam thin a. Kan hmalak hona chuan rah tha a chhuah zel a. Kan ram inthlanna pawh a tha thawkhatin, ram chung leh ram pawn lam thlengin mite hriat leh ngaihven pawh a hlawh ta hle mai. Hei hi kan zavaia tan tlanna leh thawhhona rah lawmawm tak a ni.

Kum 2023-a Mizoram Legislative Assembly inthlan lo awm turah hian inthlanna zalen, thianghlam, dik leh felfai a awm ngei theihna tur leh Sawrkar Inrelbawlna Tha (Good Governance) kan neih ngei theihna turin Mizoram People Forum leh Political Party hrang hrangte chuan tan lak ho dan tur kan ngaihtuah a. A hnuiaia thawhhona tur tarlante hi zawm theuh tha kan ti a. Thawhhona Thuthlung hi MPF-in a duh anga a duan, Political Party-te a pawmtir mai a ni lo va. MPF leh Political Party hrang hrang hruaituten uluk taka an sawi ho va, an ruahman hnuah hming an ziah hnan ta a ni. Inthlanna tha kan neih theih nan hma kan lak hona tura ruahman a ni a; a hlawhtlin theihna turin kan zavaia theihtawp chhuah theuh tha kan ti.

He Thawhhona Thuthlung hi siam thar leh a nih hma chuan inthlanna chi dang atan pawh hman zui zel tur a ni ang.

1. Inthlan chungchâng

- 1) Inthlanna thianghlam, dik leh felfai tak a awm ngei theihna turin mi tinin theihtawp chhuah theuh tur a ni.
- 2) Inthlanah hian khua leh tui dik tak, vote neite chuan vote thlâk theuh tur a ni.
- 3) Vote thlâk tura hmun dang atanga anmahni khaw lama kalna leh hawna tur ngaihtuahsak leh inthlan ni a vote

1

thlak tura motora inhruaite hi Election Dan in a phal loh avangin tu mahin ngaihtuahsak loh ni se.

2. Inthlan senso chungchâng:

Election Commission of India/State Election Commission-in a phal bak inthlan senso atan an hman lohna turin tan lak theuh ni se. Hetiangin:-

- 1) MPF-ten Candidate-te leh party-te hnenah pawisa dil emaw, dawn emaw khap tlat a ni.
- 2) House to House Campaign hi Candidate-te tan leh MPF tan pawh a hautak em em a. Dan phal baka sum hman sual theihna remchang tak a ni thei baw. Chuvangin House to house campaign hi neih loh ni se, Candidate-ten hun leh hmun inang tlangah thu an sawi theih nan Common Platform siam a ni ang.
- 3) Sum leh therhlo dang hmanga vote lei leh hralh hi Election Dan in a phal loh avangin tih hauh loh tur a ni. Mipui, pawl hrang hrang leh kohhrante pawhin party leh candidate-te hnenah thil phut neih tur a ni lo. Chutih rualin thil chi hrang hrang sem, (Entir nan- Silpouline, Jersey, Football, Mobile handset etc.) leh sawrkar development kal lai leh thil dang sem te, buh leh thil dang inphurhsak te hi Election Model Code of Conduct-in a phal loh avangin tih loh tur a ni.
- 4) Mipui vantlang tana ei leh in siam - ruai, chawhlui kil ho, sawhchiar pir leh a chi dangte, picnic te hi a hautak em em a. Candidate-te tan ngei pawh sum tak tak sen theihna a nih thin avangin tih loh tur a ni.
- 5) Candidate-te ruh tura dawr leh hmun danga thil lo lak leh pakte pawh hi tih hauh loh tur a ni.
- 6) Candidate-te tana inthlan tihautaku, heng- banner, flag leh poster-te hi veng tina tar zat tur hetiang hian bithliah a ni a. Election Model Code of Conduct hman a nih atanga hman nghal tur a ni ang:-

- a) VC/ LC member pasarih nei chinah Banner - 5, Flag -

2

50 leh Poster - 30 thleng.

- b) VC/ LC member panga nei chinah Banner - 4, Flag - 40 leh Poster - 30 thleng.
- c) VC/ LC member pathum nei chinah Banner - 3, Flag - 30 leh Poster - 20 thleng
- d) Banner hi ft. 4 x 8 aia lian lo ni se. Poster hi ft. 3 x 4 aia lian lo ni se.
- e) Flag siam dan tur: Two wheelers - Flag 1, ft 1 x 2 aia lian lo. Three wheelers leh four wheelers - flag 1, ft. 2 x 3 aia lian lo. Flag san zawng hi ft 3 aia sang phal a ni lo.
- 7) Central/State dang a tanga party hruaitute campaign-a an lokal pawhin flag leh banner te hi meeting neihna hmun bakah tar loh tur a ni.

3. Inthlan Campaign chungchâng

- 1) Sawrkar dan dinglai angin, vote la nei theilo te chu inthlan kaibhnawih thilah hman phal a ni lo.
- 2) Party ten tul an tih chuan candidate-te campaign-a an kal velnaa an iptepui banna tur (station) an siam thei ang. Chutiang hmunah chuan pawn lama ri chhuak bengchheng turin aurinna hman phal a ni lo. Thenawm khawvengte tana ninawm khawpin music leh zai te tihchhuah loh tur a ni.
- 3) Inthlan puan hnuah kawngzawh hi tih loh tur a ni.
- 4) Social Media hmanga dik lo taka thu thehdarh hi Sawrkar dan in a phalloh avang leh a thehdarhtute chu na taka hrem theih an nih avangin tih hauh loh tur a ni. Dik lo taka thu thehdarh an awm chuan rang taka bawhzui nghal a ni ang a, a tul anga puanzar a nih bakah Election chungchanga thu neitu emaw CID-Cyber Crime-ah emaw hriattir nghal zel a ni ang.
- 5) Zu leh ruihhlo (drugs) hmanga vote zawn hi Election Commission phal loh a nih avangin tih hauh loh tur a ni a. Polling area leh a bul hnaiah zu leh

3

ruih theih thil dang rui chungin awm phal a ni lo.

- 6) Vote nei zawng zawngten zalen taka vote an thlak vek theih nan theihtawpa tan lak theuh tur a ni.
- 7) Candidate-ten an tihhlawhtlin theih loh tur thil engmah an tiam tur a ni lo.

4. Zalen taka inthlan leh venhimna chungchâng

- 1) Invau leh inrikrap awm lo turin theihtawp chhuah theuh tur a ni a, security duty-te chauh lo chuan silai leh puakthei thil ken loh tur a ni.
- 2) Helte hmanruaa hman leh ralthuam chelekna awm thei te huai taka dodal theuh tur a ni.
- 3) Border leh sensitive area-ah te a tul leh mamawh anga venhimna a awm theih nan hmalak tur a ni.
- 4) Vote thlak hi secret ballot a ni a, Dan dinglai angin tuman Polling Booth chungah mobile phone ken luh loh tur a ni. Vote thlak lai thla hi tumahin lak loh tur a ni.

5. Policy siam chungchâng

- 1) A tak ram thleng thei tur leh tihhlawhtlin theih tur chauh - manifesto, policy leh programme duan ni se.
- 2) Mimal chungchâng leh tualchhung thil chauh ni lovin, party policy leh programme hi campaign-na leh inzawrhna atan hman ni se. Dawt leh thu belhchian daw lo leh finfiah nghal mai theih loh hmanga inbeih hi tumahin tih loh ni se.

6. Candidate chungchâng

Political Party tinin candidate an siam lain hetiang mi hi candidate atan ruat tura beisei an ni.

- 1) Mi hmingtha, mize nghet leh rilru puitling.
- 2) Mi taima leh rinawm.
- 3) Dik lo leh kut ting lova sum leh thil dang hmuh tum lo mi.
- 4) Zui leh ruihtheih thil dang laka fihlim.
- 5) Mipat hmeichhiatna kawnga sawisel kai lo.
- 6) Ram leh hnam Dan pawisa mi leh dikna ngaisang mi.
- 7) Khawtlang leh mahni mihring puite thatna tur duha,

4

chumi atâna inhmang peih mi.

- 8) Mahni sakhua leh kohhran zah thiam a, pâwla mi hmingtha leh rinawm.

