

**ROLE OF THE OPPOSITION IN THE LEGISLATURE :  
A STUDY OF THE  
THIRD MIZORAM STATE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**THESIS SUBMITTED  
IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR  
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN  
POLITICAL SCIENCE**



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2011**

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**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that Mr. J. Zahluna has prepared the thesis titled “*Role of the Opposition in the Legislature: A Study of the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly*” under my guidance and supervision for the Ph.D. degree in Political Science of Mizoram University. In preparing the thesis, Mr. J. Zahluna has complied with all the requirements as laid down in the Ph.D. Regulations of the University. This thesis is an original work of the scholar and has not been submitted for any degree of any other University.

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Prof. Jagadish Kumar Patnaik  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The present study titled *“Role of the Opposition in the Legislature: A Study of the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly”* forms the corpus of my empirical research pursued for the award of the Ph.D. degree in Political Science of Mizoram University.

I express my profound sense of gratitude to Prof. Jagadish Kumar Patnaik, Head, Department of Political Science, Mizoram University, under whose supervision and guidance I have carried out this study. His scholarly guidance, intellectual inputs, valuable advice and genuine concern about the progress in my research throughout the study gave me the necessary perspective and direction to the study.

I also record my gratitude to the Secretary and Staff, Mizoram Legislative Assembly Secretariat, Aizawl, who very kindly made available to me for the study and reference, the files and documents related to my study.

I am thankful to the Librarians and Staff of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly Library; Mizoram State Library; Mizoram University Library and Sub-Division Library, Aizawl, for the study materials that were made available for my consultation and for extending to me all help and facilities for this study.

My friends, Dr. D. Sundar Ram, Editor, The Grassroots Governance Journal, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh and Dr. Khaybar Ali Miah, Reader, Department of Political Science, Berhampore Girls’ College, Berhampore, Murshidabad, West Bengal, send me several items of information for this work. The unfailing support, assistance and encouragement rendered by them extended far beyond the formal confines of academics and touch a human dimension.

For my wife, a word of praise would be too small who silently took upon herself the pain for the sacrifices and for bearing me out during the course of my work.

Date

(J. Zahluna)

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

India has adopted parliamentary democracy both at the Union and State levels. Parliamentary democracy is characterised by the existence of party system. Political parties constitute an indispensable ingredient for the success of democracy in modern state. Parliamentary democracy is governed by two groups of political parties, i.e., a party or parties in power and a party or parties in Opposition. The party or parties which had been voted to power as a result of people's mandate become the ruling party or parties and the other parties are called Opposition parties. Party system supplies leadership both for running the Government and the Opposition. One of the biggest achievements of parliamentary democracy is that the role of the Opposition has been formally recognised and is given due place in the parliamentary democracy. The essence of parliamentary democracy lies in the tolerance on the part of the majority as well as minority. The majority must concede the minority's liberty of speech and expression so that they may make their voice heard. The minority must also allow the majority without vexatious obstruction and opposition to implement their programmes of popular welfare. Both sides must use the forum of Legislature for convincing each other. There can be no democratic government without an effective Opposition and a responsible Opposition is as important as the party in power. The existence of the Opposition is a characteristic feature of democracy.

The Opposition has to play a very crucial role in keeping a check on any arbitrary actions of the Government. The Opposition keeps a constant watch on the actions and policies of the Government. By highlighting the drawbacks of governmental policies, misdeeds and acts

of omissions and commission, if any, of the government, it keeps the government on its toe in adopting the right course of action. The Opposition also sharpens the Government's policy by its criticism and prevents abuse by its watchfulness. The Opposition should oppose when the need for opposition arises and should also propose alternative policy, so as to rectify the anomalies in the governmental policy.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

Legislature occupies a pivotal position in modern democratic set up. A systematic study of a single institution of parliamentary democracy is imperative for acquiring knowledge of the organisation. The Opposition constitutes the demarcation line between democracy and dictatorship, for it functions as a watch-dog of the liberties of the people. If there is no Opposition, the government might become apathetic to public grievances and even dictatorial in its conduct. The Opposition should not function merely to discredit the government in the eyes of the public but should also exhort it to modify its policy to suit the requirements of the people.

The Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Mizoram Legislative Assembly provide several recognised devices by which the Opposition can influence and check the government actions. Question, Adjournment Motion, Censure Motion, No-Confidence Motion, Resolution, discussion on Budget, Governor's Address etc are the means by which the Opposition can criticise the governmental policies and modify them. The success of the Opposition in the Legislature lies in using these weapons effectively and skillfully.

The present study attempts to examine and analyse the role played by the Opposition in the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly. The focal point of this analyse is focus on the impact and efficacy of the

Opposition in the process of policy formulation, implementation of decision and public grievances.

### ***Review of Literature***

While making a survey of the literature on the subject, it has been observed that whatever scanty literature is available, is mostly on the theoretical nature. No thorough and systematical study of the Opposition in Mizoram is available. A brief review of the subject may be highlighted:-

D. Sundar Ram edited work *Readings in the Indian Parliamentary Opposition*, Vol. I is a collection of articles written on the Opposition in Indian by 16 scholars.<sup>1</sup> The book contains two parts – Part I contains general and theoretical aspects of parliamentary Opposition. Part II deals with the role of various political parties in the Indian political system.

Parliamentary procedure has received sophisticated attention in the hands of M.N. Kaul and S.L.Shakdher's *Practice and Procedure of Parliament*.<sup>2</sup> The authors deal exhaustively with parliamentary procedure in India, comparing with English procedure and discussing the development of parliamentary procedure in India and its deviation from the English model.

Herman Finer's work *The Theory and Practice of Modern Government* studies the characters and policies of modern political parties in Europe and USA.<sup>3</sup> He also postulates the role and position of the Leader of the Opposition in England.

Renu Saksena's book *The Role of Opposition in Indian Politics* traces the functioning of Opposition in India since the first General Election upto the end of Emergency.<sup>4</sup> The author describes the role of the

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1. D. Sundar Ram (ed.), *Readings in the Indian Parliamentary Opposition*, Vol. I, Kanishka Publishers, New Delhi, 1996.
  2. M.N. Kaul and S.L. Shakdher, *Practice and Procedure of Parliament*, Metropolitan Book Co.Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 1995.
  3. Herman Finer, *The Theory and Practice of Modern Government*, Surjeet Publications, Delhi, 2005.
  4. Renu Saksena, *The Role of Opposition in Indian Politics*, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 1986.

Opposition in Indian political system and the causes for the absence of effective Opposition in Parliament.

D. Sundar Ram's book entitled *Role of Opposition Parties in Indian Politics* deals with the role of Opposition in democratic countries in general and Andhra Pradesh in particular.<sup>5</sup> The author discusses the role of the Janata and Congress (I) as an Opposition in the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly during 1978-1984. He also examines the roles of various political parties outside the Legislature.

Bhal Chandra Shukla in *Glimpses of Parliamentary Practice and Procedure* postulates the role and position of the Leader of the Opposition with special reference to Uttar Pradesh.<sup>6</sup> He examines the concept of official Leader of the Opposition in the Legislature and also suggests the probable solutions and possibilities for the smooth functioning of Indian parliamentary system.

In his unpublished Ph.D. Thesis on *Analytical Study of the Structure, Role and Functioning of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly* (1972-1984), Vanlalhluna traces the history of modern Opposition in Mizoram.<sup>7</sup> He examines the role played by the Opposition in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly in general perspective.

Apart from the aforesaid books, there are some useful Journals like *The Journal of Parliamentary Information*, *Journal of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies*, *The Indian Journal of Political Science* and *Indian Journal of Politics*. But none of the above books and Journals highlight on the role of the Opposition in Mizoram. Nevertheless, they are great source of help and guidance and have indirect relevance for the study.

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5. D. Sundar Ram, *Role of Opposition Parties in Indian Politics*, Deep & Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1992.

6. Bhal Chandra Shukla, *Glimpses of Parliamentary Practice and Procedure*, Uttar Pradesh Vishan Sabha Sachivalayan, Lucknow, 1989.

7. Vanlalhluna, *Analytical Study of the Structure, Role and Functioning of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly* (1972-1984), (Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis), Department of Political Science, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, 1988.

## ***Objectives of the Study***

The main objectives of the thesis are as follow:-

- (1) To evaluate the role played by the Opposition in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly.
- (2) To examine how far the Opposition maintained the level of parliamentary behaviour, decency and decorum in the Legislature.
- (3) To examine how far the Opposition utilised the available recognised parliamentary devices to ventilate public grievances in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly.
- (4) To study the factors responsible for the weakening of the Opposition in Mizoram.
- (5) To provide suggestions for the improvement of the working of the Opposition in Mizoram.

## ***Hypotheses***

The main hypotheses of the present study are as follows :-

- (1) The Opposition in Mizoram conceptualise their ideological commitment vaguely and politics has been characterised by defection.
- (2) The ruling party has done everything possible to keep the Opposition divided due to the fear that an understanding among them can pose a serious threat to its own existence.
- (3) The type of Opposition that has emerged in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly and the tactics it has developed.
- (4) The fragmented nature of Opposition in Mizoram Legislative Assembly prevented the emergence of an effective Opposition and as a result the Opposition failed to produce any common programmes which could be considered as superior to the ruling party.

- (5) The Opposition maintained a low profile due to communication gap with the people.
- (6) The Opposition in Mizoram can be made more effective and responsible.

### ***Significance of the Study***

The main reason for the selection of the topic lies in the fact that the need for research, in the area has been increasingly emphasised in recent years. But the area has not attracted attention and still remains unexplored. There is a widespread feeling among the people and rightly so, that the Opposition in Mizoram has failed to meet their expectations in providing a check on any arbitrary action of the State Government and as such the Opposition has a poor image. This is mainly because there are rising expectations and increasing social and political pressures on the Opposition. Therefore, it is a challenging task for researcher to take up this job of the detailed study of the role played by the Opposition in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly with a hope that it would contribute towards the improvement of the working of the Opposition.

The role of the Opposition in ensuring the successful functioning of Mizoram Legislative Assembly can hardly be over-emphasized. The presence of Opposition in the Assembly is inevitable for keeping a constant watch of the State Government. The study brings forth the role of the Opposition in fruitfully utilizing the recognised parliamentary devices on various matters of public importance. How far has the Opposition lived up to the ideals is worthwhile to examine.

### ***Methodology***

The study is largely based on the primary sources. A systematic study on the proceedings of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly during 1993-1998 formed the bulk of information. For understanding the legal framework of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business (Fourth edition, 1991) and Directions by the Speaker, 1992 had been consulted.

Sources of primary data include documents and publications of Government of Mizoram and Mizoram Legislative Assembly Secretariat.

The primary sources are also supplemented by secondary sources that include both published and unpublished works apart from articles, journals, newspapers, weeklies and other relevant materials. The researcher has also undertaken interviews with some of the Opposition members during the period under study.

### ***Limitations***

The followings are the main limitations of the study:-

- (1) It is very difficult to contain the subject in specific boundaries as the role of the Opposition inside the Legislative Assembly is a very comprehensive subject. All the issues raised by Opposition inside the Mizoram Legislative Assembly could not be identified, and only select aspects have been discussed.
- (2) The role of the Opposition in Mizoram has remained an unresearched area and there was not any accounts of investigation on the subject to rely upon. The Mizoram Legislative Assembly Secretariat do not maintain proper and uniform records on the subject. All the informations were undocumented.
- (3) When the Opposition members, during the period of our study, were interviewed on sensitive questions, there was a tendency among them to hide facts and answered questions in general way and sometimes treated some matters confidential.

### ***Chapterization***

The study has been divided into eight chapters. They are as follow:-

The first Chapter, being the introductory chapter, deals with

the statement of the problem, reviews of the literature, objectives of the study, hypotheses and methodological aspects of the study. This chapter also provides the profile of Mizoram, traditional administrative system and emergence of modern representative institutions.

The second Chapter traces the role of the Opposition in a democratic system, the origin and growth of Opposition in Mizoram. The social and political background of the Opposition members during the period of our study has been analysed.

The third Chapter analyses the attitude of the Opposition towards the Governor's Address to the Mizoram Legislative Assembly.

The fourth Chapter examines how far and how effectively the Opposition succeeded in exploiting the Question Hour. The Opposition used the Question Hour to highlight the flaws in the day to day administration of the Government.

The fifth Chapter evaluates the attitude of the Opposition towards the Budget during the general discussion.

The sixth Chapter has three parts. The first part examines the adjournment motions moved by the Opposition. The Opposition made use of this weapon for attacking the governmental administration. The second part deals with the No-Confidence Motion moved by the Opposition. The third part focuses the Censure Motion moved by the Opposition against a particular Minister.

The seventh Chapter gives a detailed account of the Resolutions moved by the Opposition. The attitude of the Opposition towards the Government Resolutions has also been analysed.

The last Chapter contains the main findings and the concluding observations. It evaluates the problems and difficulties faced by the Opposition in Mizoram. It also offers suggestions for the growth of a healthy, strong, effective and responsible Opposition in Mizoram.

## **A PROFILE OF MIZORAM**

### ***Geographical Location***

Mizoram lies in the extreme southern fringe of North-East India. Mizoram is located between 21° 58' north to 24° 35' north latitudes and 92° 15' east to 93° 29' east longitudes. The Tropic of Cancer passes through the middle of the State at 23° 30' north latitude. Mizoram is bounded on the north by Cachar District of Assam and Manipur, on the east and south by Myanmar and on the west by Tripura and Bangladesh. It has an inter-state boundary of 123 kilometres with Assam, 66 kilometres with Tripura and 95 kilometres with Manipur. Mizoram has a strategic location sharing an international boundary with two foreign countries, namely, Bangladesh with 275 kilometres and Myanmar with 475 kilometres.<sup>8</sup> Mizoram has a total geographical area of 21,087 square kilometres which accounts for 0.64 percent of the total geographical area of India. The length of the State from north to south is about 277 kilometres and the width from east to west is about 121 kilometres. The State comprises of eight districts, namely, Lunglei (4,538 sq.km), Aizawl (3,576.31 sq. km), Champhai (3,185.83 sq.km), Mamit (3,025.75 sq.km), Lawngtlai (1,991 sq.km), Saiha (1,965.81 sq.km), Serchhip (1,421.60 sq.km) and Kolasib (1,382.52 sq.km).<sup>9</sup> Each district is under the charge of the Deputy Commissioner. For administrative purpose, the State is divided into 23 Sub-Divisions, 26 Rural Development Blocks and 3 Autonomous District Councils.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Topography***

Mizoram has mostly hilly terrains running from north to south direction parallel to each other with a tendency to be higher in the eastern side and tapering in the north and south. The hills are steep and are separated

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8. Manoj Kumar Nath, "Mapping North-East India Foreign Policy: Look Past, Present and Beyond", *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. LXV, No. 4, 2004, p. 637.

9. Recently, the State Legislature passed a bill for the creation of three more districts, namely, Hnahthial, Khawzawl and Saitual. With these the number of districts rose to 11.

10. *Economic Survey : Mizoram 2009-2010*, Planning and Programme Implementation Department, Government of Mizoram, p. iv.

from one another by rivers which flow either to the north or south direction, creating deep gorges between the hills ranges. As many as six major hill ranges of various heights run through the length of the State, leaving some plains scattered occasionally here and there. The average height of the hill is about 900 metres above sea level. The highest peak in Mizoram is Phawngpui (Blue Mountain) with a height of 2,165 metres from sea level. The hills in the southern part are generally smaller and more fragmented by small brooks compared with those of the northern part.

There are a number of rivers in the State but only few of them are worth mentioning. The northern part of the State is drained by the rivers Tlawng (Dhaleswari), Tuirial (Sonai), Tuivawl, Langkaih and Tuivai, all flowing northward and eventually join the Barak river in Cachar plain of Assam. The southern part is drained by the river Chhimtuipui with its tributaries, Mat, Tuichang, Tiau and Tuipui. The western drainage system is formed by the river Khawthlangtuipui and its tributaries, Tuichawng, Phairuang, Kau and De.<sup>11</sup> All the rivers in the State are fed by monsoon rains. All the rivers swell rapidly during monsoon session and recede shortly after the rains. So far, only the rivers of Tlawng, Tuirial and Khawthlangtuipui are navigable throughout the year.

### ***Demography***

According to 2001 Census, the total population of Mizoram stood at 8,88,573,<sup>12</sup> which accounts for 0.08 percent of the population of India. Out of 8,88,573 population, 4,59,109 are males and 4,29,464 are females. The population of Mizoram is mainly constituted by the Mizos who are Scheduled Tribes with a percentage of 94.45. Mizoram is one of the sparsely populated areas of the country. The density of the population is 42 persons per sq.km as against the national average of 324 persons per sq.km. Sex ratio is of 935 females per 1,000 males.<sup>13</sup>

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11. Rintluanga Pachuau, *Geography of Mizoram*, R.T. Enterprise, Aizawl, 1994, p.13.

12. *Census of India, 2001, Series – 16, Mizoram, Final Population Totals*, The Controller of Publications, New Delhi, 2003, p. 1

13. *Economic Survey : Mizoram 2009-2010*, p.v.

The decadal variation in population of Mizoram since 1901 is shown as under:-

**TABLE I**

**Mizoram: Decadal Variation in Population since 1901**

Year	Male	Female	Total Persons	Decada Variation	Decadal Variation Percentage
1901	39,004	43,430	82,434	—	—
1911	43,028	48,176	91,204	8,770	(+) 10.64
1921	46,652	51,754	98,406	7,202	(+) 7.90
1931	59,186	65,218	1,24,404	25,998	(+)26.42
1941	73,855	78,931	1,52,786	28,382	(+) 22.81
1951	96,136	1,00,066	1,96,202	43,416	(+) 28.42
1961	1,32,465	1,33,598	2,66,063	69,861	(+) 35.61
1971	1,70,824	1,61,566	3,32,390	66,327	(+) 24.93
1981	2,57,239	2,36,518	4,93,757	1,61,367	(+) 48.55
1991	3,58,978	3,30,778	6,89,756	1,95,999	(+) 39.70
2001	4,59,109	4,29,464	8,88,573	1,98,817	(+) 28.82

*Source: Statistical Abstract of Mizoram: 2009, Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Government of Mizoram.*

In Mizoram, urbanization is taking place at an accelerated pace. The process of urbanization started during the last part of 1960s when the Government of India introduced the grouping of villages. Under this dispensation, scattered habitations were brought together in a cluster called Progressive and Protected Villages. As per 2001 Census, urban population constitutes 4,41,006 while rural population accounts for 4,47,567. This indicates that 49.64 percent of the total population of Mizoram lived in the urban areas and 50.36 percent lived in the rural areas.

In literacy, Mizoram is the second highest literate State in India, next to the State of Kerela. As per 2001 Census, the literacy percentage being 88.80 as against India's average of 65.38 percent. The literacy percentage of male and female is 90.69 and 86.13 respectively. The

percentage of literacy in urban area is 96.34 while in the rural area it is 80.45. The high literacy percentage is attributed to the Christian Missionaries. The majority of the people profess Christianity with a percentage of 86.97. The main languages spoken in Mizoram are Mizo and English.

### ***Climate and Rainfall***

Mizoram enjoys a pleasant moderate climate throughout the year. It is neither too hot in summer nor too cold in winter. The climate is humid with short winter and long summer. In winter, the temperature varies from 11 degree centigrade to 21 degree centigrade while in summer it is between 20 degree centigrade to 31 degree centigrade. In autumn, the temperature is usually between 18 degree centigrade to 25 degree centigrade. Mizoram comes under the direct influence of monsoon. The average rainfall is about 254 cms per year. The southern part of Mizoram experiences more rainfall of 350 cms per year while the northern part receives about 208 cms per year.