7. Thawhhona chungchâng

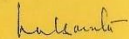
- 1) Inthlan puan a nih hnuah chuan Common Platform hi Central Forum, Constituency Forum leh Local Forum ten anmahni area theuhah an buatsaih ang a, MPF hrutaituten an kaihrui zel ang.
- 2) Party malin emaw Independent Candidate in emaw, Public Meeting neih an duh chuan MPF kaihruiaina hnuaiah neih a ni ang a, State pawn lam atanga Campaign tura lo kalte pawhin public meeting an koh pawhin MPF-in a kaihrui zel ang.
- 3) Vantlâng tân thingpui lum loh ni se; polling booth area bul hnaia electoral roll en leh number pek chhuah hi Political Party ten a mala buaipui lovin, MPF kaihruiainain, fimkhur taka buaipui ni se.
- 4) Common Platform neihna hmunah khua/veng pawn lam atangin party mi inphurh khawm loh tur a ni.

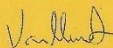
8. Tlângkawmna

- 1) A chung a 'Thawhhona Thuthlung' târ lan piah lamah hian MPF District Forum, Constituency Forum leh Local Forum ten ruahmanna hran siam loh ni se.
- 2) Heng 'Thawhhona Thuthlung' hi bawhchhia an lo awma, finfiah ngei a nih chuan, MPF-in an bawhchhiatna constituency/Area huam chhûng mai bakah a tûl angin a puangzâr ang.
- 3) He 'Thawhhona Thuthlung' hi MPF leh Political Party tinin a zau thei ang berin theh darh ni se. Party huang chhunga election cell leh information & publicity te pawhin a zau thei ang berin puangzar se.
- 4) Inthlanna thianghlîm kan neih theihna tura MPF leh Political Party-te thuthlung hian Independent Candidate-te pawh a huam ang.

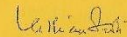
Thawhhona Thuthlungah hian Political Party tin President theuhle leh MPF hotuten hetiangin hming an ziaik.


(ZORAMTHANGA)
President, MNF
General Headquarters


(LALSAWTA)
President, MPCC
General Headquarters


(VANLALRUATA)
President, MPC
General Headquarters


(VANLALHMUKA)
President, BJP
General Headquarters


(LALLIANSAWTA)
President, ZPM
General Headquarters

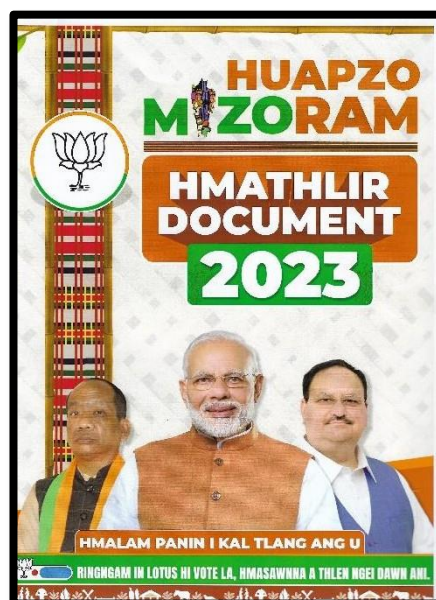
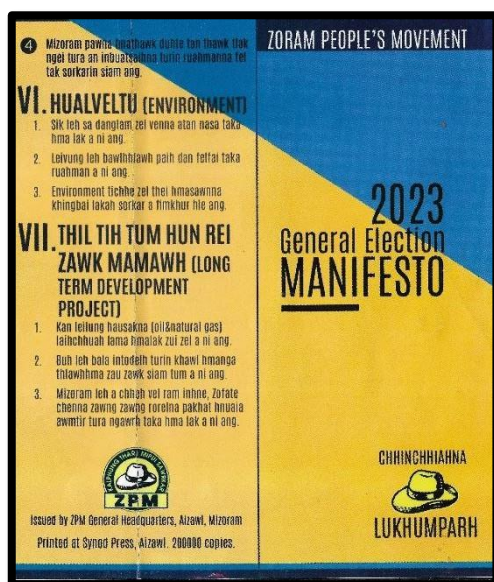
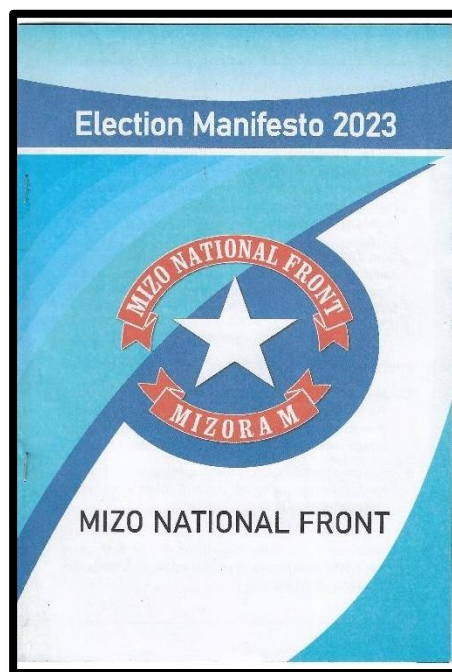
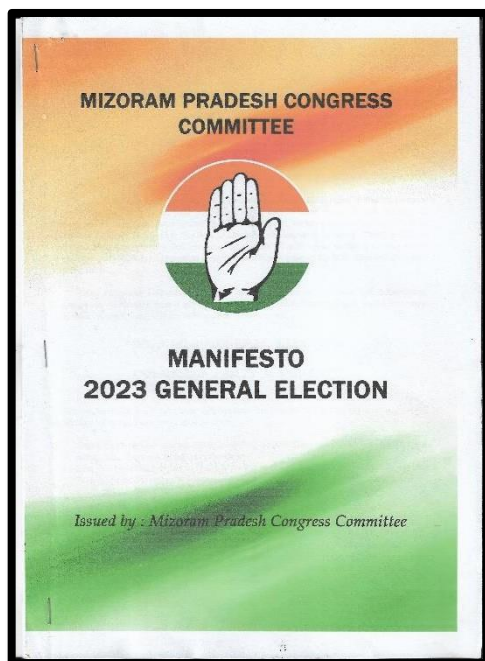

(REV. DR. C. CHAWNGMINGLIANA)
President, MPF
General Headquarters


(REV. LALRAMLIANA PACHUAU)
General Secretary, MPF
General Headquarters

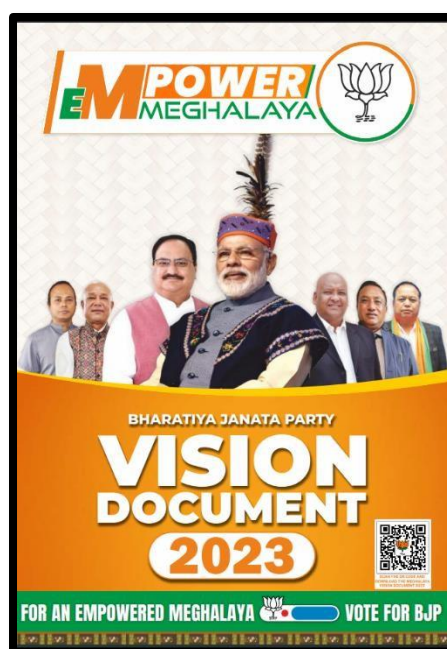
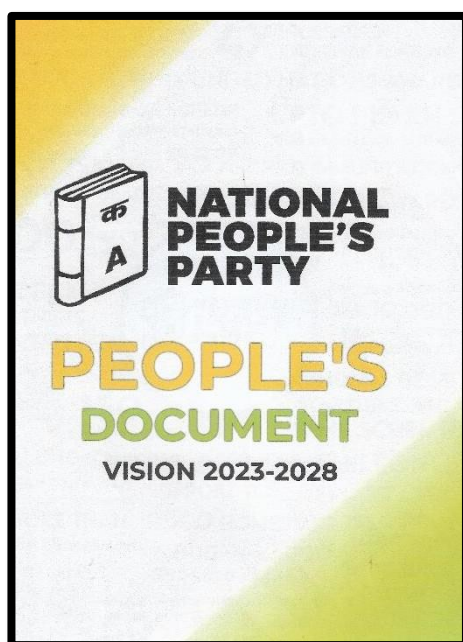
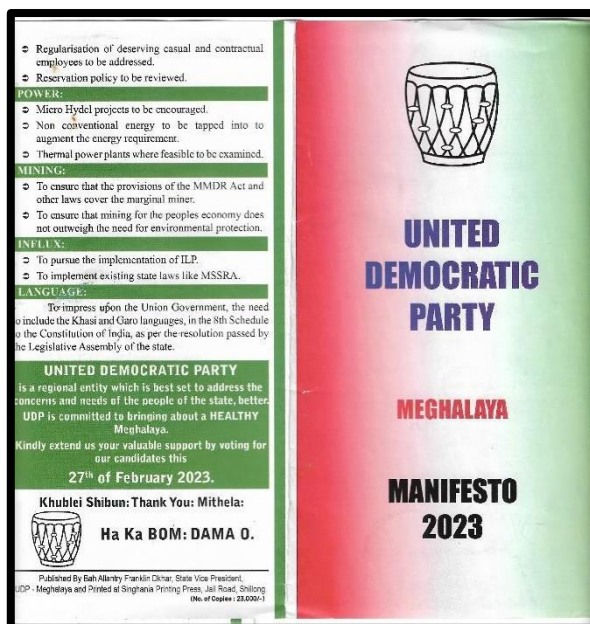
"He ramah hian awm la,
Rinawmna um zel rawh". (Sam 37:3)