### ***Vegetation***

The tropical evergreen forests are found in Mizoram. The State has one of the most enchanting hilly terrains with natural beauty, rich in flora and fauna. The entire area is covered with dense evergreen forest which presents very colourful and picturesque natural sight. The forest clad mountains, covered with mixed variety of vegetations, bamboos, wild banana trees, wild grass of different varieties, dense woods festooned with wild creepers and canes, orchids of various kinds and wild flowers add the beauty of the enchanting landscape. Based on “State of Forest Report-2009”, published by Forest Survey of India, Ministry of Environment & Forests, forest covers 9,240 sq.km (91.27 percent) of Mizoram’s geographical area, out of which 134 sq.km is very Dense Forest, 6,251 sq.km is Moderate Dense Forest and Open Forest covers 12,855 sq.km. The State has 16,717 sq.km Recorded Forest Area, out of which Reserved

Forest covers 7,909 sq.km, Protected Forest Area covers 3,568 sq. km and Unclassed Forest covers 5,240 sq.km.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Economy***

Agriculture is the main occupation of the people of Mizoram and more than 60 percent of the people are engaged in agriculture. Shifting cultivation continues to be the principal and prevalent method of cultivation. Though the hills take the form of serrated gorges, the small proportions of arable land which are found, are devoted to the production of rice, maize, ginger, banana, pineapple, chillies, sugarcane, citrus fruits etc.

Gross State domestic Product (GSDP) of Mizoram at factor cost at constant (1999-2000) price is expected to attain an amount of Rs 2,80,891 lakhs in 2009-2010 against the quick estimates of Rs 2,62, 033 lakhs for the year 2008-2009, showing a growth of about 7 percent over the previous year.<sup>15</sup> The per capita income of Mizoram for the year 2009-2010 is estimated at Rs 32,634 as against the previous year estimate of Rs 30,292. The contribution of Service sector is about 67 percent of the total GSDP while Industry sector contributes about 19 percent of the State economy and Agriculture and Allied sector contributes about 14 percent, although majority of the people are engaged in agricultural activity.<sup>16</sup>

By occupation structure we mean the distribution of work force in various activities or occupations. The occupational structure represents the economic activities of the people. The broad classification and comparison of the percentage of the occupational structure of Mizoram on the last four censuses are given below:-

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14. *Economic Survey: Mizoram 2009-2010*, p. 56.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

**TABLE II**  
**Percentage of Occupational Structure in Mizoram**

Sl. No	Category	1971	1981	1991	2001
1.	Cultivators	83.53	70.63	60.89	54.87
2.	Agricultural Labourers	0.37	2.49	3.73	5.73
3.	Household Industry Workers	0.32	0.85	1.25	1.51
4.	Other Workers	15.78	26.03	34.13	37.89

*Sources: Statistical Abstract of Mizoram : 2009, Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Government of Mizoram.*

The above table shows that bulks of the working population are cultivators. The proportion of cultivators in Mizoram has declined significantly since 1981. In 1971, as much as 85.53 percent of the workers were engaged in cultivation. The corresponding figure declined to 70.63 percent in 1981, 60.89 percent in 1991 and 54.87 percent in 2001. The proportion of workers in other categories of occupation other than cultivators has shown a sharp increase. It is thus evident that there has been a shift in the occupational structure from agricultural activities to other workers, while the household industry workers is still weak in the State.

### ***Industry***

Mizoram is one of the most backward States in India and there is hardly any scope for industrial development. The State has been notified as backward area and is categorised as ‘No Industry State’ due to the non-existence of large or medium industry. The contribution of Industry sector, both manufacturing and service industry, in the GSDP has reach 20.45 percent in 2007-2008. In terms of registration, there are 7,431 number of units registered as on 31<sup>th</sup> March, 2009. The flow of investment during 2008-2009 has been Rs 8663 lakhs and the total number of employment generated by industries stood at 4,113.<sup>17</sup> The growth of industry and industrial

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17. *Ibid*, p. 80.

development in Mizoram is relatively slow owing to its topographical and geographical disadvantages coupled with under developed infrastructure and transport bottle-neck. Power supply, transport and communication, water supply, lack of raw materials and technical know-how played significant role towards hindering slow industrial development.

### ***The Etymology of the word ‘Mizo’***

Before and after its annexation of the present Mizoram by the British, it was described as Lushai country and by that name it was also called by almost all the writers in the past. And the people were also referred to as ‘Lushai’. The term ‘Lushai’ is a corrupt word of ‘Lusei’, the name of a dominant tribe. Now, the people discarded the appellation ‘Lushai’ and have instead wanted to be called as ‘Mizo’.

The term ‘Mizo’ is a generic term which covers many kindered tribes or clans, having the same ethnic origin, close linguistic affinity and cultural traits. It includes those who identify themselves as ‘Mizo’ and who are being identified as such. The word ‘Mizo’ is a compound of two words - “Mi” and “Zo”. “Mi” means men and “Zo” means highland or hill. Thus, the word “Mizo” means the people dwelling in high hill. Ethnically, the Mizo belong to the Tibeto-Burman language speaking group of Mongoloid stock. The Mizo are closely knit homogeneous tribes with numerous clans and have a common dialect, custom, tradition and culture. They spread over a wide areas extending from Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh to Myanmar and the contiguous areas of Cachar and North Cachar of Assam, Manipur and Tripura.

Today, the name-”Mizo” is used in its ethnic sense rather than linguistic. Goswami thinks that the word “Mizo” has a political undertone - a symbol of unity and solidarity.<sup>18</sup> The collective will of the people to identify themselves as “Mizo” was realised when the Lushai Hills District

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18. B.B.Goswami, *Mizo Unrest*, Aalekh Publishers, Jaipur, 1979, p.18.

(Change of Name) Act, 1954 was passed by the Parliament. Under the Act, the name of the erstwhile Lushai Hills District was changed to Mizo District with effect from 29<sup>th</sup> April, 1954.<sup>19</sup>

The term “Ram” means ‘land’. So, Mizoram literally means the land of the Mizo. The Mizo follow a patriarchal system and their law of inheritance is based on descent through the father’s clan. The male head of the family is the authority on all matters like property, social and economic aspects of life.

### ***Origin of Chieftainship***

In traditional Mizo society, the village occupied the most important place in the administrative system. The people of the village lived on the basis of self-sufficiency in matters of food, cloth and shelter. As far as possible, the people avoided any dependence on outside assistance. People belonging to different clans mutually helped each other in their day to day life. The village has a close knit community, well-organised system of administration and ordered life which contributed to their tranquility and happiness. The main source of strength of the village community was derived from the strong social and economic base developed by them with their own efforts, resources and commitments. The administration of village was centered around the Chief or *Lal*.

In the absence of any authentic materials, it is very difficult to present how and when the institution of Chieftainship originated. In order to understand the origin of Chieftainship, it will, therefore, need an investigation into the past history or circumstances of the Mizo. When the Mizo settled in the Chin Hills of Burma around 14<sup>th</sup> Century A.D., different clans located themselves at different places, having no particular Chief to rule them. They fought against each other for supremacy. Supremacy of different villages used to be decided by physical fight between the bravest man of one village and that of another. The two would fight hand to hand and the winning man would command over the losing village. Thus, the constant war and feud with the neighbour villages necessitated to have

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19. Lalbiakthanga, *The Mizos*, United Publishers, Gauhati, 1978, p.171.

a brave, strong, intelligent and able leader to represent the village. In fact, Chietainship originated through physical ability to provide security to the people. The need for security led to the emergence of a leader which took in the shape of Chieftainship. The institution of Chieftainship, therefore, appeared to have grown out of the collective needs of group life which characterised tribal living.<sup>20</sup>

When the Mizo settled at Seipui village in Chin Hills of Burma, they fought war against the Paihte clan. The Mizo captured a Paihte named Chhuahlawma. Chhuahlawma was adopted by a Chhakchhuak clan as their son and later on got him married and had a son named Zahmuaka. Zahmuaka married Lawileri and they have six sons, namely, Zadenga, Paliana, Thangluaha, Thangura, Rivunga and Rokhuma. At the same time, on the death of Chhanpiala of Hnamte clan, who was the leader of Khawrua and Tlangkhua villages, the villagers began to search for a Chief to rule their villages. They invited Zahmuaka but at first reluctant to accept the offer. With much persuasion and his wife's pleading, Zahmuaka at last accepted Chieftainship of the said villages. The probable date could be placed at around 1500 A.D.<sup>21</sup>

At first, the institution of Chieftainship was voluntary and no tribute or reward was paid to the Chief. But as time went on, people began to feel the need for having full time Chief to devote entirely for village administration and defence and started to contribute a portion of their annual harvest for the Chief.

Soon, all the six sons of Zahmuaka became Chiefs in different villages. Among them, Thangura was the greatest. He has two sons - Chawnglula and Thanmanga. Thanmanga's son Sailova became the progenitor of the present day Sailo. Where Chieftainship has become hereditary, the law of primogenitor was generally observed. Succession passed on to the youngest surviving son. The Sailo became the most powerful Chiefs and they ruled the whole Mizoram for a period of about 250 years till Chieftainship was abolished in 1955.

20. Dr. N. Chatterjee, *The Chief and His Administration*, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, 1975, p. 1.

21. C. Nunthara, *Mizoram: Society and Polity*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 41 - 42.

### ***Traditional Administrative System***

The Chief was the ultimate controlling authority of the village for all social, political and administrative purposes, whose word was law within the limits of his territory. As the head of the village, the Chief held the highest position in the society. The Chief's administration was carried out on a fairly democratic lines, despite the fact that some Chiefs were despotic by nature. The Chief was a benevolent ruler, guardian, leader and defender of the people. The position of the Chief was explained by Lalbiakthanga as under: - "The position of a Chief was unenviable one. He was the guardian of the people, leader and defender in times of attack by the enemy and above all, giver of food in times of scarcity. In battle, he would lead his warriors. Fugitives in war would seek refuge in his house".<sup>22</sup>

Although all powers were theoretically in the hands of the Chief, practically speaking, the Chief would never try a case without consulting his council of elders called *Upa*, who were appointed and dismissed by the Chief. In dealing with the cases, the Chief and his *Upa* were guided by the established customs. The amount of power exercised by the Chief depended upon his personality. A strong Chief would control practically everything while a weak Chief would be almost entirely guided by his *Upa*. With such wide powers concentrated in his hands, the Chief could easily become an autocrat. If anyone incurred his displeasure, the Chief could drive him out of the village. If a person committed a serious crime and was in danger of his life, he could surrender his liberty to the Chief and procure against retaliation. He could, thus, save his life by becoming a slave of the Chief.

The recognition and honour given to the Chief enabled him to enjoy certain privileges :- (a) six tinfuls of paddy from every household from the annual harvest; (b) the left fore-leg of animal killed in the hunt; (c) one-tenth of the amount of salt collected from the village salt spring; (d) share of any wild honey collected by the villagers; (e) share of the fish caught in any fishing expedition; and (f) free labour in constructing his house.<sup>23</sup>

22. Lalbiakthanga, *Op.Cit.*, p. 2

23. Lalthungnunga, *Mizoram: Politics of Regionalism and National Integration*, Reliance Publishing House, New Delhi, 1994, p. 30.

### ***Emergence of Representative Institution***

In the traditional political system of the Mizo, there was no place for representative institution. The administration of the village was carried on by the Chief, who was assisted by a group of *Upa*, who were selected and dismissed by the Chief himself. The representative institution began to surface only at the fag end of the British rule.

### ***District Conference***

When India's Independence became imminent, the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, A.R.H. MacDonald, felt the need for forming a body of representatives to express the political ideas and demands of the Mizo. His idea was to institute a forum widely and freely open to both the Chiefs and the commoners. In December, 1945, an order was issued that each Circle was to be represented by two representatives - one from the Chief and another from the commoners. The whole Lushai Hills was divided into 20 Circles. The date of election was fixed at 14<sup>th</sup> January, 1946 for the North Lushai Hills and July, 1946 for the South Lushai Hills.

The elected members of the North Lushai Hills held their first meeting at Aizawl on 18<sup>th</sup> January, 1946. The meeting fixed the rate of Fathang\* at Rs 2/- per household per year and henceforth an 'Advisory Council' should be set up in every village on whose advice the Chief could exercise his powers. In the meeting, MacDonald declared that the land belonged to the people who lived in it and not to the Chiefs. As if to confirm his statement, he dismissed four Chiefs on that day and replaced them with World War II ex-service men. This statement by the British official as the Superintendent, who himself was a Britisher, left an indelible imprint in the minds of the Mizo community as a very significant one, implying that the Mizo Chiefs, contrary to the popular belief of old, were liable to be deprived of their lands by virtue of which alone they could retain their Chiefships because there could not be a King without a kingdom.<sup>24</sup>

\* *Fathang* was a tribute paid to the Chief by every household of unhusked paddy generally six kerosene oil tins annually.

24. R.Thanhliira, "Evolution of Legislative Assembly in Mizoram. Inter-Relation Between the Legislative, Executive and Judiciary", in *Assembly Silver Jubilee Souvenir*, Mizoram Legislative Assembly, 1997, p. 15.

In the third meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November, 1946, MacDonald laid before the District Conference the agenda for discussion, namely the composition and mode of elections of the District Conference and the Draft Constitution for Mizoram. The meeting was, however, prorogued because there was disagreement between the District Conference and the Mizo Union regarding the representativeness of the Mizo Union. The Mizo Union decided to boycott the District Conference “unless the Mizo Union have twice as many representatives as the Chiefs”.<sup>25</sup>

Having failed to get his scheme approved, MacDonald issued orders for fresh elections of the District Conference to be held at Lunglei and Aizawl on 9<sup>th</sup> April and 14<sup>th</sup> April, 1947 respectively. Meanwhile, the Mizo Union decided to boycott the election.<sup>26</sup>

In spite of the boycott launched by the Mizo Union, elections were held as scheduled. The newly elected members met at Aizawl on 16<sup>th</sup> April, 1947. The meeting passed the Draft Constitution for Mizoram to be submitted to the Bordoloi Committee and appointed five persons to represent the views of the Mizo.

The District Conference was unpopular because it did not serve any purpose. Whatever might be its contribution, the District Conference was the first representative institution ever found in the Lushai Hills, recognised and graced by the Government authority. It comprised of both the traditional Chiefs and the commoners with equal privileges and status and truly a landmark in the political history of the Lushai Hills. In the course of time, it came into oblivion.

### ***District Advisory Council***

When India attained freedom on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947, it was obvious that it would take time to frame and finalise the Constitution and complete all other formalities. The Government of India considered it expedient to set up interim arrangements whereby participation of the hill people of North-East Indian in the administration of their areas could be initiated.

25. Chaltuahkhuma, *History of Mizoram*, R. D. Press, Aizawl, 1987, p. 110.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

On 10<sup>th</sup> November, 1947, a meeting was held at Government House, Shillong, to finalise the composition and functions of the District Advisory Council (D.A.C.) of the Lushai Hills. The meeting was attended by the following persons:-

1. His Excellency Sir Akbar Hydari, the Governor of Assam;
2. Gopinath Bordoloi, Chief Minister of Assam;
3. Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy, Minister of P.W.D., Assam;

Delegates from the Lushai Hills were:-

Representing the Chiefs:-

(a) Lalsailova; (b) Awksarala and (c) Ngura;

Representing the Mizo Union :-

(a) R.Thanhlira; (b) R.Dengthuama; (c) Vanchhunga; (d) Ch.Saprawnga; (e) H.K.Bawihchhuaka;

Representing the United Mizo Freedom Organisation (UMFO) :-

(a) Lalmawia; (b) Pachhunga and (c) Hmingliana;

Representing Ex-Servicemen's Association:- R.Zuala.

The Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, L.L. Peters and C.E.D. Walker, Adviser to the Governor for Tribal and Excluded Areas, were also present.

The discussions were held to lay down the composition of the DAC which was required to be set up to make recommendations to the Government of Assam to determine the degree of local autonomy which was to be conferred upon the Lushai Hills within the Independent Act and of the new Constitution of India, and also the manner in which such degree of local autonomy may be decided upon, should be conferred upon the Lushai.

The meeting unanimously agreed to fix the composition of the DAC as follows: - There shall be a total of 37 seats of which 10 seats were reserved for the Chiefs. There shall be 20 general seats for the rural areas;

3 seats for the urban areas of Aizawl and 2 seats for the urban areas of Lunglei and 2 seats for women - 1 for Aizawl and 1 for Lunglei. It was further agreed that the Chiefs, if they so wished, could contest all the 27 general seats. The DAC was a non-statutory body and was to be only an advisory body and treated as a provisional District Council. The Lushai

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It was also reiterated that the DAC was to be only an advisory body which would submit recommendations to the Government of Assam, but would not initiate any legislation. It was also mentioned that it was the intention of the Government that the DAC should, subject to the general direction of the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, also exercise certain powers which are exercise under the Local Self-Government Act by local body elsewhere.<sup>28</sup>

Elections for the 10 reserved seats for the Chiefs took place on 23<sup>th</sup> March, 1948 and elections for the remaining 27 seats were held on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 1948. In the elections, out of the total of 27 general seats, the Mizo Union won 21 seats, 4 seats went to UMFO and 2 reserved seats for women were captured by Independent candidates. Three Mizo Union candidates were elected unopposed while two UMFO candidates forfeited their deposits.

The first meeting of the DAC was held on 16<sup>th</sup> August, 1948 at the Office Chamber of the Superintendent. When the Superintendent, L.L.Peters, took the chair, the members of the Mizo Union questioned as to who would preside over the meeting. Since the Mizo Union had the largest membership, they should preside over the meeting, they argued. The matter was referred for clarification to the Governor of Assam, who ruled that the Superintendent should chair the meeting of the DAC.

The second meeting was held on 17<sup>th</sup> August, 1948. The first business was to consider the Draft Regulation for the District Council

27. S.K. Chaube, *Hill Politics in North-East India*, Orient Longman Ltd., Patna, 1999, p. 178.

28. H. Vanthuama, *Mizoram Politics Chanchin (1952 Hmalam)*, Zotlang Press, Aizawl, 2001, pp. 02-103.

which was prepared on the basis of Bordoloi Committee Reports and recommendations which the Governor of Assam had sent. The Mizo Union members refused to discuss the Draft Regulation on the ground that they had not been given before-hand. Moreover, owing to the lengthy and elaborate nature of the Draft Regulation and the problem of delegates in understanding the context, which was in English, the Mizo Union demanded seven days to study and translate it into Mizo language, which the Superintendent agreed.

The third meeting of DAC was held on 23<sup>th</sup> August, 1948. The Mizo Union demanded again at least two more months to study the Draft Regulation and for consultation of their members. The Superintendent objected them and the matter was referred to the Governor.

The Governor sent N. K. Rustomji, Adviser to the Governor, to Aizawl on 31<sup>th</sup> August, 1948. After a series of meetings, an understanding was reached and the members reassembled on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1948 to discuss the Draft Regulation. Under Rustomji's guidance, the Draft Regulation was discussed smoothly. On the advice of Rustomji, District Advisory Council Sub-Committee, consisting of five members, was formed to speed up the formation of the new District Council.

In the meantime, relations between the Superintendent, who openly sided with the Chiefs, and the Mizo Union deteriorated. A non-cooperation movement, demanding removal of the Superintendent, was launched by the Mizo Union from 28<sup>th</sup> December, 1948 till February, 1949.<sup>29</sup> Many Mizo Union leaders were arrested and put behind bars. However, an agreement was reached and the detainees were released and the non-cooperation movement was called off. On 1<sup>st</sup> March, 1949, L.L. Peters was transferred and he was replaced by S. Barkataki.

On 11<sup>th</sup> February, 1950, DAC meeting was convened, in which the following resolutions were passed:-

- (1) As provided in the Constitution, there should be 24 members in the District Council. Of which, 20 will be elected directly by the people and the remaining 4 will be nominated.
- (2) The District Council shall have a President elected by the members amongst themselves.
- (3) There shall be 2 or 3 Ministers from the elected members selected by the President and they will remain in office as long as the President is pleased.
- (4) The District Council will have a Chairman and Deputy Chairman who shall be elected from amongst themselves.
- (5) The President may be removed from office if two-thirds majority of the members voted against him.
- (6) Ministers can be removed by the President. In case the President does not want to do so and the members feel that it is a deserving case, they can impeach the President and urge him to remove the Minister concerned.
- (7) The term of the member will be 5 years.
- (8) Any discussion in the District Council sitting cannot be subject to litigation in any court of law.
- (9) The quorum shall be two-thirds of the members present.
- (10) The eligible qualification for candidate in the District Council will be one who can read and write in Mizo language and a rightful resident of Mizoram.
- (11) If the District Council so wish, it can create the Secretary or staff.
- (12) A qualifying age to be a voter in the District Council is 21 years who is living in the District.