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Appendix-4: Manifesto of Political Parties in Mizoram Legislative Assembly Election 2023



Appendix-5: Manifesto of Political Parties in Meghalaya Legislative Assembly Election 2023



Appendix-6: Some Important Pictures taken during Field Work.



Interviewed Sanghuliana Mualchin,
Chairman, Town Planning, LADC on 6th
Dec, 2022



Interviewed Andrew Laltanzara, EM i/c
Middle School Education, LADC on 6th
Dec, 2022



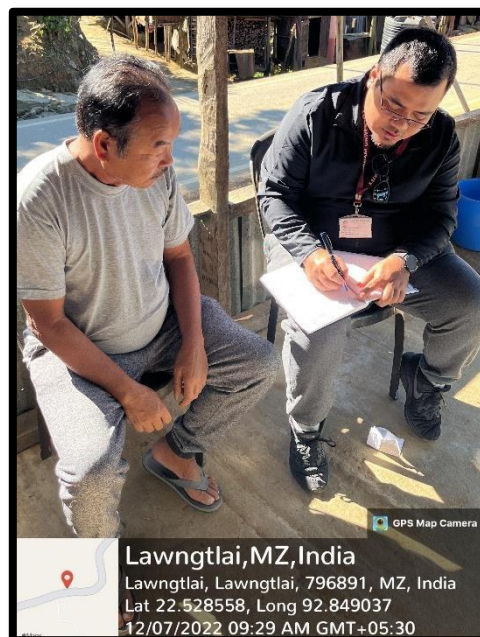
Interviewed L.H. Hauheng, Editor,
Lawngtlai Today on 6th Dec, 2022



Interviewed HC Vanlalruatpuia,
President, CYLA on 6th Dec, 2022



Interviewed A. Lalhmingsanga (VCP, Mampui) & Lalramengzami (Member, Mampui VC) on 7th Dec, 2022



Interviewed the resident of Mampui Village on 7th Dec, 2022
Inset: B. Sangphira



Interviewed V. Zirsanga, CEM, LADC on 8th Dec, 2022



Interviewed Lalropuja Chinzhah, EM i/c Agriculture, LADC on 8th Dec, 2022



Interviewed H. Lalruatkima, Executive Secretary, LADC on 8th Dec, 2022



Interviewed T. Zakunga, ex-CEM & BJP MDC, LADC on 8th Dec, 2022



Interviewed Lalrawlomova Chinzah, ex-EM & Congress leader on 8th Dec, 2022



Interviewed P.C. Chuaudinga, Office Staff, Art & Culture Dept, LADC on 8th Dec, 2022



Interviewed W.J. Nongrum, Headmen,
 Cleve Colony on 14th Dec, 2022



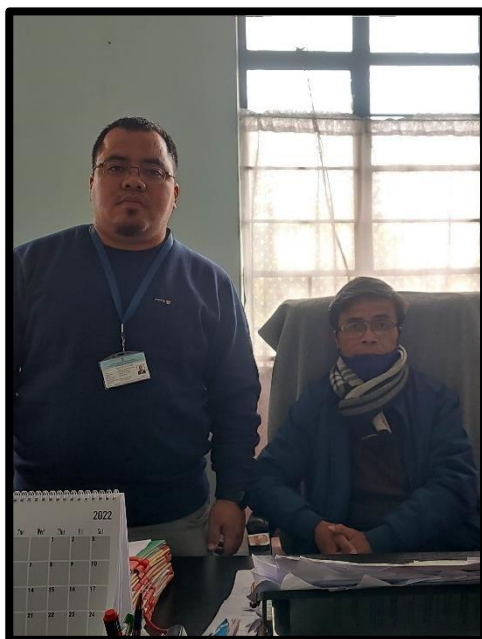
Interviewed Ainam Manik Syiem,
 Syiem, Hima Myllem on 14th Dec, 2022



Interviewed Metbah Lyngdoh, UDP
 President & Speaker, Meghalaya on 14th
 Dec, 2022



Interviewed Dr. Ampareen Lyngdoh,
 NPP Leader & Health Minister,
 Meghalaya on 16th Dec, 2022



Interviewed D.G. Syiemiong, Secretary
to the Executive Committee, KHADC on
16th Dec, 2022



Interviewed F.B. Chyne, Executive
Engineer, SMB on 19th Dec, 2022



Infront of Khasi National Dorbar Hall,
Mawkhar, Shillong



Interviewed the residence of Cleve
Colony Durbar Shnong, Shillong
Inset: Mrs. D. Sawkmie



Interviewed K. Sapdanga, ZPM Leader
& Home Minister, Mizoram on 3rd Feb,
2023



Aizawl, Mizoram, India
PPXG+F6C, Ramhlun N Rd, Ramhlun North
Mizoram 796012, India
Lat 23.748875°
Long 92.725447°
05/02/23 11:04 PM GMT +05:30

Interviewed Dr. Vanlalhlana, ZPM
Leader & Education Minister, Mizoram
on 5th Feb, 2023



Aizawl, Mizoram, India
QPCP+64V, Durtlang Leitan, Aizawl, Mizoram
Lat 23.770463°
Long 92.73552°
18/04/23 08:46 AM GMT +05:30

Interviewed Zodintluanga Ralte, ex-
Congress Minister on 18th April, 2023



Aizawl, Mizoram, India
PPH5+272, New Capital Complex Rd, Khatl
796001, India
Lat 23.727587°
Long 92.708385°
24/05/23 06:25 PM GMT +05:30

Interviewed Tawnluia, Sr. Vice
President, MNF & Dy. Chief Minister on
24th May, 2023



Interviewed Patricia Mukim, Editor, The Shillong Times on 1st June, 2024



Interviewed Donald V. Thabah, General Secretary, Khasi Students Union on 1st June, 2024



Interviewed A.L. Hek, BJP Leader & Minister, Meghalaya on 1st June, 2024



Interviewed Linda Chhakchhuak, freelance journalist (born and raise in Shillong) on 3rd June, 2024



Interviewed Faculties of Dept. of
Political Science, NEHU
Inset: Prof. T.T. Haokip, HoD on 5th
June, 2024



Interviewed Paul Lyngdoh, UDP
Working President and Minister,
Meghalaya on 5th June, 2024



Interviewed Conrad Sangma, NPP
National President and Chief Minister,
Meghalaya on 6th June, 2024



Interviewed Ardent Miller
Basaiaiwmoit, VPP President & MLA,
Nongkrem A/C on 6th June, 2024



Interviewed Pyniad Sing Syiem, CEM,
KHADC on 6th June, 2024



Interviewed Lal Thanzara, President,
Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee
(MPCC) on 28th June, 2024



Interviewed C. Ngunlianchunga, Vice
President, MPCC and MLA, Lawngtlai
West A/C on 4th July, 2024



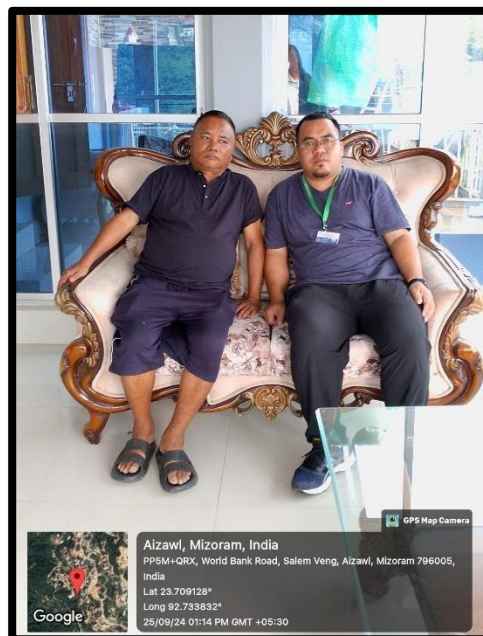
Interviewed Dr. K. Beichhua,
President, Mizoram BJP and MLA,
Siaha A/C on 19th Sept, 2024



Interviewed Prof. Malsawmliana, Gen. Secretary, Central YMA & Professor, Govt. T. Romana College on 24th Sept, 2024



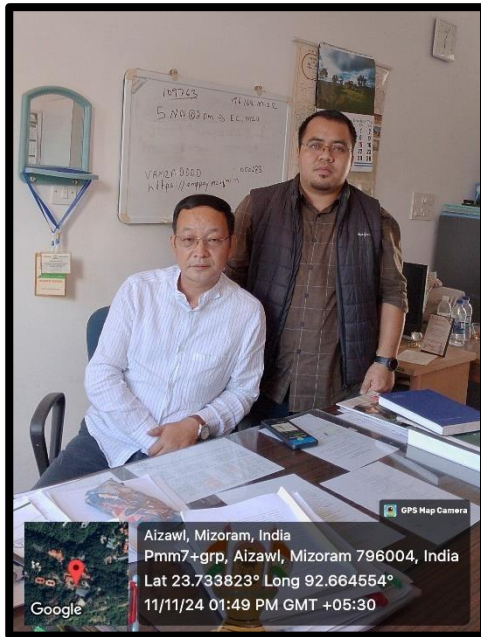
Interviewed Adam Saprsinsanga Halliday, Editor, Frontier Despatch on 24th Sept, 2024



Interviewed H.C. Vanlalruata, Correspondent, Times of India on 25th Sept, 2024



Interviewed Rev. Lalramliana Pachuau, Gen. Secretary, Mizoram People Forum on 25th Sept, 2024



Interviewed Dr. Lallianchhunga,
Faculty, Dept. of Political Science,
Mizoram University & Gen. Secretary,
MPCC on 11th Oct, 2024



Interviewed Reiek Village Council
Members on 15th Oct, 2024



Interviewed Douglas Lalmawikima,
Chairman, Tuikual South Local Council
on 25th Nov, 2024



Interviewed Prof. J. Doungel, Dept. of
Political Science, Mizoram University
on 8th July, 2025

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Publications

1. Jerry Lalmuansanga. (2018). Role of the Congress Party in Socio-Economic Development of Mizoram. In Lalmangaihi Hrahsel, et.al, Lunglei Govt. College edited book publications. *Socio-Economic and Political Development in Post-Peace Accord Mizoram* (214-232). New Delhi: Blue Rose Publishers.
2. Jerry Lalmuansanga. (2019). Mizoram State Legislative Assembly Election 2018: An Overview. In R. Lalthankhumi, Lalmalsawma Khiangte & David Rosangliana (Eds.), *Contemporary Issues in Mizoram* (205-218). New Delhi: Mittal Publications.
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4. Jerry Lalmuansanga. (2024). Analyzing Political Development and Democracy: A Pathway to Progress. *Senhri Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*. IX (1), 17-29.
5. Jerry Lalmuansanga. (2024). Democracy and Good Governance: A Study of its Significance. *Senhri Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*. IX (2), 1-15.

Seminar Paper Presentation

1. Presented a paper titled *Election Issues in Mizoram State Legislative Assembly Elections 2018* at National Seminar on 'Issues and Trends in Mizoram Legislative Assembly Elections, 2018' jointly organized by Mizoram Political Science Association (MIPSA) and Dept. of Political Science, ICFAI University, Mizoram on 22nd February, 2019.
2. Presented a paper titled *Traditional Polity in Lushai Hills* at International Seminar on 'Writing History on Highlanders of North East India' organized by Dept. of History & Ethnography, Mizoram University on 5th & 6th March, 2019.
3. Presented a paper titled *Public Policies in Mizoram: A study on New Land Use Policy (NLUP)* at ICSSR (IMPRESS) National Seminar on 'Governance and Development in Mizoram: Role of Multiple Stakeholders and Public Policies' organized by Dept. of Political Science, Mizoram University on 9th & 10th May, 2019.
4. Presented a paper titled *Mizoram Assembly Elections: History Repeats it Again* at National Seminar on 'Mizoram Since Independence: Change and Development in Polity and Society' jointly organized by Mizoram Political Science Association

(MIPSA) and Dept. of Political Science, Govt. Mamit College, Mizoram on 6th & 7th October, 2022.

5. Presented a paper titled *An Analysis of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Mizoram State Legislative Assembly Election 2023* at State level Seminar on ‘2023 Mizoram Legislative Assembly Election’ organized by Dept. of Political Science, Govt. Aizawl College, Mizoram on 28th November, 2023.

6. Presented a paper titled *Elections in Mizoram and Meghalaya: A Comparative Study* at INET-YSI Doctoral Scholars’ Conference on ‘Understanding India’s Northeast from Emerging Perspectives’ jointly organized by the Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development (OKDISCD), the Institute for New Economic Thinking (INET) and Young Scholars Initiative (YSI) on 11th & 12th March, 2025.

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ABSTRACT

DEMOCRACY IN NORTH EAST INDIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MIZORAM AND MEGHALAYA

**AN ABSTRACT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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DEMOCRACY IN NORTH EAST INDIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
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In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Political Science of Mizoram University, Aizawl.

Abstract

Democracy is the most popular form of government in the world. It is a form of government where citizens directly or indirectly elect their representatives to govern their country. The concept of democracy originates from the Greek philosophers. The term 'democracy' originates from the Greek words— 'demo' meaning people and 'kratien' meaning ruling power, referring to a government where the power lies with the people. The term democracy has been defined in various ways. One of the famous definitions of democracy is coined by Abraham Lincoln as 'the government of the people, by the people, and for the people'. In a parliamentary democracy, elections serve as a political mechanism for shaping and advancing the political opinions and consciousness of the people. The principle of holding regular and genuine elections through universal suffrage is a crucial aspect of democracy. In the elections, candidates normally contested as a representative of a political party. Political parties are one of the most important institutions of democracy. They are considered as the 'life blood of democratic politics.' Moreover, the local democratic institutions are crucial for strengthening democratic framework as it allows the citizens to participate directly or indirectly in governance at the local level.

In the context of India, indirect or representative form of democracy is prevalent. The development and survival of democracy in India can be accredited to the legacy of British imperialism in the country. The British rule in India has a lasting influence on the country's political, social and economic systems. It brought structural transformation in the Indian politics. The adoption of a democratic system was a significant act of faith, based on the belief in the universal validity of parliamentary democracy and the people's capacity to operate it. Indian democracy is a unique experiment that incorporates diversity, allows citizens to vote, freedom of speech, and expression, and conducts periodic elections to regulate the functioning of the three organs of government.

Coming to North East India, the North Eastern states used to have their own traditional political system in the pre-British (and some even during the colonial period and post-British era). The long dynastic rule of the Ahoms in Assam for six centuries prevents the British from occupying the region. However, the Ahom ruled

ended with the Burmese invasion of Assam and the subsequent annexation by the British East India Company following the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826. Thus, Assam came under the control of the British. Subsequently, the British annexed different parts of the region from time to time. The present study focuses on Mizoram and Meghalaya. Meghalaya attained full-fledged statehood in 1972 while Mizoram achieved full-fledged statehood in 1987. It discusses the democracy in North East India in general and particularly in the state of Mizoram and Meghalaya. It also compares the nature of democracy based on different parameters between the two states.

Review of Literature

The scholar reviewed 15 books and 11 articles. The review of literature shows that there are numerous insightful literatures on democracy and its related subject matter such as political parties, elections and grassroots democracy. However, there is no specific literature on the working of democracy in North East India. Moreover, there is lack of literature on the comparative study between the two states. Therefore, the scholar studies democracy in North East India by comparing the state of Mizoram and Meghalaya so that it can fill up the gap of literature in the field.

Statement of the problem

Today, democracy is the most popular concept of government and is a way of life. One of the essential elements of democracy is that the decision makers are elected through periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and virtually every adult population is eligible to vote. There are supporters and critiques on the working of democracy in India. Some argued that elections in India witness malpractices such as rigging, booth capturing, buying and selling of votes. The elections in India also experienced involvement and campaigning of unlawful organization or personnel for a particular candidate, or party in which they can influence the masses, manipulate the votes, etc.