(13) The District Council may publish a journal if so desired.<sup>30</sup>

The meeting also felt that for a large body of 37 members from remote areas, it was difficult to meet very often and arrived at quick decision. It was agreed that an Advisory Committee, consisting of 14 members, be set up on behalf of the DAC.<sup>31</sup> This arrangement did not mean that the elected DAC ceased to exist. On the contrary, it was to be summoned whenever the Superintendent considered it necessary to ascertain its views on any important subjects.

The Advisory Committee was inaugurated by Gopinath Bordoloi, Chief Minister of Assam, on 24<sup>th</sup> July, 1950. The Advisory Committee met during 27<sup>th</sup> April - 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 1951, in which the following resolutions were passed:-

- (a) The District Council Rules framed by the Government of Assam was examined and replaced those points which they disliked.
- (b) Constitution of Aizawl Town Committee, consisting of 13 members. Ten members may be elected by the public and three to be represented by the Superintendent, Supervisor of P.W.D. and Civil Surgeon, Medical.
- (c) If a man made a will with witnesses, it will be accepted as valid. However, if a man made two or three, the last will will be accepted.
- (d) For the purpose of District Council Constituency, Circle III A & B and Circle IV A & B may be amalgamated.
- (e) Post Offices may be opened in these places - Seling, Tlangnuam, Baktawng, Chhingchhip, Ngopa, Phullen, Darlawn, Bukpui, Reiek, Kanghmun, Borai, Kawrthah, Kelsih, Zanolawn, Bilkhawthlir and Thenzawl.<sup>32</sup>

The last meeting of the Advisory Committee was held on 28<sup>th</sup> September, 1951. In the meeting, the Committee passed a resolution to

30. Chaltuakhuma, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 189 – 190.

31. H.Vanthuama, *Op.Cit.*, p. 161.

32. Chaltuakhuma, *Op.Cit.*, p. 194

abolish Ramhuals<sup>+</sup> and Sachhiah\* with immediate effect.<sup>33</sup> When the process for the establishment of District Council was finalised, the DAC was dissolved with effect from 12<sup>th</sup> November, 1951.

### ***Constituent Assembly and the Sixth Schedule***

After assessing and observing the demands of the tribal people of the North-East India, Bordoloi Committee prepared its Report wherein it included several recommendations for the constitutional and administrative positions of the tribal areas. The Bordoloi Committee submitted its Report to the Chairman, Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, Minorities and Tribal and Excluded Areas on 28<sup>th</sup> July, 1947. The Report was presented in two volumes. Volume I incorporated the views and recommendations of the Committee. Volume II was a record of the evidence before the Committee. When the Bordoloi Committee studied the problems of the tribal people, it realised that these people needed protection and safeguard so that they might preserve their way of life and at the same time be able to participate in the political life of the country along with others. Keeping in view of the backwardness of the area, the Bordoloi Committee recommended a new scheme of the administrative set up for the Lushai Hills - the setting up of District Council for the Lushai Hills and Regional Council for the Pawi, Lakher and Chakma tribes. The Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, Minorities and Tribal and Excluded Areas accepted the recommendations of the Bordoloi Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> February, 1948. Provisions embodying the recommendations were incorporated in Article 244 of the Draft Constitution and in the Sixth Schedule. The Report of the Bordoloi Committee was sent to the Constituent Assembly on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1948 for discussion. The provisions of the Sixth Schedule were considered by the Constituent Assembly on 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> September, 1949.

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+ *Ramhuals* are those persons who are expert in jhum cultivation and advice the Chief in selecting suitable land for successful jhumming and select jhum land before other cultivators. They used to be considered as men of possession and often pay more *Fathang* to the Chief.

\* *Sachhiah* means a flesh tax payable to the Chief, the left-fore leg of animal killed in hunting expedition.

33. Chaltuahkhuma, *Op.Cit.*, p. 195.

## ***District Council***

After a great deal of debate and discussion on the tribal issue of the North-East India, the Constituent Assembly finally approved the provisions of the District Councils and Regional Councils, which were inserted in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India in Article 244 (2). The makers of the Indian Constitution made such arrangements for the tribals that neither the tribes lost their autonomies nor the integrity of the nation was affected. The idea behind the Sixth Schedule was to provide the tribal people with a simple and inexpensive administrative set up of their own which would safeguard their tribal customs and ways of life and secure to them management of characteristically tribal affairs.<sup>34</sup> The spirit of the Sixth Schedule reflected the wish and determination of the framers of the Constitution of India to provide the tribal people to retain their identities and a kind of autonomy by which they could develop according to their genius politically, socially and economically.

Subsequently, steps were taken to constitute District Councils in all autonomous districts of Assam. Accordingly, the Government of Assam enacted the Assam Autonomous Districts (Constitution of District Councils) Rules 1951,<sup>35</sup> and the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region (Constitution of the Regional Council) Rules, 1952,<sup>36</sup> for the constitution, procedure and conduct of business of these Councils. The first election to the Lushai Hills District Council was held on 4<sup>th</sup> January, 1952. Of the 24 seats, 18 seats were directly elected from a single member constituency and 6 members were nominated by the Governor of Assam on the advice of the Chief Executive Member (C.E.M.) of the Lushai Hills District Council. In the election, the Mizo Union captured 15 seats, while the Tribal Union won 2 seats and 1 seat went to UMFO. The Lushai Hills District Council was officially inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Assam, Bishnuram Medhi, on 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1952 at Aizawl.

34. Animesh Ray, *Op.Cit.*, p. 93.

35. *Government of Assam Notification No. TAD/R/10/50, dated Shillong, 31.7.1951.*

36. *Government of Assam Notification No. TAD/R/3/52/15, dated Shillong, 20.5.1952.*

The first election to the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (P.L.R.C) was held at the beginning of 1953. The strength of the PLRC was fixed at 12 members, of whom 9 were elected from the single member constituency and not more than 3 members were nominated by the Governor of Assam on the advice of the CEM of PLRC. In the election, all the elected seats were captured by Tribal Union, the only political party of that region. The PLRC was inaugurated by Ch. Saprawnga, Parliamentary Secretary to the Government of Assam, on 23<sup>th</sup> April, 1953 at Lunglei.

By an Act of Parliament called The Lushai Hills District (Change of Name) Act, 1954 (Act No.18 of 1954), the name of the Lushai Hills was renamed as The Mizo Hills District with effect from 29<sup>th</sup> April, 1954.

### ***Village Council***

With the abolition of the hereditary Chieftainship in the Mizo Hills District and Pawi-Lakher District on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1955 and 15<sup>th</sup> April, 1956 respectively, the administration of the village was taken over by the democratically elected Village Council. The Village Council was constituted for each village or a group of villages. Each village not less than 30 households has an elected Village Council. The membership of the Village Council varied from 3-11 according to the number of houses a village contained. The Village Council can allot land within its jurisdiction for jhum cultivation each year. It also acted as an agency for the execution of development programmes within the village. The Lushai Hills Autonomous District (Administration of Justice) Rules, 1953, provided for the establishment of the Village Council Court - the judicial wing of the Village Council. The Court was given the power to try cases of petty nature, both civil and criminal, in which both the parties belonged to Schedule Tribe. The Village Council was the lowest unit of administrative unit in Mizoram.

### ***Representatives in the Legislature***

The Lushai Hills was represented by 3 elected Member of Legislative Assembly (M.L.A) in the Assam Legislative Assembly from 1952 - 1971. However, the Lushai Hills was not represented in the Lok

Sabha and Rajya Sabha until the attainment of the status of Union Territory in 1972.

### ***Union Territory***

The Mizo District Council worked for 20 years. Under the provisions of the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971 (Act 81 of 1971), the Mizo District was elevated to the status of Union Territory of Mizoram on 21<sup>th</sup> January, 1972. As a result, the territory thereof ceased to form part of the State of Assam and the Mizo District council was abolished. The Legislative Assembly of Mizoram consisted of 30 elected members and 3 nominated members. Mizoram, as a Union Territory, held its first Assembly election on 18<sup>th</sup> April, 1972. In the election, the Mizo Union swept the polls by winning 21 seats; the Congress won 6 seats and Independents secured 3 seats. The Mizo Union formed the first popular Ministry on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 1972. The first sitting of the Legislative Assembly was held on 10<sup>th</sup> May, 1972.

The Union Territory of Mizoram has two representatives in Parliament - one in the Lok Sabha and one in the Rajya Sabha.

### ***State Legislative Assembly***

The Parliament of India passed the Constitution (53<sup>rd</sup>) Amendment Bill, 1986 and the State of Mizoram Bill, 1986 on 7<sup>th</sup> August, 1986, which received the assent of the President of India on 14<sup>th</sup> August, 1986. The result was that the status of Union Territory of Mizoram was upgraded into a full-fledged State of the Indian Union. On 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1987, Mizoram was inaugurated as the 23<sup>th</sup> State of the Indian Union with a 40-elected members single chamber Legislative Assembly.

The new State of Mizoram continued to have two representatives in the Parliament, one in the Lok Sabha and one in the Rajya Sabha.

## CHAPTER II

# OPPOSITION IN A PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

## CHAPTER II

### OPPOSITION IN A PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

Democracy is a government by discussion and discussion presupposes arguments and counter arguments. Parliamentary democracy is considered to be the best form of government because in this system, there is scope for the people to reflect their wishes and grievances through their elected representatives on the floor of the House. Parliamentary form of government is a method of arguments, discussion and decision of the majority and of accepting the majority decision providing for the right of the individual to hold different views. Here, all points of views are expressed and discussed. As there could be always at least two sets of views on any subject, there could be at least two political parties. The essence of parliamentary democracy, therefore, basically lies in the fact that the majority has its way and the minority has its say. As Laski pointed out, “Men who are to live together peacefully must be able to argue together peacefully”.<sup>1</sup> Parliamentary democracy is based on the party system of government. It is a government by criticism and exposition and, therefore, it has to be governed by two political parties - a party or parties in power and a party or parties in Opposition.

One of the essential pre-conditions for the successful working of parliamentary democracy is the existence of a strong and effective Opposition. An alert and responsible Opposition is as much necessary as a majority ruling party. If the ruling party is needed to take decisions and run the government, the Opposition is needed to ensure that decisions are reached through proper debates and discussions. Thus, the object of having Opposition under democracy emanates from the basic concept of ‘limiting power by power’.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Harold J. Laski, *Parliamentary Government in England*, S. Chand & Company Ltd., New Delhi, 1979, p. 75.
  2. Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organisation and Activity in the Modern State*, B.I. Publications, New Delhi, 1979, p. 413

## ***Historical Background of Opposition***

The word ‘Opposition’ is derived from the Latin word ‘Oppositio’ which means ‘to oppose’.<sup>3</sup> So, Opposition can be understood as resistance to the power of the State when that power is exerted oppressively. It also means a system of constitutional checks and balances guarding against power abuse and methods employed to modify the actions of government. Gilbert Campion has defined the parliamentary Opposition in the following words: - “The Opposition is the party for the time being in the minority organised as a unit and officially recognised, which has had experience of office and is prepared to form a government when the existing Ministry has lost the confidence in the country. It must have a positive policy of its own and not merely oppose destructively to ruin the game for the sake of power”.<sup>4</sup>

The institution of Opposition is a modern concept. However, if we look back to ancient Greece and Rome where a limited form of democracy prevailed, we find some sort of loosely organised Opposition. For instance, the role of the Church towards the feudal monarch in the Middle Ages, the institution of Assembly to limit power of the King and the separation of the Legislature from the Executive – all these signified the existence of Opposition in different capacities and different governments.<sup>5</sup>

In Monarchical and Dictatorial form of governments, Opposition is not supposed to exist. But even in such governments, Opposition is shown - sometimes by organising revolutions, by assassinating and by forming dissident groups or by forming government in exile or going underground. However, organised Opposition in such governments is somewhat difficult to achieve because Opposition in such governments is regarded as faction and is tainted with disloyalty.

3. *Webster Encyclopaedia Unbridged Dictionary of English Language*, Gramery Books, New Jersey, 1994, p. 1010.

4. Quoted from Renu Saksena, *The Role of Opposition in Indian Politics*, Anmol Publications, Delhi, 1986, p. 4.

5. Maurice Duverger, *Op.Cit.*, p. 413.

The institution of “Opposition party” has its origin in the British system of parliamentary democracy. The idea of a parliamentary Opposition began to evolve after the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688 in the United Kingdom, while the Opposition emerged as a well organised part of the British political system.<sup>6</sup> The phrase “His Majesty’s Opposition” was first coined by John Cam Hobhouse in 1826.<sup>7</sup> Though Opposition has a historical lineage in Britain, it was not known legally until 1937. The Ministers of the Crown Act, 1937 not only provided a statutory recognition of the Leader of the Opposition but also gave a definite status to ‘Her Majesty’s Opposition’. The Leader of the Opposition has a salary of £ 2,000 a year charged on the Consolidated Fund.<sup>8</sup> The Act also defined the Leader of the Opposition as “that member of the House of Commons who is for the time being the Leader that House of the party in Opposition to Her Majesty’s Government having the greatest numerical strength in the House”.

In Britain, the Opposition is as definitely organised as the Government itself. Her Majesty’s Opposition is second in importance to Her Majesty’s Government and it is officially recognised. It is Her Majesty’s Opposition – an alternative government - which is given an official status - a Shadow Cabinet. The Leader of the Opposition is so much dreaded that “the Prime Minister of England knows more about the Leader of the Opposition than he knows about his wife”.<sup>9</sup> The Leader of the Opposition is, so to speak, “the obverse of the Leader of the House accepts responsibility for the course of negotiation about business with the Government, arranges the subjects for debate where practice leaves the choice of subject to the Opposition, cross-examines the Prime Minister and other Ministers, watches for encroachments on the rights of minorities, demands debates when the Government is trying to slide away without parliamentary criticism”.<sup>10</sup>

6. G. C. Malhotra, “Safeguarding Democracy: Role of Opposition in Indian Parliament”, *The Journal of Parliamentary Information*, Vol. XLVI, No.2, 2001, p. 161.

7. Renu Saksena, *Op. Cit.*, p. 3.

8. Ivor Jennings, *Parliament*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970, p. 82.

9. V. D. Mahajan, *Select Modern Governments*, S. Chand & Company Ltd., New Delhi, 2000, p. 114.

10. Ivor Jennings, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 83 – 84.

## ***Importance of the Opposition***

Under a strong party government without any worthwhile Opposition to deal with, popular feelings and interests are neglected and in its place party interests and its well-beings are only looked after. For the purpose of effective functioning of a government in a parliamentary democracy, the existence of an organised Opposition is important to make the government responsible. Views after views have been expressed by eminent political scientists on the importance of the Opposition in parliamentary system. As Benjamin Disraeli said way back in 1844, “no government can be long secure without a formidable Opposition”.<sup>11</sup> Ivor Jennings points out, “if there is no Opposition, there is no democracy”.<sup>12</sup> As Erskine May has observed, “the importance of the Opposition in the system of parliamentary government has long received practical recognition in the procedure of Parliament”.<sup>13</sup> David E. Apter says, “just as the fluctuations in the glass of a barometer indicate information about the weather, so the rise and fall of support of an Opposition indicates the government the effectiveness of its policies”.<sup>14</sup> Lawrence Lowell believed that, “the recognition of the Opposition as a legitimate body, entitled to attain power by persuasion, is a primary condition of the success of the party system and, therefore, of popular government on a large scale”.<sup>15</sup> In the words of Illbert, “a strong government tempered and controlled by strong, vigilant and representative criticism is the ideal at which parliamentary institutions work”.<sup>16</sup>

The importance of Opposition in a parliamentary system cannot be over emphasized. Kemal Ataturke (1881-1938), the founder of the Republic of

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11. Antony Jay (ed), *The Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1996, p. 117.

12. Ivor Jennings, *Cabinet Government*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1969, p. 16.

13. Erskine May, *The Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usages of Parliament*, Lexis Nexis, London, 2004, p. 247.

14. Quoted from D. Sundar Ram, “Parliamentary Opposition in India: An Overview” in D. Sundar Ram (ed), *Readings in the Indian Parliamentary Opposition*, Vol. I, Kanishka Publishers, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 19- 20

15. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

16. Illbert Courtney, *Parliament*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1956, p. 103.

Turkey and its first President, was so impressed by the British parliamentary system that he appointed and set up an Opposition in his own government. But being based on different fundamental principles, it was not a success.<sup>17</sup> The presence of a well-organised Opposition in a parliamentary democracy, according to Robert A. Dahl, “is perhaps one of the greatest and most unexpected social discoveries that men had ever stumbled on to”.<sup>18</sup>

The Opposition acts as a watch-dog, observes the activities of the government and whenever it finds them working undemocratically or acting against the interests of the people, brings the government into the right track through criticism and expressing protest. To save democratic government from becoming the hand maid of the party in power, it is important to have an Opposition. If democracy has to live, Opposition must exist. Otherwise, democracy may degenerate first into one party rule and then into a one man rule. Quintin Hogg observes, “It is not a long step, from the absence of an organised Opposition to a complete dictatorship”.<sup>19</sup>

The nature and form of the Opposition in a parliamentary democracy depends upon many factors like the number of political parties, ideological affinities, alliances, party strength and quality of membership. In a one-party system, the Opposition is not allowed to exist as a separate institution. The real Opposition in a single party system is found inside the party itself. It might criticize the Government at party meeting with varying degrees of freedom and might take the form of a dissident group.<sup>20</sup>

In a two-party system where the political parties are more or less balanced, the Opposition tends to be a real institution, as in Britain. As only two major political parties existed, and power alternated between them, Opposition behaved and discharged its duty with a sense of

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17. Alfred C. Bossom, *Our House*, Barrie and Rockcliff, London, 1965, p. 186.

18. Quoted from R.K. Paliwal, “Emergence to an Organised Opposition in Indian Political System (1947- 1961)”, *Indian Journal of Politics*, Vol. XXIV, Nos. 3-4 & Vol. XXV, No.1, 1990 - 1991, pp. 172 -173.

19. Quintin Hogg, *The Purpose of Parliament*, Bradford Press, London, 1962, p. 87.

20. Maurice Duverger, *Op.Cit.*, p. 413.

responsibility. The Opposition has a reasonable chance of replacing the Government and consequently it uses the parliamentary system in its continuous struggle to defeat it. As Laski has pointed out that, “two and only two parties are essential for a successful functioning of a parliamentary democracy”.<sup>21</sup> Thus, in a two-party system, the Opposition is a government-in-waiting. The two-party system has certain advantages. Firstly, it enables the electorate directly to choose its own Government. Secondly, it brings home the responsibility for action taken to a determinate group of persons.<sup>22</sup>

In a multi-party system, the Opposition comprised of heterogeneous groups and the institutional form of Opposition is absent. These groups often fight against each other. Where no single political party is returned in strength to form the Government, shifting alliance lead to the fall of the Government. The rise of a new combination which administers the country for a brief period until it meets with the same fate as the former. In such circumstances, the role of Opposition is different. It does not act as an alternative government because of its heterogeneous composition. The Government is, therefore, faced by no consistent and regular machinery of criticism, but by irresponsible lethal attacks from all sides.<sup>23</sup>

Renu Saksena underlines the role of the Opposition in a parliamentary democracy in the following pattern:- “The existence of Opposition is the most distinctive characteristic of parliamentary democracy; it is its life blood. Democracy admits of dissent and conflict which give rise to Opposition. Parliamentary democracy needs an Opposition most if it is to function effectively and successfully.”<sup>24</sup>

For the interest of the government also, there must be an Opposition. The Opposition should be looked upon not as an enemy but rather as a good

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21. Harold J. Laski, *Op.Cit.*, p. 75.

22. *Ibid*, p. 75.

23. Herman Finer, *The Theory and Practice of Modern Government*, Surjeet Publications, Delhi, 2005, p. 626.

24. Renu Saksena, *Op.Cit.*, p. 7.

friend of the government. A good friend not only praises but also points out defects from time to time. The Opposition, by its criticism and objection, brings to light various flaws and failings of the government's policies. It keeps the government alive to its mistakes which, if not pointed out in proper time, may harm both the government and the people. Therefore, timely warnings of the Opposition led to the efficiency of the government. The Opposition, as a watchful critic, reminds the government of its limitations and makes it responsive to the people. In the absence of any Opposition, the government is bound to become lethargic in its works and neglectful of its duties. The Opposition acts as a mirror where every action of the government is reflected.

### ***Functions of the Opposition***

The Opposition is an essential part of the parliamentary democracy. The functions of Opposition are almost as important as those of the Government. Tierney, a Whig leader of the 1820s, viewed the task of the Opposition in purely negative terms. To him, "the duty of the Opposition is to propose nothing, to oppose everything and to turn out the Government". Lord Randolph Churchill said, "the function of an Opposition is to oppose and not to support the Government". Both statements are not wholly correct and outdated. The real function of an Opposition is much more complicated.<sup>25</sup>

Alfred C. Bossom believes that, "the chief function of the Opposition is to criticise constructively, ventilate grievances and keep a close watch on legislation and all Government actions".<sup>26</sup> In the words of Jennings, "the primary function of Opposition is to appeal to public opinion, partly to coerce the Government, but mainly to induce the electorate to give the Opposition a majority at the next election".<sup>27</sup> Samuel E. Finer mentions that parliamentary Opposition has the following functions:- (a) to participate in the deliberations of the House of Commons; (b) to oppose objectionable policies by voice and vote; (c) to compel

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25. Ivor Jennings, *Parliament*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970, p. 167.

26. Alfred C. Bossom, *Op. Cit.*, p. 186.

27. Ivor Jennings, *Parliament*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970, p. 162.

the government, by all acceptable methods, to modify its policy; (d) to create public revulsion against the Government and public sympathy for itself, as the pre-condition for winning the next election; and (e) to propose an alternative programme.<sup>28</sup>

“The Opposition’s real function”, Hogg says, “is to act as the responsible outlet for criticism as the incorruptible searches after scandals which need expose, the organised expression of legitimate grievances and last but not least, to act as a partly formed responsible, trained, team prepared to take office as a government when the existing administration loses the confidence of the people”.<sup>29</sup>

Effective Opposition generally means an Opposition which performs two basic functions in the set-up of parliamentary democracy. First, it provides constructive criticism and corrective to the policies and programmes of party in power. Secondly, it is able to form an alternative government when the party in power goes out of office because of the loss of the mandate of the electorate, constitutional deadlock etc.<sup>30</sup>

The function of the Opposition is not merely to discredit the government in the eyes of the people, but also induce it for modifying its policy.<sup>31</sup> The responsibility of the members in the Opposition is to be objective and pertinent in their criticism, constructive in their approach and generally amenable to reason.<sup>32</sup> The debate in the House gives an opportunity to the government to explain and defend their proposals and to the Opposition an opportunity to air their grievances or to criticise the general policy of government.<sup>33</sup> Opposition parties are expected to educate the masses and make them politically conscious. Their prime duty is to

28. Samuel E. Finer, “Politics of Great Britain” in Roy C. Macridis and Robert E. Ward (ed), *Modern Political System: Europe*, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1982, p. 67.

29. Quintin Hogg, *Op. Cit.*, p. 87.

30. D. Sundar Ram, *Role of Opposition Parties in Indian Politics*, Deep & Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 30 - 31.

31. Amrenda Sarma, “Role of Opposition in the Indian Legislature”, *The Journal of Parliamentary Information*, Vol.XXXI, No.4, 1985, p. 567.

32. Bal Ram Jakhar, *The People, The Parliament and The Administration*, Metropolitan Book Co.(P) Ltd., New Delhi, 1982, p. 227.

33. A.C. Kapur, *Principles of Political Science*, S.Chand & Company Ltd., New Delhi, 1992, p. 482.

remove the lethargy among the people and make them take interest in matter pertaining to government.<sup>34</sup>

The function of the Opposition is to attack upon government and upon individual Ministers. Its duty is to oppose. That duty is the major check upon corruption and defective administration. It is also the means by which individual injustices are prevented. This duty is no less important than that of the government. In fact, Opposition and government are carried on alike by agreement. The minority agrees that the majority must govern, and the majority agrees that the minority should criticise.<sup>35</sup>

The pattern and style of the function of the Opposition differs from country to country. It is, therefore, difficult to draw conclusion regarding the specific and definite functions of the Opposition. Yet, there is a broad agreement among the scholars on at least four functions of the Opposition: -

- (a) to form an alternative government given an opportunity;
- (b) to form public opinion on domestic and external issues that may come up from time to time so as not to allow the ruling party to become lukewarm about the country's basic interests;
- (c) to expose the failure of the party in power to fulfill the promises it had made at the election time; and
- (d) to extend its full support and cooperation to the government, both inside and outside the law-making body, on the occasions such as war or threat or internal emergency resulting from the activities of insurgents.<sup>36</sup>

An effective Opposition, while opposing various acts of commission and omission of the government, acts responsibly and suggests the remedies and alternatives. It is vital that the Opposition does not oppose just for the sake

34. M. Pattabhiram, "The Failure of Opposition Parties in India", *Journal of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies*, Vol. VI, No.1, 1972, p. 32.

35. Ivor Jennings, *Cabinet Government*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1969, pp. 499 - 500.

36. N.S. Gehlot, "Opposition in Indian Political System: Problem of Role Perception", *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. XLVI, No.3, 1985, pp. 330 - 331.

of the Opposition. Its criticism must be viable and responsible, since it is ‘the government-in-waiting’. The Opposition must keep a constant watch on the activities of the government and acquaint the people with the various problems confronting the country. The Opposition must present the image of a credible alternative government. If it is to win the next general election, it must look a united body of persons/people who would be competent to govern the country. The Opposition must exploit every weakness and defect of the existing government and offers remedies and solutions in order to put itself in a position to win the support of the electorate when the government loses popularity.

### ***Quality of Opposition***

In order to perform the role, the Opposition must be united, well-organised, strong and effective. The effectiveness with which the Opposition can play its role depends largely on the genius of the men who form the Opposition. To be effective, to achieve results and to gain the objective, the Opposition has to speak with a united voice, present a single front which will make it effective and forceful and respected by the public in general. The Opposition must be able to formulate a well thought out programme of actions and present itself as a force to reckon with.

The Opposition needs the ability to use the available parliamentary procedural devices to create maximum impact. To make this possible, a thorough understanding of the rules and procedures, directions of the Speaker, conventions, customs, usages etc is essential. The Opposition should know the scope and application of the rules, what procedural devices to use and when and how to follow up. It is imperative to choose the right procedural means to achieve its objective. The Opposition must be well-informed, well-equipped, vigilant and well-prepared on the agenda and the business before the House. The Opposition Leader has to do the necessary homework and master the facts and figures with full information on the subject so that he can make a convincing speech in the House. It is also important that the Opposition should maintain good conduct, use the principles of parliamentary etiquettes, refrain from using unparliamentary languages and expressions and to uphold the dignity and honour of the House. Thus, for being an effective Opposition, much depends on

the personal attributes of its members, their knowledge, devotion, sincerity, habit of hard work and the capacity to utilize the available parliamentary opportunities.

### ***Effective Leadership***

For projecting a bright image of the Opposition, an effective leadership is essential. The Leader of the Opposition is the guardian of the legitimate rights of the Opposition in the House. As Laski says, “For without effective generalship, the Opposition case goes by default. The effective work of criticizing the government fails to be done. Because it so fails, the ears of the country do not listen to the proceedings of the House, and the educative force of its debate is lost. More than this. A weak Opposition begins to lose confidence in itself. It loses its integration and becomes not merely self-critical, but publicly self-critical”.<sup>37</sup>

In view of the importance of the Opposition in a parliamentary democracy, the post of the Leader of the Opposition is indeed one of responsibility. He, among other things, “must be in his place even constantly..... He must be familiar with all the tricks of skilled parliamentarians and all the opportunities available under the rules of the House”.<sup>38</sup>

The responsibility of keeping his party united, strong and well-knit, the Leader of the Opposition is required to establish and maintain good and amicable relations between the Government and the Opposition bench, for the smooth running of parliamentary democracy. As Madhu Dandavate rightly observes, “the most important function of the Leader of the Opposition is not only to seek consent but to co-ordinate the activities of the members of the Opposition”.<sup>39</sup>

The Opposition educates the public in forming matured and reasoned opinion. By pointing out the omissions and commissions of the party in power and placing its own plans and programmes before the public,

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37. Harold J. Laski, *Op. Cit.*, p. 163.

38. Ivor Jennings, *Parliament*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970, p. 84.

39. Madhu Dandavate, “Role and Position of the Leader of the Opposition”, in D. Sundar Ram (ed), *Readings in the Indian Parliamentary Opposition*, Vol.I, Kanishka Publishers, New Delhi, 1996, p. 60.

the Opposition helps the electorate in exercising their mature judgments on vital issues. Moreover, the presence of an Opposition gives the people a choice in selecting better representatives and restrains the ruling party from using power arbitrarily.

### ***Origin and Growth of Opposition Parties in Mizoram***

In Mizoram, Opposition in the modern acceptance of the term did not exist till 1946. The Chiefs who ruled Mizoram for about 250 years organised a highly centralised administration, leaving little scope for an Opposition. But this did not mean that Opposition was not shown. There were examples of revolts against the Chiefs. This happened during 1877 - 1889.<sup>40</sup> This event was known in the Mizo language as “Lal Sawi”. It means punishing of the Chiefs. The main reason of such uprising was the oppressive rule of the Chiefs.

It was a popular uprising against the despotic rule of the Chief in which almost all commoners were involved. The weapon used in this movement was simple – pledges. The people came together and took pledges among themselves to unite together for their cause. The Chief was then called upon to take the pledge promising never to behave to the people as before.<sup>41</sup> The movement spread from one village to another like wildfire. The movement shook the strong foundation of the Chieftainship and halted the smooth running of the administration of the Chief. The result was, however, short-lived and brief because the unity among the common people could not last long.<sup>42</sup>

The history of the Opposition in Mizoram in the modern concept can be traced back to 9<sup>th</sup> April, 1946, when the Mizo Union, the first political party, was formed to act as an Opposition to the British Government in

40. B. Lalthangliana, *Culture and Folklore of Mizoram*, Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, 2005, p. 81.

41. Sangkima, *Essays on the History of the Mizos*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 2004, p. 97.

42. Sangkima, “A Mizo Uprising: A Significant Event in the History of Chieftainship in Mizoram”, *Proceedings of North East India History Association*, Eleventh Session, Imphal, 1990, p. 200.

the Lushai Hills. Its objective was the social and political upliftment of the Mizo. It not only wanted to abolish the Chieftainship in the Lushai Hills but also desired to establish a popular elected Council to control the affairs of the Mizo.<sup>43</sup>

In order to have a comparative idea of the composition of the Opposition in different years during the terms of four District Councils; four Union Territory Assemblies and three State Legislative Assemblies, it is imperative to devote some of the following pages a brief account of the electoral performances of the various political parties to show a comparative picture.

The first general election to the District Council, which was the first ever election on the basis of adult franchise, was held on 4<sup>th</sup> January, 1952. The election was fought mainly between the Mizo Union and UMFO. The Mizo Union, which was spear-heading for the abolition of Chieftainship, received absolute majority by capturing 15 seats out of the 18 elected seats. The Tribal Union won 2 seats and the UMFO secured only 1 seat.

In the second general election to the District Council held on 25<sup>th</sup> January, 1957, the elected membership was raised to 22 members and the nominated members were reduced to 2. The election did not change the political complexion. The Mizo Union came out victorious with reduced strength of 12 seats. The Opposition, UMFO, which has been marginalised in the previous election, has gained by increasing its representatives to 8; Independents captured 2 seats.

In the third general election to the District Council held on 29<sup>th</sup> February, 1962, the Mizo Union's domination of the electoral scene continued by winning 16 seats. The Tribal Union and the Eastern Indian Tribal Union captured 2 seats each and the Congress and Independent won 1 seat each.

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43. Vanlalhluna, *Analytical Study of the Structure, Role and Functioning of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, 1972-1984*, (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, 1988), p.169.

Election to the fourth District Council could not take place in 1967 due to the outbreak of insurgency in Mizoram on 1<sup>st</sup> March, 1966. Election was held on 23<sup>th</sup> April, 1970. This election marked the end of one party dominance in Mizoram and the uninterrupted domination of the Mizo Union in the electoral scene has come to an end. The Opposition, Congress, has gained enormously in strength by winning 11 seats. The Mizo Union appeared to break down by capturing 9 seats only. Independents won 2 seats.

In the first general election to the Union Territory of Mizoram Legislative Assembly held on 18<sup>th</sup> April, 1972, the Mizo Union won 21 seats out of the 30 elected seats and the Congress won 6 seats. The 3 elected Independent members joined the Mizo Union Legislature Party.

An important change took place in the composition of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly when the ruling Mizo Union merged into the Congress on 23<sup>th</sup> January, 1974, and as a result of which, the Congress which was in Opposition became a ruling party at once. For a few months between January - August, 1974, there was not even a single member of the Opposition in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly. But in September, 1974, four MLAs, namely, R. Dotinaia, R.D. Sangkhuma, C. Chawngkunga and Vanlalhruaia, left the Congress party and formed the Mizo Union Legislative party in the House. They requested the Speaker of the Assembly to allot separate seats for them in the House as they would not like to be on the Treasury Bench. The Speaker accepted their request and allotted separate seats for them. But in 1976, C. Chawngkunga left the Mizo Union and joined the People's Conference (P.C.) party and Vanlalhruaia returned to the Congress party in January, 1977.<sup>44</sup>

Election to the second Mizoram Legislative Assembly was held on 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> May, 1978. The P.C. achieved outstanding electoral victory with 22 seats. The Congress could manage to collect only 4 seats; the Janata party captured 1 seat and Independents secured 3 seats. Barely

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44. *Ibid.*, p. 174.

five months after a new Ministry took over, on 13<sup>th</sup> October, 1978, nine P.C. M.L.As withdrew their support to the Ministry. This finally led to the dissolution of the Legislative Assembly and President's Rule was imposed in Mizoram on 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1978.<sup>45</sup>

Following the dissolution of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly and the imposition of the President's Rule, mid-term election was held on 24<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1979. The P.C. was faced with formidable Opposition not only from the Congress, but also from P.C. 'B', formed by a group of P.C. dissidents, led by Sakhawliana. The P.C. came out victories with 18 seats. The Congress captured 5 seats; P.C.'B' won 4 seats; Janata Party and Independent secured 2 and 1 seats respectively.

Election to the fourth Assembly was held on 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1984. The Congress won the battle of the ballot with overwhelming majority by bagging 20 seats as against P.C. 8. The Mizo Convention and Independent won 1 seat each.

After the formation of the State of Mizoram, the first election to the Assembly was held on 16<sup>th</sup> February, 1987. The total number of registered voters were 3,21,557, of whom 1,63,043 were male electors and 1,58,514 were female electors. There were four political parties, namely, Congress, Mizo National Front (MNF), P.C. and Mizo National Union (MNU) and Independents in the election fray. There were 145 candidates including 4 women. The Congress set up the largest number of candidates and contested all the 40 seats. The MNF had 37 candidates while the P.C. set up 36 candidates. The MNU fielded 21 candidates and 11 Independents filed their nominations.

Table I brings out the salient features of the 1987 Assembly election.

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45. Animesh Ray, *Op. Cit.*, p. 243

**TABLE - 1**

<b>Parties</b>	<b>No. of Candidates</b>	<b>Seats won</b>	<b>Forfeited Deposit</b>	<b>Valid votes Polled</b>	<b>% of votes</b>
MNF	37	24	1	84,549	36.62
Congress	40	13	-	76,152	32.99
P.C.	36	3	4	54,717	23.70
MNU	21	-	19	7,688	3.33
Independents	11	-	8	7,759	3.36
<b>Total</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>2,30,865</b>	<b>100.00</b>

*Source: Report on the Fifth General Elections to the Legislative Assembly of Mizoram, 1987, Chief Electoral Officer, Mizoram.*

The total number of votes in the election was 2,33,556 and the valid votes polled was 2,30,865 and 72.63 per cent polling was recorded. The newly emerged MNF swept the polls by capturing 24 seats in a House of 40. It polled 36.62 per cent of the valid votes or 84,549 votes out of 2,30,865 valid votes cast. The Congress won 13 seats while the P.C. secured 3 seats.

The MNF Ministry headed by Laldenga, consisting of 6 Cabinet Ministers and 5 Ministers of State, was formed on 27<sup>th</sup> February, 1987. The new Ministry went off smoothly for about 18 months when dissension within the party soon resulted in the fall of the Government. On 29<sup>th</sup> August, 1988, 9 MNF MLAs informed the Speaker of the Assembly that they have dissociated from the ruling party and withdrew support from the Ministry and have formed a separate party called MNF 'Democratic' (MNF 'D'). After taking into consideration the development, the Governor of Mizoram came to the conclusion that it was not possible for the Government of the State with such situation to function in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of India any more. Thus, the State came under the spell of President's Rule on 7<sup>th</sup> September, 1988.

The mid-term poll, owing to the dissolution of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, was held on 21<sup>th</sup> January, 1989. There were 3,33,733 registered electors, 1,68,570 were male electors while 1,65,163 were female electors. In this election, as many as seven political parties and Independents were vying for the 40 - Assembly seats at stake. For the first time in the electoral history of Mizoram, pre-poll alliance was arrived at. The Congress and MNF 'D', a breakaway group of MNF, entered the electoral seats adjustment. The Congress set up 34 candidates, leaving 6 seats to its ally, the MNF 'D'. The MNF contested all the 40 seats. The P.C. nominated 38 candidates including 3 women. The MNU fielded 36 candidates. Two clan-based political parties, namely, Hmar People's Convention (HPC) and Chakma Jati Parishad (CJP), for the first time entered Assembly polls by setting up 3 and 1 candidates respectively. Four Independents also filed their nominations.

A unique feature of this election was that the leaders of the main political parties were contesting from two constituencies. The Presidents of MNF, Congress and P.C., all of whom were former Chief Ministers, contested from two constituencies. Lalthanhawla, President of Congress, contested from two constituencies – Lokicherra and his earlier Serchhip constituency. Laldenga, President of MNF, also contested from his earlier Aizawl North II constituency and Aizawl South II constituency. Aichhinga, a Minister in the Laldenga's Ministry, contested from his earlier Kolasib constituency and Aizawl East I constituency. Brig. T. Sailo, President of P.C., contested from Aizawl North II constituency and North Vanlaiphai constituency. This trend was started by Laldenga in 1987 election when he contested from two constituencies - Aizawl North II and Sateek and was declared elected from both.

Table II indicates the performances of various political parties in the election of 1989.

**TABLE - II**

<b>Parties</b>	<b>No. of Candidates</b>	<b>Seats won</b>	<b>Forfeited Deposit</b>	<b>Valid votes Polled</b>	<b>% of votes</b>
Congress	34	23	-	93,561	34.85
MNF	40	14	1	94,763	35.29
P.C.	38	1	13	52,813	19.68
MNF 'D'	6	2	-	13,709	5.10
MNU	36	-	35	8,251	3.07
H.P.C	3	-	3	1,804	0.67
C.J.P	1	-	1	975	0.36
Independents	4	-	3	2,614	0.98
<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>2,68,490</b>	<b>100.00</b>

*Source: Report on the Sixth General Elections to the Legislative Assembly of Mizoram, 1989, Chief Electoral Officer, Mizoram.*

In the 1989 Assembly election, the electorates affirmed their faith in the Congress – MNF ‘D’ alliance by returning them with a thumping majority. The Congress secured 23 seats and its partner, the MNF ‘D’, won 2 seats. The MNF bagged 14 seats. The P.C. was left with just 1 seat. On 24<sup>th</sup> January, 1989, the Congress – MNF ‘D’ coalition Ministry led by Lalthanhawla was sworn in. The Ministry lasted its full term.

In the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly, which formed the period under study, the political situation underwent a basic transformation even before the election date was announced. Mizoram’s small electorates (4,01,699) and small constituencies (the highest was Lawngtlai with 17,153 voters and the smallest was Khawhai with 5,784 voters) have meant that election results were never easy to predict.

Since 1992, the political parties were faced with the compulsion of seat-sharing negotiations. There were prolonged negotiations for pre-poll alliance between the two Opposition parties - the MNF and the Janata Dal (J.D.), an offshoot of P.C. All these years these two parties contested against each other in the elections. To counter the Congress, the two parties had made efforts to forge a united front.