In democracy, the rights of weaker section of the society including the minorities are given prime importance. The majority population in the society instead of promoting and protecting the minority rights, they ignored the rights and privileges of the weaker section of the society. Some people claim that the rights of the weaker section of the society are suppressed and they did not enjoy their rights and status as provided by the constitution. At the same time, fundamental rights like the freedom of speech and expression, and freedom of press are questioned in the country. People express and share their views and opinions which are sometimes contrasted to the ruling party are being charged and became the victim. Sometimes, the controversial socio-political issues are not being cover by the press as there are some kinds of warning, restriction and limitation from the government agencies. That is why some of the political scientists are of the opinion that the essence of democracy is in decline and also face many challenges in the contemporary world.

Nowadays, Indian democracy has fallen in the trap of vicious circle of challenges. Many people are not politically conscious, some leaders are not honest and they are not committed to the welfare of the people, judiciary is sometimes biased, freedom of the press is jeopardized. In short, Indian democracy is passing through an infantile stage and it has not been able to stand on the foundation of democracy firmly. Besides, there are other challenges before Indian democracy. Political parties are one of the most essential institutions in democracy. However, it faces several challenges such as lack of inner democracy, corrupt party leaders, dynastic control, ideological weakness and less participation of women. Election is the essence of democracy and India face challenges in conducting elections. Some of the major issues include use of money and muscle power, fake voting, booth capturing, criminalization of politics, influence of caste and religion in politics, misuse of government machinery and bias media reports. Moreover, local democracy which is considered as the foundation of democracy faces several challenges. Among them includes inadequate financial resources, irregular elections, political interference, bureaucratic control and low public participation.

Mizoram and Meghalaya are not exception from the above challenges faced by the Indian democracy. The election in Mizoram and Meghalaya witnessed buying

and selling of votes, the influence of the civil societies to support particular candidates or parties, employing unlawful organization for the advantages of individual candidates or party in sensitive areas. Therefore, the scholar studies the working of democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya and compare them to understand the nature of democracy in these states.

Delimitation of Research

Democracy is a very vast subject. So, the present study focusses only on the role of political parties, elections and local democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya. The scholar analyses the role and contribution of the political parties in strengthening the working of democracy in both the states. It also discusses the nature and process of elections in the states. The study also examines the working of local democracy in both the states as it constitutes the key ingredients of democracy. It analyses the functioning of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs), Municipalities, Village Council and Local Council in the state of Mizoram. In the case of Meghalaya, it studies the working of Autonomous District Council, Municipalities and traditional institutions namely *durbar* system and *syiemship*.

The rational for selecting the two states—Mizoram and Meghalaya are: Firstly, these states are the two most peaceful states in the North Eastern region. Secondly, these are Christian dominated states and also were parts of the undivided Assam. Thirdly, both the states have three Autonomous District Council each. It can be mention here that the scholar examines the working of democracy from the lens of comparative approach. It also analyses which one (Mizoram or Meghalaya) is working better than the other in the functioning of democracy apart from the similarity and dissimilarity of the system. The study focuses during the period from 2018-2025.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the working of democracy in North East India.
2. To analyse the working of political parties in Mizoram and Meghalaya.
3. To evaluate the nature and process of elections in Mizoram and Meghalaya.

4. To examine the roles and functions of local government in both the states.
5. To compare the working of democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya.

Research Questions

1. What is the nature of democracy in North East India?
2. How political parties are working in Mizoram and Meghalaya?
3. How elections are conducted in Mizoram and Meghalaya?
4. What are the roles and functions of local government towards the working of democracy in both the states?
5. What are the similarities and differences between the functioning of democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya?

Methodology

The present study is qualitative in nature. It employed historical and descriptive methods. The study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data are collected through personal and telephonic interview (details of interviewees are given in the bibliography). The scholar used unstructured and open-ended questions. Leaders of different political parties in Mizoram and Meghalaya are interviewed to understand the nature of election and the role of political parties in strengthening democracy. The scholar interviewed 37 political leaders (29 from Mizoram and 18 from Meghalaya). Interviews are also conducted to different sections of the society in Mizoram and Meghalaya. Leaders of civil society organizations like Young Mizo Association (YMA), Young Lai Association, Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), Khasi Students Union (KSU) and local citizens and local body leaders are interviewed to know their views and perspectives on the working of democracy in these states. A total of 22 (13 from Mizoram and 9 from Meghalaya) civil society leaders, local body leaders and common citizens are interviewed for the study. Academicians, government officials, journalists and church leaders are also interviewed to seek their opinion towards the process of elections, working of political parties and the functioning of grassroot democracy. A total of 24 personals (12 each from Mizoram and Meghalaya) including academicians, government officials, journalists and

church leaders are interviewed. Besides, case study method is employed to analyse the working of Autonomous District Councils (Lai Autonomous District Council and Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council), urban local bodies (Tuikual South Local Council and Shillong Municipal Board), rural local bodies (Reiek Village Council, Mampui Village Council under LADC) and traditional institutions (Cleve Colony village durbar and Hima Myllem Syiemship) to have an insightful on the working of grassroot democracy. Altogether, the scholar interviewed 95 key informants from different sections of the society. They were selected purposively to represent their eminence and expertise in the area of study. Secondary data includes—government records (gazette), books, newspaper, magazines, journals, party manifesto, party constitutions, party records and other online sources. The scholar used descriptive and content analysis to analyse the collected literatures to have an insight of the study.

Chapterizations

Chapter-I: Introduction

The first chapter introduces the study. It incorporates the concept of democracy, profile of Mizoram and Meghalaya, review of literature, statement of the problem, delimitation of research, objectives of the study, research questions, methodology and chapterizations.

Chapter-II: Political Parties in Mizoram and Meghalaya

The second chapter studies the roles and contributions of different political parties towards the working of democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya. It also examines the functioning of different political parties and tries to understand the inner party democracy.

Chapter-III: Elections in Mizoram and Meghalaya

The third chapter discusses the process of elections in both the states. It also examines whether the elections in Mizoram and Meghalaya are conducted in free and fair manner. Other issues such as money and muscle power or even the role of church is also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter-IV: Local Democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya

The fourth chapter studies the working of local democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya. It also analysed the working and functioning of grass-root democracy such as Autonomous District Council's, Municipalities, Village Council's and Local Council's in both the states. It also examines the traditional institutions in Meghalaya namely—durbar system and *syiemship* that are still prevalent in the state.

Chapter-V: Working of Democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya: A Comparative Study

The fifth chapter compared the working of democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya. It discusses the similarities and differences between the working of democracy in Mizoram and Meghalaya.

Chapter-VI: Conclusion

The last chapter summarizes the study and findings.

Summary and Conclusion

Political parties are essential for the functioning of modern democracy. They are important because democracies cannot function without the existence of political parties. Under a parliamentary system, the ruling party forms government and implements the policies it promised during the elections. The emergence of political parties in India can be traced back to the period of freedom movement. In the late 19th century, different socio-economic organizations in India were established to challenge against the British administration. For instance, the Zamindari Association was established as the first organization in 1837. Subsequently, the Indian National Congress (INC) was established in 1885 as the first political party in India. The INC dominated, guided and initiated the freedom struggle as a mass movement rather than a political party.

It is observed that the political parties in Mizoram and Meghalaya were established during the British era. The erstwhile Lushai Hills district (present

Mizoram) was prohibited from any kind of political activities. The first political activity began only in 1925 when Telela and his friends met the Superintendent. They requested the Superintendent to initiate change in the administration of the Lushai Hills to allow the Lushai people to join politics. Therefore, the formation of political organizations came only in the mid 1940's. The first political party i.e. Mizo Common People Union (later on Mizo Union) was formed on April 9, 1946. Whereas in Meghalaya, different socio-cultural organisations were established in the state before the formation of an organised political party. The socio-cultural organisations such as Jaintia Durbar (1900), Khasi National Durbar (1923) and Garo National Council (1945) were forerunner in the formation of political parties in the state. However, the first regional political party in the state namely the All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) was formed in the year 1960.