The first comprehensive ground work for electoral adjustment of seats between the MNF and J.D. was arrived at on 7<sup>th</sup> April, 1992.<sup>46</sup> On

46. Zoni Eng, Aizawl, 8-15, April, 1992.

that day, in a joint statement, the two parties agreed in principles to forge a pre-poll alliance. Two old foes of Mizoram political parties joined hands to come together on a common platform to jointly uproot the Congress from its “misrule”.<sup>47</sup>

Several round of talks were held between the MNF and J.D. on the issue of seats adjustment. As a result of such talks, the two parties finally reached an agreement under which the MNF would contested 25 seats and the J.D. was allotted 15 seats.<sup>48</sup> The alliance was viewed as a stepping stone for alignment of regional forces in Mizoram politics.

However, the unreliability of the alliance was soon exposed. Differences on seats adjustment ultimately precipitated a crisis and led to the virtual withdrawal of the J.D. from the alliance. The J.D. formally called off the alliance at a meeting of its Executive Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1993.<sup>49</sup> Subsequently, the Opposition parties failed to project a viable alternative to the Congress.

The J.D. leaders experienced that the past has shown that its existence as political force depend largely on being associated with other major political parties. They realised that failure to arrive at an electoral understanding might lead to the process of wilderness in which the party was at that time placed. The party has not tasted power in the State since it bowed out of office in 1984. Every successive elections since 1984 marked its decline. The J.D. leaders were conscious of its poor performances in the State Assembly elections in 1987 and 1989. The last election in 1989 administered to it a major blow in terms of representation in the State Legislature with just one MLA. Therefore, ideological considerations had never inhibited the party from seeking alliance. In its frantic power-pursuit and political survival, the J.D. started negotiation with the Congress on 7<sup>th</sup> October, 1993.<sup>50</sup>

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47. *Mizo Arsi*, Aizawl, 8<sup>th</sup> April, 1992.

48. *Mizo Aw*, Aizawl, 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1993.

49. *Harhna*, Aizawl, 5<sup>th</sup> October, 1993.

50. *Harhna*, Aizawl, 8<sup>th</sup> October, 1993.

However, the Central Committee of J.D. had inhibition about joining the Congress while the State Unit wanted it.<sup>51</sup> On 24<sup>th</sup> October, 1993, the State Unit of J.D. decided to break away from the party and formed ‘Mizoram Janata Dal’ (MJD). On 25<sup>th</sup> October, 1993, the Congress and MJD reached pre-poll seat sharing agreement. According to the agreement, the MJD was to withdraw its candidates in 12 constituencies and support the nominees of the Congress and the Congress is to reciprocate the gesture in 12 constituencies. Besides, it was also decided that the two parties would enter into “friendly contests” in 16 other seats.<sup>52</sup> The two parties reached an understanding on seat sharing agreement barely 36 days before the day of polling, i.e., 30<sup>th</sup> November, 1993. Since the MJD was not a recognised political party at that time, all its candidates had to file nominations as Independents. As a result, there emerged a clear cut political polarisation between the Congress - MJD alliance on the one hand and the MNF on the other hand.

Table III gives the electoral performances of the political parties in the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly.

**TABLE - III**

<b>Parties</b>	<b>No. of Candidates</b>	<b>Seats won</b>	<b>Forfeited Deposit</b>	<b>Valid votes Polled</b>	<b>% of votes</b>
Congress	28	16	-	1,06,320	33.10
MNF	38	14	1	1,29,816	40.41
MJD	24	8	8	60,521	18.85
B.J.P	8	-	6	10,004	3.11
Independents	23	2	19	14,536	4.53
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>3,21,197</b>	<b>100.00</b>

*Source: Report on the Seventh General Elections to the Legislative Assembly of Mizoram, 1993, Chief Electoral Officer, Mizoram*

51. *Vanglaini*, Aizawl, 19<sup>th</sup> October, 1993.

52. *Mizo Aw*, Aizawl, 26<sup>th</sup> October, 1993.

As anticipated, the Congress - MJD alliance became victorious. The Congress won 16 seats while its electoral partner, MJD, secured 8 seats. In terms of seats, the MNF could win only 14 seats, but it mustered 40.41 per cent of the valid votes polled, the highest by any party. Independents captured 2 seats. A Congress - MJD coalition Ministry headed by Lalthanhawla of Congress as Chief Minister and Lalhmingthanga of MJD as Deputy Chief Minister, consisting of 9 other members from the Congress and 4 other members from MJD, was sworn in on 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1993. The Ministry's composition reflected as much of Congress domination, having allotted to the MJD only 13 portfolios out of 40.

The Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly met for the first time on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1993. Lalrinchhana of MNF, who was appointed Speaker *pro tem* by the Governor on 8<sup>th</sup> December, administered the oath of office to the new members. Vaivenga of Congress was elected as the Speaker, defeating MNF candidate, F.Malsawma, by 24 votes to 16 votes. On 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1993, the Speaker announced that the MNF Legislature Party was recognised as 'Opposition Party' in the House and its leader, Zoramthanga, as the Leader of the Opposition.<sup>53</sup>

On 28<sup>th</sup> April, 1994, the Chief Minister asked all his Ministers to tender their resignations in order to form 'a new Ministry'. The resignations of Lalhmingthanga, Deputy Chief Minister, and H.Thangkima, Transport Minister, both MJD, were accepted. In their places, two other MJD members, namely, Hrangthanga Colney and F. Lawmkima, were inducted as Ministers.<sup>54</sup>

As a result, the MJD asked all their Ministers to resign and the latter refused and pledged their support to the Chief Minister. The fragility of the coalition became evident on 29<sup>th</sup> April, 1994, when the MJD fired the last weapon in its armoury by withdrawing support to the Government

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53. *Proceedings of the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly (hereafter cited as PMLA)*, First Session, 1993, p. 17.

54. *Mizo Aw*, Aizawl, 29<sup>th</sup> April, 1994.

and thus ending the 142 days old coalition Ministry.<sup>55</sup> The move, however, posed no threat for the Ministry, which had firmly in the saddle for the solid support of 5 MJD Ministers. On 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1994, two Independent MLAs pledged their support to the Ministry. On 2<sup>nd</sup> May, the Chief Minister announced that a Congress Ministry was formed and a coalition Ministry has come to an end.<sup>56</sup> On 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 5 MNF MLAs defected to the Congress and two of the defectors were rewarded with Ministership. Thus, defection swelled the strength of the Congress to 28 and defection has gifted the State its single party government.

The main feature of this short-lived coalition experiment was dissimilar parties assembled together to exercise political power. Their electoral alliance was not based on any set principles. The only binding factor among the two parties was a desire for the governance of Mizoram without any programmatic or policy consensus. They lacked homogeneity due to the opportunistic alliance struck between desperate and ideologically heterogeneous parties. There was lack of clarity on two points. Firstly, they were based purely on the ambition to stay in power but did not have common programmes and policies as their foundation. Secondly, the alliance did not think of evolving any mechanism for the effective coordination and monitoring of the government.

### ***Conditions for Recognition of a Party or Group***

In Mizoram Legislative Assembly, directions by the Speaker stipulated that in recognising a parliamentary party or group, the Speaker shall take into considerations the following principles:-

- (a) Only those parties and groups which have common principles and programmes and which have contested the election on the basis of the declaration of such principles and programmes, shall be recognized.

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55. *Vanglaini*, Aizawl, 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1994.

56. *Harhna*, Aizawl, 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 1994.

- (b) They should have their programmes both within and outside the House. They should work according to their principles both within and outside the House.
- (c) It shall be necessary for the recognition of parties and groups that their strength should at least be one-fourth of the total number of members of the House and two (2) members respectively.<sup>57</sup>

A party securing at least one-fourth, i.e., 10 seats of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly can qualify for recognition for the official Opposition status and avail facilities as an Opposition, provided it fulfilled the above two conditions. A political party, having representation in the Assembly, which satisfied the above first two conditions but fail to command the required minimum strength, i.e., one-fourth or 10 members, can be recognised as a Group, provided its membership amount to at least 2.

The Rules of Procedure has bestowed a prestigious position of the Leader of Opposition in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly. One legal provision of positive value to the Opposition was the official recognition of the position of Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of Opposition means, “the leader of the largest party in Opposition and recognised as such by the Speaker”.<sup>58</sup>

The Leader of Opposition received a salary of Rs 2,550/- per month. He shall receive a sumptuary allowance of Rs. 2,750/-; family allowance of Rs 2,000/- and entertainment allowance of Rs 1,000/- per month. He shall be entitled, without payment of rent, to use of a furnished residence or if he was not provided such residence, he shall be entitled to a residence rental charge of Rs 6,000/- per month.<sup>59</sup>

57. Direction 9 of *Directions by Speaker, Mizoram Legislative Assembly (to be cited henceforth as Direction)*, Mizoram Legislative Assembly Secretariat, Aizawl, 1992.

58. Rule 2 (zz) of *Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Mizoram Legislative Assembly (Fourth Edition) (hereafter cited as Rule)*, Mizoram Legislative Assembly Secretariat, Aizawl, 1991.

59. Act 3 of *The Mizoram Salaries and Allowances of Leader of the Opposition (Amendment) Act*, 1991.

The Leader of Opposition shall be entitled to the free use of motor vehicle, the entire cost of maintenance and propulsion along with the service of chauffeur, shall be borne by the Government.<sup>60</sup>

### ***Sessions of the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly***

The Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly held 17 sessions, covering a period of 155 days and the number of days on which the House actually sat was 110. During its span, the Assembly devoted 560 hours and 35 minutes on various kinds of business transacted by it in 110 sittings. The average duration of the sitting was about 5 hours and 9 minutes.

### ***Social and Political Background of the Opposition Members in the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly***

The study of the theoretical framework of the parliamentary institution does not project the correct image of the institution. It gives only a partial picture of it. In order to understand the political reality, one has to study the men who mould the behavior of the institution. The success of any parliamentary institution largely depends upon the quality of the persons who are associated with. As an important parliamentary institution, the Opposition has played a vital role in shaping the destinies of the people in a variety of ways. The character which this august institution acquires after each general election is directly related to the quality and the social background of its members. As Parry says, “it is a widespread assumption of political sociology that social background and upbringing of a decision maker will influence his attitude and politics”.<sup>61</sup>

This study makes an attempt to examine the social and political background of the members of the Opposition in the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly. An understanding of the social and political

60. Act 6 of *The Mizoram Salaries and Allowances of Leader of the Opposition Act*, 1991.

61. Geraint Parry, *Political Elites*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1969, p. 27.

**TABLE 1**  
**DATE OF COMMENCEMENT AND TERMINATION OF THE SESSIONS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Session	Date of Commencement	Date of Termination	Duration of session (in days)	Actual days of sitting	Total number of days in the year which the House sat	Duration of sitting (in hours)
First	10.12.1993	13.12.1993	4	3	3	4 hr 35 min.
Second	8.3.1994	29.3.1994	22	14		75 hr 37 min.
Third	26.8.1994	26.8.1994	1	1	19	5 hr 10 min.
Fourth	7.11.1994	11.11.1994	5	4		18 hr 16 min.
Fifth	14.3.1995	3.4.1995	21	14		67 hr 42 min.
Sixth	27.9.1995	5.10.1995	9	5	22	24 hr 35 min.
Seventh	13.12.1995	15.12.1995	3	3		14 hr 34 min.
Eight	12.3.1996	20.3.1996	9	6		17 hr 24 min.
Ninth	16.7.1996	17.7.1996	2	2	24	8 hr 13 min.
Tenth	12.9.1996	1.10.1996	20	14		77 hr 37 min.
Eleventh	3.12.1996	4.12.1996	2	2		7 hr 30 min.
Twelfth	11.3.1997	21.3.1997	11	9		30 hr 42 min.
Thirteenth	15.7.1997	31.7.1997	17	12	23	81 hr 27 min.
Fourteenth	18.11.1997	21.11.1997	4	2		12 hr 34 min.
Fifteenth	17.3.1998	23.3.1998	7	5		19 hr 45 min.
Sixteenth	27.5.1998	27.5.1998	1	1	19	1 hr 43 min.
Seventeenth	14.7.1998	30.7.1998	17	13		95 hr 57 min.
	Total		115	110	110	560 hr 35 min.

background would enable us to find out the quality of the Opposition. Most of the informations used in this study were collected from the official Who's Who, 1995, published by the Mizoram Legislative Assembly Secretariat,<sup>62</sup> and supplemented by 'Tute Nge?', Who's Who, 1994, published by Joseph L. Ralte.<sup>63</sup> In this context, it is worth noting that though the study of the income and occupation of the members is important but beset with difficulties. Income is one of the criteria for determining the social status of a person. It is virtually impossible to get accurate figures from the Legislators about their incomes because most of them were reluctant to reveal their incomes. Puri points out, "it is observed that income is one of the elusive demographic variables as the general tendency is to hide income rather than reveal it correctly".<sup>64</sup> Occupation is one of the important criterias for social ranking. It is an index of a person's social class. But the information lacks precision since there is much overlapping in regard to the profession of members. It is difficult to draw lines of demarcation between various professions where members usually indicate more than one professions at a time. It is not uncommon for a Legislator in Mizoram to be engaged in several occupations at different stages of his life or to be engaged in several of them simultaneously. For instance, a teacher can be a businessman or a lawyer can be a journalist at the same time. Besides, there are difficulties in obtaining the exact data on this aspect. Some of the Legislators have not specified any occupation but cited social and political works as their main occupations. With these limitations, we have taken up the following variables, i.e., age, place of birth, number of children, education, age of entry into politics, previous legislative experience and length of political career.

### ***Age Profile***

It is assumed that the behaviour of a person has much to do with the factor of age because it is supposed to bring maturity, experience and judgment. Though the Constitution of India lays down a qualifying

62. *The Who's Who*, 1995, published by the Mizoram Legislative Assembly Secretariat, Aizawl.

63. Joseph L. Ralte, *Tute Nge?*, *Who's Who*, Zorin Publications, Aizawl, 1994.

64. Shashi Lata Puri, *Legislative Elite in an Indian State: A Case Study of Rajasthan*, Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1978, p. 54.

minimum age limit at 25 years for membership of the Legislative Assembly,<sup>65</sup> it does not provide any upper age limit. It seems that the founding fathers of the Indian Constitution assumed that a person usually attains maturity at the age of 25 years. It is generally felt that the younger people are more active and progressive and full of spirit for work than the older generation. Jha observes that, "the young members are expected to imbibe new values and they may even cherish new ideals as against the old members which may be more conservative, more practical and more matter of fact".<sup>66</sup>

**TABLE - V**

**Age composition of the Opposition Members in the Third Legislative Assembly**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Number of Persons</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
35 – 40	1	8.33
41 – 45	-	-
46 – 50	6	50.00
51 – 55	2	16.67
56-60	3	25.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The above Table shows that an overwhelming majority of the Opposition members belonged to the age group of 46-50 years, which constituted 50 per cent. Older members who were in the age group of 56 - 60 years have 25 per cent of representation. Those in the age group of 51 - 55 years accounted for 16.67 per cent. Young member in the age group of 35 - 40 years has 8.33 per cent of representation. There was no representation of Opposition members who were in the age group of 41-45 years. Thus, the Table reveals that middle aged members were in a predominant position and the younger group of Opposition parties did not seem to have much success in the Assembly election.

65. Article 173, *Constitution of India*, Eastern Book Company, Lucknow, 1993.

66. Dayadhar Jha, *State Legislatures in India: Legislature in the Indian Political System*, Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1977, p. 72.

### ***Place of Birth***

Place of birth seems to be important in the electoral politics. A person who was born within the constituency where he seeks election has a better chance of getting elected to the Legislative Assembly. This might be explained by the fact that electors want representatives to be local products who can feel the pulse of the people better than the outsiders.

**TABLE - VI**

#### **Place of Birth**

<b>Place of Birth</b>	<b>Number of Persons</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Within the Constituency	2	16.67
Outside the Constituency	10	83.33
Total	12	100.00

The Table reveals that out of the 12 members of the Opposition, 10 members or 83.33 percent were born outside the constituencies they represented. Only 2 members or 16.67 percent were born within the constituencies from which they have been elected.

### ***Number of Children***

Now a-days, there is a growing pressure for small families and fewer children. The Government is making its efforts to reduce the size of the children through family planning programmes.

**TABLE - VII**

#### **Number of Children**

<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Number of Persons</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
2	4	33.33
3	4	33.33
5	2	16.67
6	2	16.67
Total	12	100.00

The Table - VII demonstrates that majority of the members of the Opposition were interested in adopting family planning and keep the

family size limited to 2 - 3 children, which constituted 66.66 per cent; while four members seemed to have not been interested in adopting family planning programme crossing thereby the limit of family norms by giving birth to 5 - 6 children.

### ***Education***

Education has been universally recognised as a vital factor in the development of human personality. Political Scientists considered education as a significant variable in the political process where education and particularly the higher education is still beyond the reach of the common man. It is assumed that education moulds a person into elegant, efficient and high perceptive being. Education is especially important for the politicians because modern politics demands a reasonable understanding of the issues and events covering local, regional, national and global dimensions. Finer observes the quality of the Legislator in the following words :- “he needs sensitiveness to the life, difficulties, aspirations and future emerging problems of the world outside the Assembly”.<sup>67</sup> Education profoundly affects the behaviour pattern of a person as well as the understanding he brings to bear upon public affairs. Though there is no minimum educational qualification for contesting elections, the presence of illiterates and even the literates below matriculation standard has been declining.

**TABLE - VIII**  
**Educational Qualifications**

Level of Education	Number of Persons	Percentage
Intermediates	2	16.66
Graduates	6	50.00
Post Graduates	2	16.66
Doctorates	2	16.66
Total	12	99.98

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67. Herman Finer, *Op.Cit.*, p. 386.

The above Table demonstrates that all the members of the Opposition were educated. Out of the 12 Opposition members, 2 members studied up to Intermediate level. The maximum number, i.e., 6 members were Graduates, which constituted 50 per cent. About 16.66 per cent were Post Graduates and the same percentage were Doctorate degree holders.

### ***Age of Entry into Politics***

The age of the members of the Opposition at the time of entry into politics would indicate as to what age the members were interested in politics. The political career of any member has been a typical consequence of events. It is for this reason that political careers tell us a great deal about their participation in the political process of the State. A politician cannot hope to become a member of the legislature without active participation in the political activities in the State.

**TABLE - IX**  
**Age of entry into politics**

<b>Age of Entry</b>	<b>Number of Persons</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
20 and below	1	8.33
21 - 25	2	16.66
26 - 30	2	16.66
31 - 35	2	16.66
36 - 40	1	8.33
41 - 45	2	16.66
46 - 50	-	-
51 - 55	-	-
56-60	2	16.66
Total	12	99.96

The Table indicates that members of the Opposition started their political activities while they were quite young. It was further found that those who entered politics below 20 years of age accounts for 8.33 percent. From the age groups of 21-25, 26-30 and 31-35, the percentage of Opposition members entering politics was 16.66 per cent each. Those who entered politics in the age group of 36 - 40 formed only 8.33 percent. The percentage of those who were politically active in the age groups of 41 – 45 and 56 - 60 was 16.66 each.

### ***Previous Legislative Experience***

Prior legislative experience of the members of the Opposition may be viewed as an indicator of their previous experiences in the legislative work. Previous legislative experience becomes a crucial factor in their recruitment to the State Legislature. Legislative experience enables a member to know the formal and informal norms of the House, technicalities of the legislative process which constituted the essence of parliamentary form of government. The experience in legislature is an invaluable asset in the armoury of a member.

**TABLE - X**

#### **Previous Legislative Experience**

<b>Legislative Experience</b>	<b>Number of Persons</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
First Time	6	50.00
Second Time	1	8.33
Third Time	4	33.34
Fourth Time	1	8.33
Total	12	100.00

The Table discloses quite a high return of the new members of the Opposition to the Legislative Assembly. A very significant number, i.e., 50 per cent of the Opposition members were new entrants who have not been in the Legislative Assembly before. Six members or 50 percent of the total members has acquired legislative experience for one or more terms as members of the Union Territory Legislature or as those of State Legislature.

### ***Length of Political Experience***

It is generally believed that participation in political activities help the participants in acquiring useful training and political education. Length of political experience is another element of professionalism. Amateur politicians will not stay long in politics because unlike other professions, it does not bring a regular return. Nor is there an assured

future prospect. Hence, those who stay on in politics do so with the intention of facing all the risks that it involves.

**TABLE - XI**  
**Length of Political Experience**

Length of Political Career	Number of Persons	Percentage
10 years and below	6	50.00
11 – 20 years	2	16.67
21 – 30 years	3	25.00
31 – 40 years	1	8.33
Total	12	100.00

It is evident from the above Table that there is great difference among the Opposition members in the matters of the length of political career. A fairly large number of the Opposition members have been in politics for fairly long periods. It was found that 50 percent of the Opposition members have a political career of less than 10 years. 16.67 percent have 11-20 years of political career to their credit. 25 per cent were those who have 21 - 30 years of political career. Only one member or 8.33 per cent of the total members has 31 years of political career.

### ***Conclusion***

A close look at the social and political background of the Opposition members in the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly revealed that the majority of them belonged to middle-aged group. The middle-aged group were preferred to younger and energetic in the elections to the Assembly. Judged by the academic qualifications, a large number of members had been Graduates besides other higher qualifications. As regards the political background of the Opposition members, it was found that half of the members did not have past legislative experience and it proved that new entrants were at the helm of affairs. The Opposition members who were born in the constituencies from which they have been elected constitute 16.67 percent. The study reveals that the Opposition members comprising 41.66 percent made their political debut below 30 years of age. The Opposition members were all married and they have planned their family size according to the needs of the time.

## CHAPTER III

# GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS AND THE OPPOSITION

## CHAPTER III

### GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS AND THE OPPOSITION

In this chapter, an attempt will be made to indicate the role of the Opposition vis-a-vis the Governor's Addresses to the Mizoram Legislative Assembly. In doing so, emphasis will be laid on the major issues and contents of the Addresses and the views and reactions of the Opposition to the same. Before dealing with the issue, it seems pertinent to make some reference to the relevant provisions of the Constitution of India and the Assembly on the subject.

The Governor is the constitutional head of a State Government. He is appointed by the President of India.<sup>1</sup> The Governor holds his office during the pleasure of the President. The normal term of office of the Governor is for a period of 5 years.<sup>2</sup> The Governor is an integral part of the State Legislature. Chapter III of Part VI of the Constitution of India deals with the State Legislature. Article 168 provides that for every State there shall be a Legislature which shall consist of the Governor and one or two Houses.

Before the Assembly can start functioning, certain preliminaries have to be gone through. Article 180 (1) of the Indian Constitution authorises the Governor to appoint a Speaker *pro tem* in the absence of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly immediately after the election for performing the formality of administering the oath to each elected member. In appointing the Speaker *pro tem*, the Governor follows the convention of appointing the senior most member of the Assembly. A person so appointed as a Speaker *pro tem* should know the powers, functions and limitations of the office. He should be well conversant with the Rules of the House and should be able to decide the points of order. He should enjoy

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1. Article 155, *Constitution of India*.

2. Article 156, *Ibid*.

the confidence of the members of the House as an impartial person. His past conduct in the House must earn the good will of the members.<sup>3</sup> The Speaker *pro tem* has all powers of the Speaker under the Constitution and Rules of Procedure.<sup>4</sup> Erskine May also maintains that a member taking the Chair (Speaker *pro tem*) under these circumstances is granted by the Standing Order all the powers which are exercised by the Speaker.<sup>5</sup> The main functions of a Speaker *pro tem* are :- to administer oath to new members; to conduct election to the office of the Speaker; and to relinquish the office immediately. As the function of the Speaker *pro tem* is limited, his tenure is also limited and is very short.

Article 176 of the Indian Constitution says, “At the commencement of the first session after each general election to the Legislative Assembly and at the commencement of the first session of each year, the Governor shall address the Legislative Assembly or in the case of a State having a Legislative Council, both Houses assembled together and inform the Legislature of the cause of its summon”.

The first session of each year opens with the Address delivered by the Governor which means the House of the State Legislature come into session only after the Address is concluded. The session of the House can be said to commence only when the Governor has addressed the House under Article 176 (1) of the Constitution of India. The Governor’s Address is neither a meeting nor sitting of the Assembly because it does not form part of the proceedings of the House. The Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Mizoram Legislative Assembly also says that the election of the Speaker, in case of the first session of the Assembly after the general election, must be over before the House is being addressed by the Governor.<sup>6</sup>

Under the Constitution of India, the Governor has not only the right to address the House, but also the power to send message to the

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3. S.H.Patil, “Speaker Pro Tem”, *Journal of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies*, Vol.XXV, Nos. 1-4, 1991, p. 25.

4. M.N. Kaul and S.L. Shakhder, *Op. Cit.*, p. 99.

5. Erskine May, *Op. Cit.*, p. 280.

6. *Rule 17 (1)*.

Legislature of the State.<sup>7</sup> The Governor can determine under what circumstances it becomes necessary to send messages to the House. He alone determines what messages are to be sent. The Rule also provides that when a message from the Governor to the Assembly under Article 175 of the Indian Constitution is received by the Speaker, he shall read the message to the Assembly and give necessary directions in regard to the procedure that shall be followed for the consideration of matters referred to it in the message. In giving these directions, the Speaker shall be empowered to suspend or vary the Rules to such extent as may be necessary.<sup>8</sup>

When the Governor addresses the Legislature, his position cannot be considered as superior to that of the Legislature for the simple reason that he is not above the Legislature but he is a part of it. It leads to the impression that both the Governor and the Legislature are of equal importance and status. Article 168 of the Indian Constitution does not speak of the superiority of either of the two. The Governor of a State constitutes a limb of the Legislature and is to be treated as a part and parcel of the Legislature.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, when the Governor addresses the Legislature under Article 176, it leads to its logical corollary that the Rules, according to which the Speaker preserves order and enforces discipline, will be binding on the Governor also.<sup>10</sup>

During the Governor's Address, no member can legitimately claim any right to put questions to the Governor or to make any kind of comments upon him. Any attempt to read a parallel address or to refuse to listen to the Governor or otherwise to obstruct the proceedings of the Assembly amounts to a grave constitutional impropriety.<sup>11</sup>

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7. Article 175 (2), *Constitution of India*.

8. *Rule* 23.

9. M. S. Dahiya, "Governor's Address to State Legislature: The Problem of Decorum", *Journal of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies*, Vol.VI, No.4, 1972, p. 96.

10. *Ibid.*, p.97.

11. Bhal Chandra Shukla, *Glimpses of Parliamentary Practice and Procedure*, Uttar Pradesh Vishan Sabha Sachivalaya, Lucknow, 1989, pp. 2-3.

During the Address by the Governor, there are cases of noisy and disorderly scene resulting in the interruption of his speech or that might compel him at times to leave the House without reading the complete text. The question is whether such an incomplete Address by the Governor amounts to substantial compliance of Article 176 (1). If such thing happens, the Governor's reading of portion of his speech followed by the House adopting a resolution taking the Governor's speech as 'read' could be taken as the speech having been delivered.<sup>12</sup>

The Address by the Governor contains a policy statement of the Government. Such Address is not the opinion of the Governor himself on any policy matter. The Address, whenever delivered, is prepared by the Government itself and it is the Government and not the Governor who is responsible for its contents. The purpose of Address is two folds :- firstly, to make a review of the activities and achievements of the Government during the preceeding year; secondly, to make a statement of policies and programmes Government proposes to pursue in the ensuing year including the list of proposed Bills to be piloted in the House. Since the contents of the Address is a statement of the Government, it is the Government alone which is answerable for it on the floor of the House. Therefore, any criticism against the contents by the members on the floor of the House should be addressed to the Government and not the Governor. In all cases, it is a written speech and the Governor merely intones the words of the Ministry.

In Mizoram Legislative Assembly, the Governor's Address is laid on the Table of the House and copies of printed Address are made available to the members.<sup>13</sup> The Speaker allots the date and time for the discussion of the matters referred to in the Address given by the Governor. The discussion of the Governor's Address started with a Motion of Thanks. Any member of the House can move such a Motion and second it. In the Mizoram Legislative Assembly throughout our period of survey, this function was discharged by the members of the ruling party in power. The

12. Chandra Bushan Pandey, *Governor: Preserver, Protector and Defender of the Constitution?*, Vikash Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1999, p.116.

13. *Rule 17 (2)*.

form of the Motion is: - “That the member of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly assembled in this session are deeply grateful to the Governor for the Address which he has been pleased to deliver in this House on .....”.

During the day allotted for discussion on Governor’s Address, other business of a formal nature can be transacted.<sup>14</sup> The scope of discussion on Governor’s Address is very wide and any aspects of administration may be brought into focus. Members are free to speak on all sorts of problems. Even matters which are not specifically mentioned in the Address may be covered. The discussion that follows on Governor’s Address opens floodgates of a royal battle on matters of policy between the Government on the one hand and the Opposition on the other hand. The Address of the Governor, which is prepared by the Government itself, reflects the Government’s policy with an indication of the programme it seeks to follow for any given period. Therefore, the Governor’s Address provides the Opposition with materials to launch their offensive against the Government. It also enables the Opposition to ventilate public grievances and extract information, promises and assurances. Besides criticising the Government’s policy and programme, the Opposition utilised the occasion not only to remind the Government on its failure but also to state their views on relevant issues.

Members do have the right to move amendment to the Governor’s Address. At the closure of the discussion on Governor’s Address, usually the Chief Minister replies the debate.<sup>15</sup> Thereafter, the Motion of Thanks is put to vote. After the Motion is passed by the House, communication is sent to the Governor by the Speaker conveying to him, the Motion adopted by the House.<sup>16</sup>

During the period under study, the Governor addressed the State Assembly of Mizoram six times, five times on the eve of the Budget Sessions and one just after the formation of the Third Mizoram State Legislative

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14. *Ibid.*, 20.

15. *Ibid.*, 21.

16. *Ibid.*, 17 (4).

Assembly on the 11<sup>th</sup> December, 1993. A glance at the proceedings of the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly during 1993 - 1998 at the course of discussion on Governor's Address revealed that utmost dignity and decorum befitting that occasion was maintained. No untoward incident has occurred and no member has ever indulged in unruly behaviour. All the Governor's Addresses were recorded without any amendment.

It is worth to mention here that the Mizoram Legislative Assembly has a distinguished record of orderly and decent parliamentary behaviour by all members. The records of the proceedings of the Assembly during the period under study revealed the truth that abusive words against their opponents were rarely used. There were no records that members have used physical power on the floor of the House as it generally happened in other State Legislative Assemblies of India. It has been observed that the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, in comparison to other State Assemblies of India, has remained much more peaceful during the hours of debates and discussions on different occasions. Walk-out of the House in protest against something said or done, creating disturbances, interruption, boycott and obstruction of the Assembly proceedings were a rare phenomenon. But this does not mean that tussle and confrontation between the ruling and Opposition parties never took place.

Opposition's participation in the discussion on the Governor's Address had been mainly in the form of expressing dissatisfaction for failure to mention important issues in the Address or disregard towards some policies or actions of the Government and to suggest alternatives to the policies of the ruling party. Like other parliamentary devices for ventilating grievances, the Governor's Address also provided an opportunity to the members to place before the Government the grievances of their respective constituencies and to expose the Government for its alleged acts of omissions and commissions. The Opposition in Mizoram Legislative Assembly fully utilised this opportunity. The role of the Opposition is discussed in the light of specific items discussed by the Governor in respect of the policy outline made by him in his address. The Governor of Mizoram

addressed the first session of the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly on 11<sup>th</sup> December, 1993. He thanked the people of Mizoram for having made the just concluded Assembly elections free and fair and the way election campaigns and elections conducted had been mark by peace and tranquility which could serve as a model for the rest of the country. The discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the Address by the Governor took place on the Assembly on 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1993. The main issue which has drawn the attention of the members of the Opposition has been the alleged corruption in the conduct of the just concluded Assembly election of 1993.

Initiating the discussion on the Governor's Address, Lalrinchhana of MNF claimed that the election of 1993 was not free and fair as had been stated by the Governor in his Address. He said that the use of money permeated the elections more than ever before and money apparently decided the fortunes of quite a few seats. Under the Election Commission of India's guideline, each candidate is allowed an expenditure of Rs 10,000/-. But the quantum of money being used in the elections has been very high despite the restrictions. He narrated that while some candidates campaigned freely, it was not so in some areas like Saiphai and Saipum villages of Bilkhawthlir Constituency in Aizawl District. There were intimidations and threats to the voters asking them to choose a particular candidate.<sup>17</sup>

Lalkhama of MNF attacked the Government along the same line. He assailed the Government and blamed the ruling parties for adopting corrupt practices in the election. Moreover, he stated that a Central Minister had recently spoken about the lifting of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873, commonly known as the 'Inner Line Regulation', which was in force in Mizoram. He demanded a clarification on this issue from the Government.<sup>18</sup>

H. Lalruata of MNF dismissed the claim of the Governor that the election was free and fair. He said that threats were carried out with

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17. *Proceedings of the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly (to be cited henceforth as PMLA), First Session, 1993*, p. 13.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 14 – 15.

arms and voters were intimidated and harassed. He further said that it was an open secret that Shanti Bhahinis, Chakma militant, were involved in the election and were allegedly campaigning for a particular party. Referring to the Chakma issue, he regretted that not a single word was mentioned by the Governor about the Chakma infiltration from Bangladesh, who have now been comfortably settled in the western belt of Mizoram. The Chakma's are now no longer satisfied with a District Council and are demanding a separate Union Territory within Mizoram. He felt pained that the silent invasion of illegal immigration from Bangladesh did not get the recognition of the Government.<sup>19</sup>

Taking part in the discussion, F. Malsawma of MNF said that the speech of the Governor was not a true reflection of the ground reality and was, instead, trying to glorify a failed Government. He was amazed to learn that the Government was unable to provide free supply of medicines to the Government Hospitals and asked as to how the Government was going to solve the problem. He further said that the just concluded election was not fair enough. Referring to some instances as examples, he said that some muster roll employees under Art and Culture Department were discharged merely because they sang a song in the election campaign whereas some others who openly involved in the political campaign were left unnoticed. Some Home Guard personnels were also discharged on the slightest pretext. There were physical assaults and threatening in some Constituencies during the Assembly election. As election was held under such circumstances, how can the Governor call the election free and fair, he wondered.<sup>20</sup>

L.P. Thangzika of MNF charged the Government with misuse of power for party ends, favouritism and victimization and suppression of the opponents. One of the glaring instances to prove that charge was the suppression of the democratically elected Village Council by a nominated Committee. Referring to the situation in Ngharchhip and Cherhlun villages of Hnahthial Constituency in Lunglei District, he alleged that a Develop-

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19. *Ibid.*, pp. 16 – 17.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 18 – 19.

ment Board Committee was set up by the Government with the Congress of Ngharchhip village for the developmental work of the above two villages. None other than their party members had been included in the developmental works. He wondered if the Government was right in showing favouritism with the ruling party members in preference to those who had been democratically elected. He further said that such suppression has no doubt posed the problem of diminution of the prestige and tarnish the image of an elected institution.<sup>21</sup>

Zoramthanga, Leader of the Opposition, attacked the Government for its pre-election distribution of 160 bundles of G.I. roofing sheets in his Constituency, i.e., Champhai in Aizawl District. He also expressed his concern over the manner of dismissal of the employees of Art and Culture and Home Guard personnel. Referring to the issue of civil supplies, he cited examples of the Government's wrong policy. He gave an example of how Union Flour Mills, Silchar of Assam, has gained from flour supply while local industries were being ignored; thereby resulting in heavy losses to the State exchequer.<sup>22</sup>

In his address to the Legislative Assembly on 8<sup>th</sup> March, 1994, the Governor said that his Government has attached great importance to the development of power and electricity sector and efforts were made to develop hydel power through mini projects. In order to alleviate the difficulties of the people in drinking water, great importance has been given to urban and rural water supply programmes. The Government has also been committed to achieve 'Health for All by 2000 A.D.'.

During the discussion on the Governor's Address of 1994, the Opposition primarily focused on the apathetic conditions of water supply, health care services and power and electricity. While participating in the discussion, Zakhu Hlychho of MNF pointed out some lacuna in the Address of the Governor. He regretted that in the Address, there was no mention about Tuipang Hydel Project which could be able to generate 5

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21. *Ibid.*, pp. 36 – 37.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 39 – 41.

Megawatts of power. He accused the Government of neglecting Chhimtuipui District.<sup>23</sup>

Lalrinchhana of MNF regretted that the Governor's Address failed to reflect the administrative achievements of the Government. He observed that the present Government had utterly failed in providing effective, clean, impartial and transparent administration and charged the Government of being incapable of running the administration of the State. He further said that the Budget amount spent for power and electricity had been increasing each year, but there was no positive result to be seen on the power development. He also criticised the Government for not paying adequate attention to the Health and Family Welfare Department. He pointed out the shortage of medicines and equipments in the Government run Hospitals which put the people of the State in great hardship.<sup>24</sup>

Referring to Serlui 'B' Hydel Project, Lalkhama of MNF said that a large amount of money has been squandered on it in spite of the fact that the Project could produce only 3 Megawatts of power. He, therefore, requested the Government to abandon this Project and, instead, concentrated on other bigger Projects like Bairabi and Tuirial Hydel Projects.<sup>25</sup>

Dr. R. Lalthangliana of MNF blamed the wrong selection of the contractor for Greater Lunglei Water Supply Scheme. The Scheme was started on 19<sup>th</sup> October, 1990 and it was to be completed within three years. The time for completion of the works for the Project was extended three times but construction could not be completed till now. So, he demanded that the Contractor, M/S Subhas Project and Marketing Limited, Calcutta, be black listed by the Government of Mizoram.<sup>26</sup>

Lalsawta of MNF said that in 1993, Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) has taken an amount of Rs 600/- lakhs as a loan from Life Insurance Corporation of India for the construction of Water Supply

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23. *PMLA, Second Session, 1994*, p. 9.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 9 – 10.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Schemes for Serchhip and Kolasib towns. Till now, the construction works had not been started. He questioned the Government as to what efforts had been made to initiate the construction of the projects.<sup>27</sup>

T. Hranghluta of MNF said that the Government of Mizoram has committed to attain the goal of “Health For All by the year 2000 A.D.”. The attainment of this goal required a thorough overhaul in the existing approach. He was doubtful to a great extent regarding the Government’s commitment to achieve the goal under the existing conditions. He urged the Government to set up a Cancer Hospital which the people of Mizoram badly needed.<sup>28</sup>

H. Zathuama, an Independent member, referred to the slow progress of rural electricity. He said that it was unfortunate that most of the villages in his Constituency, i.e., Ngopa in Aizawl District, have not been electrified. He regretted that there was no mention about Leiva Hydel Project within Ngopa Constituency in the Governor’s Address. He urged the Minister-in-charge to take note of it and requested him to include the Leiva Hydel Project in the projects to be taken up.<sup>29</sup>

B. Lalhlengliana of MNF said that the State was caught in the grip of power crisis and the sufferings of the people were acute. He suggested that instead of taking up many small projects, the Government should concentrate on big projects like Bairabi Hydel Project.<sup>30</sup>

L.P. Thangzika of MNF alleged that there were frequent electricity shut-downs and break-downs in Lunglei District, for which the Government was solely responsible. He urged the Government to ensure regular supply of power in Lunglei District.<sup>31</sup>

K.T. Rokhaw, an Independent member, informed the House that last year there was only one specialist doctor at Saiha Civil Hospital. But that doctor was transferred to another place and this resulted in the

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27. *Ibid*, p. 15.

28. *Ibid*, pp. 15 – 16.

29. *Ibid*, pp. 17 – 18.

30. *Ibid*, p. 18.

31. *Ibid*, p. 20.

functioning of the Hospital without specialist doctor. He, therefore, requested the Government to post specialist doctor at Saiha Civil Hospital. He further stated that at Tuipang village, medical service was offered through Primary Health Centre which was manned by one doctor and two Nurses. Whenever the doctor was out of station, the two Nurses had to run the Centre as the people of the area around Tuipang village depended on this Centre. He, therefore, demanded that a Hospital be set up with full equipments and facilities.<sup>32</sup>

F.Lalzuala of MNF held the Government responsible for the delay in the completion of the Greater Lunglei Water Supply Scheme.<sup>33</sup>

Participating in the discussion, F. Lalremsiama of MNF accused the Government for its failure to tackle power shortage. Quoting statistics from Government documents in support of his claim, he said that out of the 721 villages in Mizoram, only 617 villages have been electrified, which was not much an achievement. He further said that after spending large sum of money, the Government failed to supply safe drinking water to the people even in Aizawl city. Quoting from the Governor's Address, he said that out of 721 villages in Mizoram, only 166 villages get regular water supply. Comparing to the amount of money spent for water supply, he saw absolutely no scope or justification for complacency. He charged the Government in adopting unsympathetic attitude towards the people in regard to the supply of safe drinking water. Disagreeing with the Governor's statement that the Government committed to achieve "Health For All by 2000 A.D.", he said that the Government was far from achieving this target as the Civil Hospitals were always short of free medical supplies. He urged the Government to set up Cancer Detection Centre or treatment for the cancer patients in Mizoram.<sup>34</sup>

Zoramthanga, Leader of the Opposition said that if the Government was so keen to take up the Bairabi Hydel Project, they should have started the Project in the last five years of their previous term. He

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32. *Ibid*, p. 21.