The study found that there are similarities in the constitution and organizational structure of the national parties such as BJP and INC. However, it is important to mention that the Congress (I) in Mizoram have been given functional autonomy by the All India Congress Committee (AICC) since 1978. Therefore, the Congress (I) in Mizoram have separate constitution which suited the interest of the people. The constitution of the regional parties in Mizoram and Meghalaya are quite similar as they focus on the regional agenda. In the context of Mizoram, the regional parties promise to safeguard the customs and tradition of different Mizo tribes and work for the benefits of the son of the soil. Similarly, the regional parties in Meghalaya focus on the regional issues of the state. It is important to mention that the General Assembly is the highest decision-making body and the unit (local level) is the lowest body in all party organizations. Moreover, political parties in both states have women and youth frontal organizations. While in Mizoram, all political parties have elders wing which is not found in Meghalaya. Further, the parties in both states have established different committees or department to strengthen the functioning of their party.

With regard to the inner democracy and party leadership, it is learnt that the political parties in both states faces internal as well as external challenges. They

believed that external challenges are easily manageable while internal challenges hamper the functioning of the party. It is important to mention that inner democracy is not practicable in reality as party leaders want to stabilize their leadership and dominate the party organization for a longer period of time. Therefore, appointing leaders became a norm instead of conducting elections by having strong contender within the party. The study reveals that party leaders in Mizoram except the BJP usually ruled their party for lengthy period of time. For instance, Lal Thanhawla (INC), Zoramthanga (MNF) and Lalduhoma (ZNP) dominate the party organization as they ruled the party for two to five decades. In the context of Meghalaya, the Congress and the BJP rotate their leaders frequently as compared to other party. While the UDP and the NPP changed their President only after the expiry of their incumbent leaders.

Election is another important feature of democracy as effective electoral system is considered as cornerstone of representative government. Every democratic country has fairly defined eligibility rules for voting in elections. The franchise, however, did not arrive at once. It evolved gradually in response to various factors such as property ownership, literacy, age, religion, race, gender, residence, and so on. The most notable development in the history of democracy over the last century has been the gradual evolution of suffrage from a limited, usually uneven, and indirect system to one that is now practically—universal, direct and equal. The phrase “Election is an expression of feelings” emphasizes assessing the quality of democracy via the electoral process.

Coming to India, franchise for citizens was restricted before the adoption of the constitution in 1950. Citizenship in the constitution was based on the principle of inclusion, requiring adult membership in society to qualify for full state citizenship. Rights of citizenship, including the right to vote, were justified solely on this principle. This could have been due to liberal individualist ideas, which emphasized abstraction from group dynamics, which may not have influenced key political actors. If democracy has been accepted, no member of the nation can be excluded from the exercise of franchise. As a result, elections in India—the most populous

nation in the world is described as a ‘spectacle’ or ‘carnival’ due to the substantial voter participation.

In the context of Mizoram, chieftainship was the only form of government prior to the British annexation of the Lushai Hills. The chief ruled and controlled every village and they were the supreme rulers in their own territories. The electoral politics of the Lushai Hills begin with the formation of the District Conference in 1946. Later, the Lushai Hills District Advisory Council was established in 1948. Subsequently, the District Advisory Council was upgraded to the status of District Council and the first Lushai Hills District Council election was held on 1952. The Lushai Hills District was changed to Mizo Hills District in 1954. During the period, the MU dominated the electoral politics of the Lushai Hills. The Mizo Hills District Council under the Assam government was elevated to the status of Union Territory on 21st January, 1972. Mizoram experienced four Union Territory Assembly Election till the signing of ‘Memorandum of Settlement’ between the MNF and the Government of India on 30th June, 1986. Mizoram attained full-fledged statehood and became the 23rd state of the Indian Union on 20th February, 1987.

In the context of Meghalaya, the people in the hills of North-East India had their own political system before the advent of the British. The Jaintia’s, the Khasi’s and the Garo’s had their own traditional political institutions which varies among tribes. Later on, the British suzerainty was established in the Khasi Hills in 1838, followed by the Jaintia Hills in 1862 and Garo Hills in 1882, resulting in the administration under the Chief Commissioner of Assam. The electoral politics of the state of Meghalaya begin with the formation of District Councils (then undivided Assam). The Autonomous District Councils were first introduced in 1952 in the then United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District and Garo Hills District. The Jowai sub-division (now Jaintia Hills District) was later created in 1964 (but actual functioning in 1967) by bifurcating the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District. Later on, an autonomous state of Meghalaya within the state of Assam was formed by the Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act, 1969 comprising the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District and Garo Hill District. When the North East Reorganization Act of 1971 came into force in 1972, a full-fledged state of Meghalaya was born.

Coming to Mizoram and Meghalaya, both states were initially part of undivided Assam. Mizoram experienced nine Assembly elections while Meghalaya experienced eleven Assembly elections since statehood. It is learnt that churches and civil society organizations played a significant role in Mizoram elections. For instance, the Mizoram People Forum (MPF) was formed in the state in 2006 to establish a transparent, accountable, and reliable government and establish good governance in the state. As a result, the MPF and political parties signed agreements and took several efforts for ensuring clean, free, and fair elections. There are some groups who appreciate MPF's efforts in reforming election process while there are some groups who disapprove the involvement of church in elections. While it is observed that churches and civil society organizations did not directly participate in Meghalaya elections. But sometimes they have hidden agenda by mobilizing the people so as to achieve their objectives.

In election, every political party enters the election with its own manifesto, which it uses to woo voters. The study reveals that election manifesto in both states do not play a crucial role in winning the elections. In Mizoram, the voters focus particularly on the flagship programme than the whole manifesto. It is learnt that the flagship programmes in Mizoram such as—Garden Policy, Jhum Control Policy, New Land Use Policy, Mizoram *Intodelhna* Project (project for self-sufficiency), Socio-Economic Development Programme, etc. were short-lived and co-terminus. The flagship programmes failed mainly due to financial constraints. Whereas in Meghalaya, it is difficult to implement single party manifestos as the state always experienced fracture mandate except the first Assembly in 1972. As a result, the coalition partner in the government framed 'common minimum programme' to be implemented during their term. Therefore, it is not possible to initiate individual party manifesto due to the absence of single majority party in the Assembly elections.

The study found that electoral strategies play a crucial role in elections in both states. The common strategies include house-to-house campaigns, street campaigns, public rallies, and distribution of pamphlets and manifestos. Nowadays, social media has become increasingly popular for attracting voters. Elections are also

fought on issue basis, with different strategies in rural and urban areas. The study found that money power and religion (here Christianity and church denomination in both states) play a significant role in winning elections. It is important to mention that both states also have different strategies in elections. For instance, Mizoram experienced joint platform or common platform initiated by the MPF in which the candidates address the gathering under the supervision of MPF. While in Meghalaya, pocket meeting is popular in which two or more villages gather in one place to listen the address by the candidates. It is also learnt that elections in Mizoram involve a combination of—individual capabilities, party affiliation, and party leaders (recently). While in Meghalaya, individual personality attributed the most in winning the elections. The reason is that individual leaders are elected as independent candidates or even they changed their party affiliation.

The study observed that there are only three parties who ruled the state since statehood, namely—the INC, the MNF and the ZPM. The INC and the MNF shared power on rotational basis after every ten years since 1989: from 1989-1998 by the Congress, 1998-2008 by the MNF, 2008-2018 by the Congress and from 2018 till 2023 by the MNF. However, the trend was break in Assembly election 2023 by the ZPM. Whereas in Meghalaya, the state always experienced fracture mandate except the first Assembly in 1972 led by the APHLC. As a result, coalition government become norms due to the absence of majority government by single party. Thus, different political parties are in the coalition government, sometimes as major player who led the coalition or sometimes as junior partners.

Coming to the Assembly Elections in 2018, both states have Assembly elections in the year 2018. The study found that there are similarities as well as difference between the two Assembly elections held in 2018. Firstly, there was pre-poll alliance in the both states—the ZPM in Mizoram and the Regional Democratic Alliance (RDA) in Meghalaya. The MNF swept the election in Mizoram and forms government while the fracture mandate in Meghalaya led to the formation of coalition government led by the NPP. Secondly, the study found that election in Mizoram was fought on flagship programmes whereas the issues in Meghalaya witnessed tall promises from different political parties. Thirdly, the election results

witnessed the worst ever performance of the Congress in Mizoram as it retains only five seats from 34 seats in 2013. Whereas, the Congress emerged as the single largest party in Meghalaya but it fails to form government. This was the first time the Congress in Meghalaya was not in power sharing with other parties in one Assembly term. Lastly, the election result is significant for the BJP as they first open that their account after consecutively contesting the Mizoram Assembly elections since 1993. Whereas in Meghalaya, the BJP won two seats and found one Ministerial berth in the coalition government. It is important to mention that the BJP even though small in number, they are always crucial in the formation of coalition government. The MNF government led by MNF and the MDA government led by NPP completed their five years term.