33. *Ibid*, p. 22.

34. *Ibid*, pp. 23 – 24.

criticised the Government for its lack of initiative to find a solution to the power crisis.<sup>35</sup>

The Governor addressed the Legislative Assembly on 14<sup>th</sup> March, 1995, in which he lauded the Government for signing a Memorandum of Understanding (M.O.U) with the leaders of Hmar People's Convention (H.P.C.) on 27<sup>th</sup> August, 1994, which brought an end to hostility and ushered in an era of peace. 317 HPC volunteers came overground with their arms and pledge to abjure violence and become law-abiding citizens. The Government has also taken up the New Land Use Policy (N.L.U.P.) for the upliftment and prosperity of the rural people.

There were some instances in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly when the Opposition praised the achievements of the Government on the Governor's Address. To cite an example, the Governor's Address of 1995 mentioned the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (M.O.U.) between the Government of Mizoram and the Hmar People's Convention (H.P.C.). A peep into the history might help to understand this significant event.

Since 1986, the HPC demanded for the creation of an Autonomous District Council in Hmar majority areas in North Mizoram. At the beginning, the HPC started vigorous movement in peaceful means but in 1989, the movement turned into violent means. Later, the movement leadership came to an understanding with the Government of Mizoram that resulted in the signing of the M.O.U. For a durable solution to the Hmar issue and with the objective to provide maximum autonomy to the Hmar people for their social, economic, educational and cultural advancement, the M.O.U. proposed to create an autonomous self-governing body known as "Sinlung Hills Development Council" (S.H.D.C.) within the State of Mizoram.

Though the Opposition welcomed the general principles of the M.O.U., they criticised the Government for its failure to fulfilled certain

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35. *Ibid*, p. 25.

conditions in the M.O.U. Lalrinchhana of MNF accused the Government for its failure to constitute the S.H.D.C and the demarcation boundaries for the S.H.D.C.<sup>36</sup> F. Malsawma of MNF alleged that the Government had not paid enough attention to the Hmar problem and failed to take initiative steps for rehabilitation of the H.P.C. personnels coming overground. This has made them very desperate and there was sign of discontentment among them and they were contemplating fresh insurgency by sending fresh trainees to the Naga underground forces.<sup>37</sup>

Lalsawta of MNF pointed out a mistake on the part of the Government and stated that the M.O.U. was signed on 24<sup>th</sup> July, 1994, and not on 27<sup>th</sup> August, 1994, as stated by the Governor in his Address. He accused the Government of being irresponsible and insensitive to important event which required attention.<sup>38</sup> R. Tlanghmingthanga of MNF expressed his dissatisfaction over the handling of the Hmar issue. He alleged that the Government had been unsuccessful in fulfilling its primary responsibility.<sup>39</sup>

F. Lalremsiama of MNF wanted to know the number of arms and ammunitions surrendered by the H.P.C. He further said that the people were now discontent and disillusioned and he was afraid that the leaders of H.P.C. might revive violent means.<sup>40</sup>

Lalkhama of MNF said that after signing the M.O.U. with the H.P.C., the Government was silent on the implementation of the M.O.U. This clearly showed the callousness of the Government towards the Hmar people.<sup>41</sup>

Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD said that the feeling of being neglected has been the main reason for the movement of the Hmar people and they called for the attention of the Government. He criticised the Government for its failure to implement the M.O.U. He said that the Government has failed to fulfill the aspirations

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36. *PMLA, Fifth Session, 1995*, p. 31.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 35

of the Hmar people. The Government was deceiving the Hmar people and belied the expectations of the Hmar people and the Hmar people were disappointed and disgusted.<sup>42</sup>

The Opposition also made severe attack on the Government by pointing out the draw backs in the implementation of the “New Land Use Policy” (N.L.U.P.). In 1984, the Congress Government introduced a new scheme for the economic development called “Land Use Policy”. In 1989, the Congress Government revived the project with its new form as NLUP and a newly created Rural Development Department was entrusted with the implementing agency. The NLUP was termed as one of the flagship economic development programmes of the Congress. The NLUP sought to draw the farmers away from the unproductive and destructive traditional occupation of shifting cultivation to permanent means of livelihood. The selected farming household has to choose any one of the forty six trades broadly classified into three principal sectors: - (a) Agriculture and Allied Sector; (b) Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Sector; and (c) Industry Sector. Each beneficiary was given cash ranging from Rs 20,000 to Rs 50,000 as grant by the Government. The NLUP Scheme covered a total number of 42,514 families in 10 Rural Development Blocks.

Initiating the discussion, B. Lalthlengliana of MNF said that the main cause of the failure of the NLUP was the inadequate financial assistance provided to the farmers by the Government. On going works became standstill due to the late payment of funds. Considering the gravity of the beneficiaries, he said, the Government should come forward with timely release of funds and allot sufficient funds to them.<sup>43</sup>

F. Malsawma of MNF said that the Government had failed to take any meaningful step for the success of the NLUP. The situation had been further aggravated by the failure of the Banks to release funds on time.<sup>44</sup> Lalhmingthanga of MJD said that the beneficiaries of NLUP were facing a lot of difficulties as a proper deal was not given. He stressed the need to improve the present system for better results.<sup>45</sup>

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42. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

H. Thangkima of MJD said that the NLUP in its present system could never realise its full potential if it was implemented within the same structure. The beneficiaries of various trades were not provided the full amount of payments due to them. Citing an example in the village of Ramlaitui in Vanva Constituency in Lunglei District, he said, people who had chosen sugarcane for their trades were provided Rs 500/- only when they were supposed to get Rs 3,000/-. Such were the cases in other areas like Lunglei North, Lunglei South, Vanva, Buarpui and Tawipui. He, therefore, urged the Government to set up an Enquiry Commission to look into the matters.<sup>46</sup>

In his addressed to the Legislative Assembly on 12<sup>th</sup> March, 1996, the Governor said that 1995 for Mizoram has been a year of ‘Motor Accidents’, which claimed many lives. The Government has given great importance to education and Mizoram has the distinction of achieving 88.06 percent literacy. The problem of infiltration of foreign nationals from neighbouring countries has been tactfully handled by the Government by detecting and deporting the illegal immigrants from Mizoram.

A study of the Governor’s Address of 1996 has revealed that three main issues were uppermost in the minds of the Opposition, namely, Mizoram State Transport Department, Education and Foreign infiltration.

Lalhmingthanga of MJD expressed his dissatisfaction on the statement given by the Governor in his Address that the year 1995 was a ‘Year of Motor Vehicle Accidents’. It was painful that so many people had lost their lives in accidents. Road accident generally occurred due to human error. Whenever human error was responsible for road accident, action should be taken against the staff concerned. Every accident should be viewed seriously by the Government and enquired into thoroughly not only to punish the guilty but also to ascertain the causes and to take measures necessary to prevent recurrence of similar accidents.<sup>47</sup>

Lalsawta of MNF said that majority of State Transport accident was ultimately traceable to the failure of human element. He stressed the

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46. *Ibid.*, pp. 37 - 38.

47. *PMLA, Eighth Session, 1996*, pp. 57 – 58.

need of giving top-most priority to ensure safe journey for the people. The Minister concerned should take the entire responsibility for the accident, he added.<sup>48</sup>

Lalkhama of MNF said that Transport Department had purchased six new buses last year, but the Department has been incurring massive losses of Rs 3 crores. He warned the Department to be careful in future. He also alleged that there has been financial irregularities and misappropriation of funds by the top officials.<sup>49</sup>

H.Thangkima of MJD assailed the Government for the frequency and regularity of the accidents in Transport Department. He said no concrete efforts had been made so far for the improvement of Transport Department to meet the challenge ahead. He urged the Government to provide better transport facilities and wanted to extend the State Transport services from Sialsuk to Thenzawl, Lunglei to Buarpu and Khawbung to Zawlsei.<sup>50</sup>

F. Malsawma of MNF alleged that the Government was dealing with the safety in the State Transport Bus very carelessly and callously causing disastrous accidents. He said the Minister concerned and the Transport Department gave contradictory views whenever such accidents occurred. He challenged the Government to resolve its inherent contradictions on the State Transport issue.<sup>51</sup>

Education has been one of the rallying areas where the Opposition launch their attack on the Government in the Discussion of the Governor's Address. Lalhmingthanga of MJD said that education would be considered the key vehicle for social transformation. As per the Government's policy of starting plus 2 system, he underlined the need to allocate more fund for education in the Budget provision. This plus 2 system could not work unless sufficient resources like buildings were made available. He further said that the Government of Mizoram in its Budget Session on 23<sup>th</sup> March, 1992 passed an official resolution for the

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48. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

establishment of a Central University. However, the Chief Minister informed the House that the Government of Mizoram has received Rs 80 crores from the Central Government for the establishment of a State University. He warned the Government that it would be a financial burden for a poor State like Mizoram to have a State University. He, therefore, pleaded the State Government to opt for a Central University.<sup>52</sup>

Lalsawta of MNF drew the attention of the House that lands belonging to Education Department at High School Hill, Aizawl had been encroached by individuals and constructed private buildings. Land which has been notified for the construction of College of Teachers' Education was also allotted to individuals. He charged the Government of being incapable of protecting Government land.<sup>53</sup>

Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD recalled the Government resolution of 1992 to established a Central University in Mizoram. However, the Government has deviated from its earlier stand. He came down heavily on the move to establish a State University. He suggested that the plus 2 system should follow on the pattern of Central Board of Secondary Education.<sup>54</sup>

Lalkhama of MNF emphasized the need to send Mizo students to foreign countries to make them employable to private sectors or at least conform to make them self-employed.<sup>55</sup>

F. Lalremsiama of MNF highlighted the contradictory statements of the Government. He pointed out that the Governor in his Republic Day speech of 1996 mentioned the appointment of 228 Post-Graduate Teachers for Higher Secondary Schools and now in his Address to the Assembly, the Governor has said the appointment of 142 teachers only and he demanded a clarification from the Government. He further said that as more and more students were coming from High Schools, it was necessary to open more Higher Secondary Schools or junior Colleges to accommodate the students. The education sector needs to be revamped by making it more job-oriented so that it can contribute productively. He criticised the Government for what he described as 'its total and comprehensive failure' to improved the standard of education.<sup>56</sup>

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52. *Ibid*, pp. 59-60.

53. *Ibid*, p. 63.

54. *Ibid*, p. 67.

55. *Ibid*, p. 70.

56. *Ibid*, p. 76.

H. Thangkima of MJD expressed the view that the existing strength of teachers had been inadequate in proportion to the strength of the students in High Schools. High Schools were reeling under shortage of teachers and lack of infrastructure facilities and demanded early filling up of vacancies for effective results. Giving certain instances, he pointed out that Chhipphir High School in Vanva Constituency in Lunglei District have no Mathematics and Science Teachers and requested the Government to take note of it.<sup>57</sup>

Infiltration of foreign nationals from neighbouring countries figured prominently in the discussion of the Governor's Address. The Opposition criticised the Government for its alleged lack of initiative to find a solution to the foreign nationals issue. Lalsawta of MNF said that the Governor in his Address had mentioned about the problem of foreign infiltration from across the border which posed a serious threat to the peaceful environment in the State. He recalled the Governor's Republic Day speech of 1996 in which the Governor mentioned the same statement. This clearly indicated that the greatest peril now faced by Mizoram was influx of unabated illegal foreign nationals from neighbouring countries which defied solution demanding administrative acumen and political wisdom of the Government. He alleged that the Government had not taken any step for the detection and deportation of unauthorized foreigners.<sup>58</sup>

Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD pointed out that the present and continuous influx of illegal infiltrations of Chakma from Bangladesh has continued unabated. He recalled an unstarred Question No. 14 asked by him to the Home Minister during the Winter Session on 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1995 regarding the number of deported illegal foreigners and the answer was 8. He charged the Government of being completely unconcerned and oblivious of the foreigners' issue. Areas bordering Bangladesh have witnessed very high growth rate in population. He said that it was a matter of regret that the Government has failed to raise the issue of illegal migration with the Government of India in a serious and concerted manner over all

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57. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

these years. It would be impossible to find a lasting solution to this gigantic problem unless there exists political will.<sup>59</sup>

Lalkhama of MNF said that Border Security Force (B.S.F) has been guarding Mizoram-Bangladesh border on the western sector and Mizoram-Burma border on the eastern sector has been guarded by the Assam Rifles. The BSF has been most callous, unreasonable and uncooperative in its actions. We should not allow Mizoram's peaceful environment to be disturbed by the large scale infiltration of illegal immigrants from across the border. He expected to hear from the Governor's Address next year that armed Police outposts consisting of at least two sections of Police would be set up at Parva, Vaseitlang, Borapansuri, Marpara and Dampa. He, therefore, urged the Government to ensure that people were safe and move freely without any fear. In order to achieve these ends, the Government should take a practical approach in tackling foreigners' issue.<sup>60</sup>

F. Lalremsiama of MNF said that whenever a member asked about illegal infiltration during Question Hour, instead of giving straight-forward answers, the Minister prevaricate in an attempt to prevent information being furnished to the House. He challenged the Government to reveal the number of detection and repatriation of illegal immigrants and the future course of action of the Government.<sup>61</sup>

F. Malsawma of MNF, quoting from the Press report, stated that Shanti Bhahini, the armed wing of Jana Sanghati Samiti, an organisation to seek constitutional recognition for Chakma ethnic identity in Bangladesh, has set up camp at Puankhai on the western belt of Mizoram bordering Bangladesh. He alleged that some Ministers from Mizoram Government were known to have visited the Shanti Bhahini camp. Thus, the problem of foreign infiltration from Bangladesh has become the greatest existential crisis of Mizoram which demand an immediate permanent solution at the initiative of the Government of Mizoram. He said every foreigner staying illegally in Mizoram should be deported. He criticised the Government for its failure

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59. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 68 - 69.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

to check foreign infiltration and urged the Government to enforce stringent border controls in order to prevent illegal infiltration.<sup>62</sup>

The Governor, in his address, to the Legislative Assembly on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 1997, said that regular distribution of essential commodities to the people of the State through Public Distributive System has been the vital concern of his Government. With this object in view, the Food & Civil Supplies Department has been taking vigorous steps to ensure regular procurement and timely supply of essential commodities to the people. As a result, there has not been any scarcity of essential commodities in the State during the past one year.

During the course of discussion on Governor's Address of 1997, the Opposition's attack centered around two major issues - scarcity of essential commodities and illegal influx of foreigners.

F. Malsawma of MNF said that the Governor's Address not only gave a misleading picture of the real situation prevailing in the State but also concealed many important facts which should have been highlighted. He criticised the Government's failure in addressing the scarcity of essential commodities and its ineffective efforts to procure supplies from other States.<sup>63</sup>

Lalsawta of MNF found that the Governor's Address did not articulate the true picture of the State. The Governor's Address did not reveal the scarcity of essential commodities which had compounded the misery of the people. He charged the Government of its inability to provide sufficient essential commodities to the people and had nothing to offer to solve the problem.<sup>64</sup>

Lalkhama of MNF opined that the Governor's Address did not reflect the real picture of the State. The people were put to great hardship as a result of the acute shortage of essential commodities like meat, rice, kerosene oil, flour, milk, other milk products etc.<sup>65</sup>

62. *Ibid*, p. 84.

63. *PMLA, Twelfth Session, 1997*, p. 17.

64. *Ibid*, pp. 18 - 19.

65. *Ibid*, p. 22.

B. Lalthlengliana of MNF said that a government which could not provide essential commodities to its people could not claim to be a government for the poor. He further said that the biggest failure of the present government was its inability to provide adequate essential commodities which hit the people very badly.<sup>66</sup>

H. Thangkima of MJD criticised the Government for its alleged lack of initiative to find a solution to the scarcity of essential commodities. He thanked the Central Government for providing half-price ration to the poor. However, he expressed his regret over the absence of a single word in the Governor's Address about the generosity shown by the Central Government to the people of Mizoram.<sup>67</sup>

In the matter of amendment to the Governor's Address, the Opposition has to encounter hostile members from the ruling party. Procedural points were raised by the members of the ruling party to frustrate the Opposition's amendment. Such a situation occurred in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly in 1997. On 12<sup>th</sup> March, 1997, Lalsawta of MNF, moved his amendment. He, in his amendment, disagreed with the Governor's statement that there was no acute shortage of essential commodities in the State. F. Lalremsiama of MNF defended Lalsawta by citing that the people certainly felt the scarcity of essential commodities. He tried to impress upon the House that Lalsawta's amendment was in order. The situation reached a stage when the Speaker had to give his ruling on the matter. The Speaker asked, "Has our honourable member submitted the amendment in writing?". Lalsawta reacted, "It is nowhere stated in Rule 19 that the amendment should be submitted in writing".<sup>68</sup> However, the Speaker did not permit him to move his amendment as it was not submitted in writing.

There have been repeated allegations over the years that successive governments in Mizoram had shown lack of foresight in formulating effective strategy in matter concerning the problem of illegal foreign infiltrations from neighbouring countries. During the discussion on

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66. *Ibid*, p. 22.

67. *Ibid*, p. 23.

68. *Ibid*, p. 30.

the Governor's Address of 1997, the Opposition were dissatisfied when they did not find any reference to the illegal foreign infiltration issue. Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD wanted to know the incident at Vathuampui village in Chhimtuipui District where the Chin National Front, Chin militant group of Burma, occupied that village. He also wanted to know the action taken or to be taken by the Government against a foreign Buddhist Monk who lived at Chamdur village in Chhimtuipui District.<sup>69</sup>

F. Lalremsiama of MNF was surprised to find that the Governor's Address contained no concrete policy for the deportation of illegal foreign infiltrations. To him, the Governor did not project the right picture of the State in his speech. He accused the Government's reluctance to even talk of such issue, let alone taking any action thereon.<sup>70</sup>

Disagreeing with the Governor's statement that security of the State was accorded, Lalkhama of MNF said that the security of the State has been endangered due to the mass influx of foreigners from Burma, Bangladesh and Tripura. He said that infiltration has posed a big challenge for the people of Mizoram and it must be stopped.<sup>71</sup>

B. Lalthlengliana of MNF said that though massive illegal immigration has continued unabated, the Governor's Address did not mention about the number of detection and deportation of illegal foreigners from Mizoram and the deletion of names of illegal voters from the voters' list. He alleged that the Government was showing negligence towards infiltrations, which was posing a serious threat to Mizoram. He further alleged that the Government has not taken any steps for the detection and deportation of illegal foreigners from Mizoram.<sup>72</sup>

R. Tlanghmingthanga of MNF said that Mizoram border management has unfortunately never been strong. This is why the State has been subject to repeated influx of foreigners from different directions. The Government of Mizoram has set up The Anti-Foreigners Squad whose

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69. *Ibid*, p. 17.

70. *Ibid*, p. 19.

71. *Ibid*, p. 21.

72. *Ibid*, p. 22.

mission is to detect and apprehend illegal foreigners in Mizoram. The Squad aimed to serve and defend the State's interests and ensure security of the individual, society and the State. With the creation of such Squad, it was expected that the security on border areas would be improved with a dedicated enforcement wing. Unfortunately, there was hardly any visible action against the illegal foreigners by the Anti-Foreigners Squad.<sup>73</sup>

In the course of the address to the Legislative Assembly on 17<sup>th</sup> March, 1998, the Governor said that the Government accorded high priority to the maintenance of peace and harmony among the people and the security of the State. The over-all law and order situation remained peaceful. An important policy of the Government was transparency and efficiency in administration and enforcing accountability of Government at all levels.