Elections were held in both state in the year 2023. The study found the commonalities as well as difference in both elections. Firstly, there was pre-poll alliance known as Mizoram Secular Alliance (MSA) in Mizoram while there was no pre-poll alliance in Meghalaya. In the election, the ZPM win by an absolute majority in Mizoram while Meghalaya again experience fracture mandate and formation of coalition government led by NPP for the second term. Secondly, it is learnt that the political parties in Mizoram again fought the elections on flagship programmes while various issues and agenda were raised by different political parties in Meghalaya. Thirdly, it is observed that the state of Mizoram has a new Chief Minister Lalduhoma. Earlier, there were only three Chief Ministers in post-statehood period, namely—Laldenga (MNF), Lal Thanhawla (INC) and Zoramthanga (MNF). The state witnessed the reining of Lal Thanhawla and Zoramthanga who dominated the state politics for 35 years since post-statehood period. While in Meghalaya, there were 12 Chief Ministers including the incumbent Conrad Sangma.

Fourthly, the election results witnessed the defeat of the MNF in Mizoram. The MNF which is one of the oldest regional parties in the region ruled the state for more than 16 years. Whereas the UDP which is one of the strongest regional parties in Meghalaya again became the constituent partner in the coalition government. It can be noted that the UDP have been in coalition government for 18 years (till date they are part of the government). Lastly, it is observed that the Congress party in

both states have been decimated in the elections. The Congress in Mizoram face a major setback as it retains only one seat while the party in Meghalaya secure only five seats. It became the worst ever electoral performance of the party since its establishment in both states. The Congress party in Mizoram and Meghalaya ruled the state for the longest period of time. In Mizoram, the Congress dominated the electoral politics of the state as they ruled for 22 years and three months since Union Territory era. Similarly, the Congress in Meghalaya ruled the state (sometimes as major and minor party in coalition) around 34 years. It means that the tenth Assembly term (2018-2023) and the eleventh Assembly term (2023-continuing) was the only term the Congress was not sharing power with other parties. It means that due to the frequent change of government, the Congress have the chance to serve the state at least once in one Assembly terms.

The study reveals that the Assembly elections in Mizoram always witnessed single party ruled as political parties always secured absolute majority. It is important to mention that the government in Mizoram always experienced stable government except the first MNF Ministry in 1987. The MNF Ministry led by Pu Laldenga collapse as it lost majority due to intra-factionalism. The MNF government led by Laldenga was the only Ministry who cannot complete five years. Besides, there is no changing of the Chief Minister within the Assembly term. While in Meghalaya, the state always witnessed fracture mandate in the Assembly election. Therefore, post-poll alliance is necessary to form the coalition government. The study reveals that coalition politics led to instability in the government as political parties frequently switch their support to one political party to another. Within one Assembly term, the coalition government is led by different political parties and different Chief Ministers. For instance, the eight Assembly (2008-2013) witnessed the changing of Ministry or Chief Minister for four times.

It is learnt that changing of Chief Minister within the same party is also very common in the state of Meghalaya. For example, the seventh Assembly (2003-2008) experienced the change of Chief Minister for three times—D.D. Lapang (for two times) and J.D. Rymbai, even though they belong to the same party (the Congress party). The instability of government also results in the imposition of President's rule

twice in the state. It is interesting to mention that an independent MLA Flinder Anderson Khonglam once became Chief Minister. It is observed that among the 12 Chief Ministers, only four Chief Ministers—Capt. Williamson Sangma, S.C. Marak, Mukul Sangma and Conrad Sangma can complete five years. However, it is interesting to mention that the state has never experienced mid-term poll despite the frequent change of government.

Local democracy is another important aspect of democracy. Local democracy is the foundation of grassroots democratic governance. It is vital for democracy as it brings governance closer to the people. It ensures the representation of local needs and encourages public participation. By decentralizing power, it enhances accountability, develop local leadership, promotes inclusive development and community identity, thereby making democracy more inclusive, responsive and participatory. Coming to Mizoram and Meghalaya, the local government systems in both states are different from one another. Mizoram has elected democratic grassroot institutions, while Meghalaya has a semi-democratic local government due to the existence of traditional institutions in the state. The local government in Mizoram are broadly classified into three—urban local bodies, rural local bodies and the Autonomous District Council. Whereas the local government in Meghalaya are broadly classified into Autonomous District Council, traditional institution and urban local bodies.

In the context of urban local bodies, Mizoram has two types of urban local bodies—Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) in Aizawl city and Lunglei Municipal Council (LMC) in Lunglei urban areas. The other nine administrative district did not have Municipalities in Mizoram. However, the study is limited to the AMC as LMC was established only in 2023 while the AMC started functioning in 2008. The AMC with an elected representatives manages civic management in Aizawl city. Whereas in Meghalaya, there are 12 urban local bodies namely—six Municipal Board, one Cantonment Board and five Town Panchayat. However, the study focuses on the area covered under Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC) area. Shillong has two types of urban local bodies—Shillong Municipal Board (SMB) and Shillong Cantonment Board. The Shillong Cantonment Board is a type of urban local

body for ensuring civic amenities in cantonment areas (military areas). The SMB is a non-elected body run by government officials. It was established in 1973 and is responsible for civic services and city management in Shillong.

The study found the similarities as well as difference between the two urban local bodies. Firstly, it is observed that the AMC and the SMB have common functions such as civic amenities and hygienic services. The services include—solid waste and sanitation management; streetlighting; maintenance of public places like parks/gardens; maintenance of footpaths, lanes, by-lanes, drainage system, public toilets; parking space, etc. Secondly, the AMC and SMB have the authority on tax collection. The AMC collect tax and non-tax revenue, property tax, etc. Similarly, the SMB collect house tax, sanitation tax, water tax and lighting tax. Thirdly, both are empowered with trade licence within their jurisdiction. They issue trading licenses or shop licenses and are responsible for maintenance and management of municipal markets and stalls. Lastly, the various functions under the AMC and SMB are implemented by different department, wing or cell. The state government has transferred 15 out of 18 subjects under the Twelfth Schedule to the Constitution. For instance, the AMC have 15 departments/wings/cell while the SMB have 11 department for managing various functions in their jurisdictions.

The study also found the difference between the two bodies. Firstly, it is observed that the AMC covers the entire Aizawl city. It is divided into 19 wards with six wards reserved for women. While the SMB did not cover the entire Shillong city and covers only 38 localities which is further divided into 27 wards. Secondly, the AMC have three organizational structure such as—Board of Councillors, Ward Committee and Local Council. Whereas the SMB itself is responsible for the overall administration of the Shillong city. Thirdly, the AMC is an elected body headed by Mayor with the Executive Council exercising all executive power. On the other hand, the SMB is non-elected body as they are headed by government officials. Fourthly, it is learnt that the AMC lacks cooperation with other government agencies except its nodal department—Urban Development & Poverty Alleviation Department (UD&PA). While in Meghalaya, the SMB have cordial relations with government agencies in its functioning. Lastly, the study found that the AMC is empowered with

building regulation like other Municipalities while the SMB did not have the authority on building regulations.

In the context of rural local bodies, the two states are exempt from the implementation of Panchayati Raj Institutions. In Mizoram, the government introduces the Village Council as the lowest form of government, succeeding traditional chieftainship since 1954. The Lushai Hills District (Village Council) Act, 1953 (as amended from time to time) has been practiced in the whole state of Mizoram until the formation of AMC (since 2008) for Aizawl city and LMC (since 2023) for urban areas of Lunglei respectively. Similarly, the state of Meghalaya is also exempted from the implementation of Panchayati Raj system. Therefore, Meghalaya aligns traditional socio-political institutions in local government. The traditional institution such as *Syiemships*, *Doloiships*, *Nokmaships* and the Durbars are adapted under the Autonomous District Councils. The study focuses on Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council, where traditional political systems are based on village, raid, and state levels. The study on traditional institutions emphasis on durbar hima or state durbar and *durbar shnong*. *Syiemship* is responsible for the overall administration of the traditional institutions while the *durbar shnong* is the lowest form of administration at the urban and rural areas.

The study observed the similarities between the village council and the traditional institutions. Firstly, the village council and village durbar constitute the lowest form of grassroot administration in both states. They perform different functions and duties. Among them include—formulation of development schemes, implementing various projects, overseeing collective interests such as sanitation, water supply, health, roads, and education, etc. Besides, they also function as nodal agent or implementing agency of various central and state government schemes. All the development schemes and projects require the prior approval of the village council and village durbar within their localities. Both are essential for effective local governance, enhancing developmental work, dispute settlement, etc. Secondly, the village council and village durbar role in administration of justice is remarkable. They are empowered with judicial functions and established Village Council Court for the adjudication of minor civil and criminal issues.

The study also reveals the difference between the village council and village durbar in both states. Firstly, the traditional institutions such as chieftainship (in erstwhile Lushai Hills) were discontinued with the establishment of village council in Mizoram. Whereas in Meghalaya, the traditional institutions such as *syiemship* exist in the state under the regulations of Autonomous District Councils. Secondly, the village council in Mizoram is a democratic body as the people elect their representatives through universal adult suffrage. The executive body of the village council led by President exercise all the important functions in which the village council are vested upon. While in Meghalaya, the village durbar is not purely democratic as there are some places where only adult male participates in the durbar meeting and in the election. The village durbar is headed by village headmen with other functionaries in the locality.

In the context of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs), the ADCs in both states are established for the administration of tribal areas in the then state of Assam. It was established under Article 244 (2) and Article 275 (1) of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. As a result, there are 10 Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) set up across the four states of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura. The District Councils has a Chairman and Deputy Chairman to conduct the business for session and presided over its meeting. It has an Executive Committee, which functions similarly to the Cabinet in the state government. The Executive Committee is led the Chief Executive Member (CEM) with Executive Member (EM). The positions of CEM and EM are equivalent to those of Chief Minister and Cabinet Minister of the state government, respectively. The tenure of ADC is five years. They are empowered with executive, legislative and judiciary within their jurisdiction. The Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India safeguards the tribal communities in the Northeastern India. It provides protection in land, forest resources and allowed them autonomy in social and political development. Besides, it empowered the ADCs to make laws and regulations on all matters relating to the customs, culture, traditions and practices of the tribal people, language, identity of the minorities, etc.

In Mizoram, the Lushai Hills District Council and the Pawi Lakher Regional Council (PLRC) was inaugurated in 1952 and 1953 respectively. The Lushai Hills

District Council was upgraded to Union Territory in 1972 and the PLRC was trifurcated into the present ADCs such as Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC), Mara Autonomous District Council (MADC) and Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC). The study is confined to LADC which is the largest in terms of geographical area among the three ADCs in Mizoram. On the other hand, the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council and the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council was officially inaugurated on 1952. Later on, Jowai Autonomous District Council (later Jaintia Hills ADC) was carved out from the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills ADC in 1964. The study is limited to the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council (KHADC) as its headquarters Shillong is also the state capital of Meghalaya.

The study found the similarities between the LADC and the KHADC. Firstly, the main purpose of the District Council is the protection of tribal people in the North Eastern states. It is learnt that although the LADC and KHADC did not fulfil all the desires of the people, both institutions serve the interest of the people in protecting their customs, culture, traditions, language, identity, land, forest, etc. Secondly, the LADC and KHADC also faced power tussle with the state government. For instance, delayed in releasing of funds from the state government is common if the party belonging to the state and ADC is different. Thirdly, political instability is another common feature which hampers the functioning of the ADCs in both states. The study reveals that the 11th LADC term (2020-till date) and the 13th KHADC term (2019-2025) experienced political instability as the CEM have been changed for five times. Lastly, the issue of direct funding is another hot debate in the LADC and KHADC. There are different opinions expressed by party leaders, officials, journalists, academicians and civil society leaders. However, the demand of direct funding can be achieved only by amending Article 275 (1) which effect the federal structure of the Indian Constitution.

The study also found the difference between the two ADCs. Firstly, the three ADCs in Mizoram covers only two revenue districts of Lawngtlai and Siahla. Whereas in Meghalaya, the three ADCs covers the entire state (except Municipality and Cantonment Board). Secondly, the study found that LADC enjoys executive

power over primary education while the study found that the KHADC did not have authority on primary education as the District Council already transferred primary education to state government due to lack of fund. Thirdly, it is observed that the structure of judiciary in both ADCs is different. The LADC have four set up such as—Village Council Courts, two Intermediate District Council Courts and the LADC Court. Whereas the KHADC have five set up namely—Village Court, Additional Subordinate District Council Court, Subordinate District Council Court, Additional District Council Court and District Council Court.

Fourthly, the village council under the ADCs in Mizoram had their own acts, rules and regulations which suited the tradition, customs and culture of the people. The village council with an elected body is also the lowest form of government under the ADCs in Mizoram. Whereas in Meghalaya, the traditional exist as all the tribal chiefs and headmen were placed under the jurisdiction of the ADCs. It means that the traditional institutions in Meghalaya were under the control of ADCs. It is observed that the traditional chief i.e. *syiem* gave recognition letter to the village headmen which is known as '*sanad*'. Lastly, the study found that the District Council election is hotter than MLA and Parliament elections in the LADC. Whereas in KHADC, it is learnt that MLA election is the hottest elections followed by District Council and Parliament elections. The study also found that there is no single factor for winning elections in LADC and KHADC. Among the common factors includes—personal capabilities, family relationship, party affiliation, money power and church denomination. The issue of clan can be one of the most important factors in LADC while personality factors attributed the most in KHADC.

From the above, it can be concluded that democracy is one of the most popular concepts of government in the modern world. It is considered as the most legitimate and desirable political system in the world as it ensures that power rest with the people, directly or through elected representatives. India is a good example of a democratic society as well as democratic government. In the working of democracy, political parties play a crucial role and are known as the 'life blood of democracy'. Political parties engaged in all sphere of life including social, religion, economic and political activities. The political parties in Mizoram and Meghalaya

like in other parts of India lead the society. Political parties in these states function in a similar manner. They contested in the elections and formed the government by the winning party or parties (by forming pre-poll or post-poll alliances). In terms of stability of government, Mizoram is performing better because all the government can complete their normal tenure of five years except the first government led by Laldenga. While in Meghalaya, only four governments (out of 24 governments) can complete their normal tenure of five years without changing the Chief Minister. It means that political parties in Mizoram are more disciplined than Meghalaya as change of party leaders or Chief Minister is not happening in Mizoram. In these states, there are ADCs (three each) working under the Sixth Schedule, urban and rural local bodies. In the working of local democracy, all the local bodies in Mizoram (rural and urban) are elected by the electorate and one-third of the seat are reserved for women. Whereas in Meghalaya, the local democracy (urban bodies and traditional institutions—*Syiemship* and village *durbar*) are semi-democratic body as traditional institutions still exists in the state. In some village *durbar*, only male participate in the *durbar* meeting and also in the elections. In other words, women are not eligible to participate in some *durbar shnong* (village *durbar*). It means that universal adult franchise is not practiced in all the local body. In short, the working of democracy in Mizoram is better than Meghalaya in terms of stability of government (at the state level) and also more democratic in nature particularly in the functioning of local democratic bodies.

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29. Shanpru, Rishot, Asst. General Secretary, Cleve Colony Durbar, Meghalaya. (Dated: 16th December, 2022).
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C. Name of Newspaper (Print & Electronic) Used

1. *Bengvarna* (Mizo online news website)
2. Business Standard
3. Business Today
4. Deccan Herald
5. Economic Times
6. Financial Express
7. First Post
8. Highland Post
9. Hindustan Times
10. India Today
11. *Lenkawl* (Daily newspaper in Serchhip, Mizoram)
12. Livemint
13. Meghalaya Monitor
14. NDTV
15. News 18
16. North East Now
17. North East News
18. Scroll.in.
19. Syllad
20. Telegraph India
21. The Aizawl Post
22. The Economic Times
23. The Hindu
24. The Indian Express
25. The Lawngtlai Post
26. The Mizoram Post
27. The MorungExpress
28. The New Indian Express
29. The Print
30. The Shillong Times
31. The Statesman
32. The Telegraph

33. The Times of India
34. The Wire
35. Ukhrul Times
36. *Vanglaini* (Mizo daily newspaper)
37. *Zalen* (Mizo online news website)

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