In the course of the discussion of Governor's Address of 1998, the Opposition focused their attack of the Government on two major issues - law and order and administration. F. Malsawma of MNF alleged that the law and order situation worsened under the present Government. He referred to the number of crimes committed which showed how bad the law and order situation was in the State.<sup>74</sup>

Lalhmingthanga of MJD disagreed with the Governor that the over-all law and order situation remained peaceful. He expressed his dissatisfaction over the handling of law and order situation. He urged the Government to increase the allowances, rations and other facilities of the Police personnel for the effective enforcement of law and order.<sup>75</sup>

F. Lalremsiama of MNF said that a large number of Bru families have fled to Tripura and Assam due to intimidations and threats from the Bru National Liberation Front (BNLF). The Government of Mizoram has offered necessary arrangement for the safe return of the affected families by making adequate arrangements and providing free rations and

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73. *Ibid*, p. 24.

74. *PMLA, Fifteenth Session, 1998*, p. 46 .

75. *Ibid*, p. 49.

compensations. However, a large number of Bru families refused to return. In his opinion, the Government of Mizoram was not indebted and he objected to provide compensations to the Bru families after all they refused to return. The BNLFF should provide compensations to the affected families since they were responsible for their fled.<sup>76</sup>

Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD blamed the Government for the deteriorating of law and order situation in the State. He said that the Government had belied the expectations of the people due to the failure of the Police in the investigations of certain murder cases.<sup>77</sup>

Dr. R. Lalthangliana of MNF held the Government responsible for the breakdown of law and order situation in the State. He criticised the State Government for failing to contain murders, rapes and robberies. These incidents had brought shame to the entire State. These incidents showed the State's lack of action and initiative in restoring law and order and charged that the Government had failed in controlling such incidents.<sup>78</sup>

Coming to administration, F. Malsawma of MNF stated that it had become an instrument of partisan politics rather than an instrument of impartiality and efficiency. His speech was a strong indictment of the Government's administrative policy. He further said that the Government had failed to take any meaningful step towards administrative reform.<sup>79</sup>

Lalhmingthanga of MJD observed that the present Government has utterly failed in delivering the good to the people and also failed in providing efficient and transparent administration. The Government had proved to be a failure on all fronts. The way in which the Budget has been spending clearly indicate lack of transparency.<sup>80</sup>

F. Lalremsiama of MNF said if one look into account the performance of the Government over the year, then one could say that this Government failed to provide clean, efficient and impartial administration. The manner in which the Government selected District Capitals confirmed the absence of accountability and transparency in administration.<sup>81</sup>

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76. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD said that the Governor's Address had talked about efficiency and impartiality in administration. In this regard, he disagreed with the statement and said that the Address was full of hoaxes and inexactitudes to cover up the comprehensive failure of the Government. The people of Mizoram have witnessed the partiality and inefficiency of this Government, he added.<sup>82</sup>

A brief survey of the discussions on the Governor's Addresses revealed that the Motions of Thanks were passed unanimously in 1993, 1995, 1997 and 1998 and in 1994 and 1996 the Motions were put to the vote of the House and carried by voice vote. While analysing the discussions on the Governor's Addresses, it was found that the Opposition members represented the problems only in general way. Most of their demands were not in clear, specific and particular terms. Excepting a few, the Opposition members were not able to specify the type of arguments they demanded. The Opposition members can effectively articulate their demands by providing sufficient evidences. Only on a few occasions, Opposition members used to give statistical evidence to support their claims. Hence, most of the Opposition members were not able to analyse the problems in particular perspective and they have not utilized the available forum fully to articulate their demands.

As long as the institution of the Governor continues, there are bound to be occasions for Governor's Address to the Legislative Assembly. As the head of the state, the Governor's Address is a celebrated and ceremonial occasion. This occasion should be marked with dignity, decorum and decency. The Governor is an integral part of the State Legislative Assembly and, therefore, he should be treated with respect and reverence. This, however, does not mean that the Opposition will have a marginal role. The Opposition has to play its role of criticizing the policies and programmes outlined in the Governor's address to the extent that the Government of the day can not ignore the points raised by the Opposition.

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82. *Ibid*, p. 57.

## CHAPTER IV

# OPPOSITION AND THE QUESTION HOUR

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### OPPOSITION AND THE QUESTION HOUR

In the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, unless the Speaker otherwise directs, the first hour of every meeting is devoted to asking and answering of questions and that hour is known as 'Question Hour'. Asking question is an inherent and unfettered parliamentary right of all the members of the Assembly. Question hour is generally the most interesting part of the day's proceedings in the Assembly; and it affords an opportunity to members of the Assembly to subject the executive to critical examination both in respect of its policy and action. It is during the Question hour that the members can ask questions on every aspect of administration and governmental activity. Government policy comes into sharp focus as the members try to elicit pertinent information during Question hour. Finer observes that, "during the question hour, the members are trying to see what is over on the other side of the hill and to do so early enough to influence the government before its commitment is absolute".<sup>1</sup> Members of the Assembly, Ministers, visitors to the Assembly, Government officials and Press representatives, all of who are present in maximum numbers during the Question hour, look forward to it with curiosity, attention and lively interest.

The Government is virtually put on trial during Question hour. Members make use of Question hour to ask question on all subjects falling within the sphere of the Government. The questions throw a piercing search-light on the whole administration. Every Minister whose turn is to answer a question has to inform, explain and defend the acts of omissions of his Ministry. Understandably, there is a battle of wits between the members and the Minister concerned. Through the question hour, the Government is able to quickly feel the pulse of the people and adapt its policies and actions accordingly.

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1. Herman Finer, *Op.Cit.*, p. 532.

Answers to questions reveal how each department is functioning and its level of efficiency. Mishra has rightly pointed out that, “question hour is the hour by which a member renews daily his faith that democracy is a government of the people, by the people and for the people”.<sup>2</sup> The importance and value of this device has been expressed by Laski in the following form:- “No better method has ever been devised for keeping administration up to the mark”.<sup>3</sup> Jennings observed that, “for the prevention of minor oppressions and major oppressions, the process of questioning is valuable”.<sup>4</sup> Question Hour has been praised as “the most powerful implements of democracy”.<sup>5</sup>

Question hour is the most outstanding and effective instrument in uncovering the administrative lapses and bringing about redressals. Question time is a testing time, both for the Minister and the member. It is both a challenge and an opportunity. Thus, “the question hour brings the work of the Departments of State into the public view. It makes them realize that they are functioning under a close public scrutiny which will continuously test their efficiency and honesty”.<sup>6</sup> In such a way, the members who ask questions, if correctly made use of, can serve six useful purposes. Firstly, it can be used to seek information regarding policy and decisions of the Government. Secondly, by asking questions the members can press the Government officials for action in order to avoid needless delay in the implementation of the governmental policy. Thirdly, it can secure a change in the government policy highlighting its shortcoming and sometimes its incongruities. Fourthly, it can be used to check the abuse of power by government officials. Fifthly, the way a Minister conduct himself during question hour may make or mar his ministerial career. By his ready wit, the courtesy he shows, his candidness and persuasive abilities, he can establish rapport with the House. Lastly, it also helps to enhance the questioner’s image as an effective partyman and parliamentarian.<sup>7</sup> Whatever may be the

2. D.N. Mishra, *Legislatures and Indian Democracy*, Concept Publishing Company, Delhi, 1979, p. 3.

3. Harold J. Laski, *Op. Cit.*, p. 147.

4. Ivor Jennings, *Parliament*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1970, p. 105.

5. N.N. Mallya, *Indian Parliament*, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1970, p. 102.

6. Harold J. Laski, *Op. Cit.*, p. 151.

7. D. Sundar Ram, “Parliamentary Opposition in India : An Overview”, in D. Sundar Ram (ed), *Readings in the Indian Parliamentary Opposition*, Vol. I, Kanishka Publishers, New Delhi, 1996, p. 22.

purpose of putting a question, it gives an opportunity to the members to obtain information on a matter of public interest on the floor of the House.

### ***Categories of Questions***

There are three categories of questions, namely, a question for oral answer which is tabled with the intention that it should be given an oral answer in the House during question time; a question for written answer which is not taken up in the House but the written answer to which is deemed to be laid on the Table of the House at the end of the question for oral answers and is printed in the official proceedings of the House; and, a question for oral answer with a notice shorter than fifteen clear days.

In the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, there are six types of questions which may be briefly discussed as under:-

**Starred Question:** - Of all the types of questions, the Starred questions are of utmost significance. There is a rush for asking these questions by the members. The reasons are that all members wish to have oral answer to their questions because they give them added opportunities to put supplementaries. A Starred question is one to which a member desired an oral answer in the House and which is distinguished by an asterisk mark (\*). A Starred question provides a quicker and more specific answer. A member cannot ask more than five Starred questions on any day. As all the Starred questions admitted could not be asked during the Question Hour, written replies are furnished for those oral answers which could not be given and shall form part of the proceedings of the day on which the questions are listed.<sup>8</sup>

**Unstarred Question :-** An Unstarred question is one which is not called for oral answer in the House and on which no supplementary questions can consequently be asked. An answer to such a question is given in writing and is laid on the Table of the House an hour before the Speaker takes his seat.<sup>9</sup> Some questions are more suitable for written answers

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8. Rule 40(1).

9. *Ibid*, 38 (4)(a).

when long tables of statistics are required. There is no limit on the number of Unstarred questions a member may ask.

**Supplementary Question:** - Any member may put supplementary questions to a Starred Question after it is called by the Speaker for the purpose of further elucidating any matter regarding which any answer has been given. The Speaker may disallow any supplementary question if, in his opinion, it infringes the rules regarding question or if a sufficient or reasonable number of supplementary questions has already been put in respect of the same question.<sup>10</sup> The object of supplementary question is to elucidate any ambiguity in the reply of a Minister or to seek some further information. Jennings observes that, “Originally, questions were asked in order to secure an answer. Today, they often serve as pegs on which to hang a more insidious supplementary”.<sup>11</sup> Generally, the member in whose name such a question stands shall be given the chance to ask a supplementary question, if any. Each supplementary question takes more time than the main question. Supplementary questions are the back bone of the Question Hour. They are more important than the original question in the sense that they provide the real opportunity to elicit more and more information and to probe further into the matter. As such, “a supplementary question may refer only to the answer out of which it immediately arises, must not be read or be too long, must not refer to an earlier answer or be addressed to another Minister and is governed by the general rules of order affecting all questions”.<sup>12</sup>

**Short Notice Question:** - A question relating to a matter of public importance which requires urgent attention may be asked for oral answer by a member with shorter than fifteen clear days. In such a case, the member has to briefly state the reasons for asking the question with short notice. Where no such reasons have been assigned in the notice of the question, the same is returned to the member. If the Speaker is of the opinion that the question is of urgent nature, the Minister concerned is asked whether he is in a position to reply to the question at a shorter notice, if so, on which

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10. *Ibid*, 39.

11. Ivor Jennings, *Parliament*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1970, p. 106.

12. Erskine May, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 354 - 355.

date. If the Minister concerned is in a position to reply, such question is answered on a day to be indicated by him and at the time to be determined by the Speaker. Such question will be called immediately after the Starred Questions listed for the day have been disposed of. If the Question Hour has either been dispensed with or has not been provided for, it may be called for answer as the first item of business, and if there is any new member to take oath or affirmation, then immediately thereafter. If the Minister concerned is unable to answer the question at shorter notice and the Speaker is of the opinion that the question is of sufficient public importance to be orally answered in the House, he may direct that the question be treated as a Starred Question and given priority and answered accordingly.<sup>13</sup>

**Half - an - Hour Discussion:** - The Speaker may permit a member who desires to raise a discussion on a matter of sufficient public importance which has been the subject of a recent question - oral or written - and the answer to which needs elucidation on a matter of fact. A member must give notice in writing to the Secretary three days in advance of the day on which the discussion is intended to take place. This notice must be accompanied by an explanatory note stating the reasons for raising the discussion on the matter in question. The notice is also required to be supported by the signature of at least another member. It is within the power of the Speaker to decide whether the matter is of sufficient public importance to allow the discussion in the House for half an hour. There shall be no formal motion before the House nor voting. The member who has given notice may make a brief statement and it will be open for discussion. The Minister concerned shall give a short reply.<sup>14</sup>

**Question to a Private Member:** - A question may be addressed by a member to a private member provided the subject matter of the question relates to some bill, resolution or other matter connected with the business of the House for which that member is responsible. The procedure in such question shall be the same as that followed in the case of question addressed

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13. *Rule 53.*

14. *Ibid.*, 54.

to a Minister. The Speaker, if he thinks necessary, may change the procedure, for questions asked, to a private member.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Notice of Questions***

A member is required to give not less than fifteen clear days notice of a question. Notice of a question shall be given in writing to the Secretary of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly and shall specify the official designation of the Minister whom the question is addressed and the nature of the question - Starred or Unstarred, and the date on which the question is proposed to be placed on the list of questions for answers.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Conditions of Admissibility of Questions***

A question must relate to a matter of administration for which the Government is responsible. Its purpose shall be eliciting of information or suggesting action on a matter of public importance.<sup>17</sup> The right to ask question is, however, governed by certain conditions which are described below: -

- (a) It must not bring any name or statement not strictly necessary to make the question intelligible.
- (b) If it contains a statement, the member asking it must make himself responsible for the accuracy of the statement.
- (c) It must not contain arguments, inferences, ironical or offensive expressions, imputations, epithets or defamatory statements.
- (d) It must not ask for an expression of opinion or the solution of a hypothetical proposition.
- (e) It must not refer to the character or conduct of any person except in his official or public capacity.
- (f) It must not be of excessive length.
- (g) It shall not repeat in the same session in substance questions already answered or to which an answer has been refused.

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15. *Rule 48.*

16. *Ibid.*, 37.

17. *Ibid.*, 42.

- (h) It shall not require information set forth in easily available documents or in ordinary works of reference.
- (i) It shall not ask for information on a matter which is under adjudication by a Court of Law having jurisdiction in any part of India.
- (j) It shall not ordinarily ask about matters pending before any statutory tribunal or statutory authority performing any judicial or quasi-judicial functions or any commission or court of enquiry appointed to enquire into, or investigate any matter but may refer to matters concerned with procedure or stage of enquiry, if it is not likely to prejudice the consideration of the matter by the tribunal or commission or court of enquiry.
- (k) It shall not reflect on the character or conduct of any person whose conduct can only be challenged on a substantive motion.
- (l) It shall not make or imply a charge on personal character.
- (m) It shall not ask for information on trivial, vague and meaningless matters.
- (n) It shall not ordinarily seek information on matters of past history.
- (o) It shall not relate to a matter which a Minister is not officially connected.
- (p) It shall not relate to day-to-day administration of Local bodies or other semi-autonomous bodies. The Speaker may, however, allow questions which arise out of their relation with the Government or refer to breaches of law or rules or relate to important matters involving general welfare.
- (q) It shall not refer to debate in the current session.
- (r) It shall not criticise decisions of the Assembly.
- (s) It shall not seek information about matters, which in their nature are secret, such as, decisions or proceedings of the Cabinet, advice given to the Governor by Law Officers and other subjects, the disclosure of which is against public interest.
- (t) It shall not deal with matters before a Committee appointed by the House or with matters within the jurisdiction of the Chairman of a Select Committee or the authorities of the House.

- (u) It shall not refer discourteously to a friendly foreign country.
- (v) It shall not raise questions of policy too large to be dealt within the limit of an answer to a question.
- (w) In matters which are or have been the subject of correspondence between the Union Government and the Mizoram Government, no question shall be asked except as to matters of fact, and the answer shall be confined to statement of facts.<sup>18</sup>

The Speaker shall decide on the admissibility of a question under Rule 43 and shall disallow any question which, in his opinion, is an abusive of the right of questioning or is in contravention of the rules.<sup>19</sup> The final decision regarding treating a question as Starred or Unstarred rests with the Speaker.<sup>20</sup>

The Speaker may allow the question of an absent member to be put by another member duly authorised to do so in writing, but it shall come after the disposal of all other questions listed for the day.<sup>21</sup> If any question placed on the list of question for oral answer on any day is not called for answer within the time available for answering question on that day, the Secretary shall circulate the replies within three days and such replies shall form part of the proceedings of the day on which the questions were listed.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Analysis of Questions***

We will attempt to analyse and examine the Questions put by the Opposition members during the period under study in the following pages.

### ***Starred Questions***

All the four types of questions - Starred, Unstarred, Supplementary and Half-an-Hour Discussion - were asked in the Third

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18. *Ibid.*, 43.

19. *Ibid.*, 44.

20. *Ibid.*, 45.

21. *Ibid.*, 50.

22. *Ibid.*, 40.

Mizoram State Legislative Assembly. But, invariably, the number of Starred Questions admitted and answered were more than each of the three categories of questions. This amply showed the interests of the members in the Starred Questions. A total of 1,604 Starred Questions were admitted and answered in the previous Assembly, out of which 1,475 were asked by the Opposition members, which accounted for 91.95 percent of the total number of Starred Questions. During the period under study, a total of 1,948 Starred Questions were admitted and answered. Out of these, 1,830 were asked by the Opposition members which accounted for 93.95 percent of the total number of Starred Questions. The number of Starred Questions asked by the Opposition members increased by 355 which shows that the Opposition members were more alert to certain issues than the previous Assembly. Table I gives the details of the Starred Questions asked by the Opposition.

**TABLE - I**

**Details showing the total number of Starred Questions asked by the Opposition members**

Session of the Assembly	Number of sittings (in days)	Total number of Questions admitted	Total number of questions asked by the Opposition	Percentage
I	3	Nil	Nil	Nil
II	14	164	164	100.00
III	1	Nil	Nil	Nil
IV	4	84	83	98.81
V	14	284	260	91.55
VI	5	193	187	96.90
VII	3	83	81	97.60
VIII	6	147	139	94.56
IX	2	40	40	100.00
X	14	198	193	97.47
XI	2	38	34	89.47
XII	9	140	139	99.28
XIII	12	237	218	91.99
XIV	2	40	33	82.25
XV	5	60	45	75.00
XVI	1	Nil	Nil	Nil
XVII	13	240	214	89.10
Total	110	1948	1830	93.95

*Source: Compiled from the Proceedings of the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly (1993-1998), Mizoram Legislative Assembly.*

As all the Starred Questions admitted could not be asked within the time available for answering questions during Question Hour, written replies were furnished for those which oral answers could not be given. No oral replies shall be required to such questions and no supplementary questions shall be asked in respect thereof. Of these admitted 1,948 Starred Questions, only 442 were actually given oral answers on the floor of the House representing 22.69% of the total number of Starred Questions answered and the remaining 1,506 replies were laid on the Table of the House. Out of the 442 oral answered, 421 belonged to the Opposition members which accounted for 95.24% of the total oral answers were given on the floor of the House. The maximum number of Starred Questions orally answered on the floor of the House was 16 on 29<sup>th</sup> March, 1994 and the minimum number was 1 on 13<sup>th</sup> September, 1994, 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1998, 15<sup>th</sup> July, 1998 and 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1998. The average percentage of oral answered given was 4.75 or nearly 5 questions per question day.

The Table II shows the details of the number of Starred Questions which have been given oral answers on the floor of the House and the number of Starred Questions which could not be given oral answers but replies were circulated among the members.

**TABLE - II**

**Details showing the total number of Starred Questions which have been given oral answers and the total number of Starred Questions which could not be given oral answers but replies were circulated.**

Session of Assembly	Total number of oral answer given	Percentage	Total number of oral answer which could not be given	Percentage	Total
I	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
II	98	59.76	66	40.24	164
III	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
IV	26	30.96	58	69.04	84
V	100	35.21	184	64.79	284
VI	19	9.85	174	90.15	193
VII	11	13.25	72	86.75	83
VIII	16	10.89	131	89.11	147
IX	10	25.00	30	75.00	40
X	53	26.77	145	73.23	198

XI	8	21.05	30	78.95	38
XII	25	17.86	115	82.14	140
XIII	37	15.62	200	84.38	237
XIV	6	15.00	34	85.00	40
XV	6	10.00	54	90.00	60
XVI	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
XVII	27	11.25	213	88.75	240
Total	442	22.69	1506	77.31	1948

*Source: Compiled from the Proceedings of the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly (1993-1998), Mizoram Legislative Assembly.*

A Department-wise study of Starred Questions asked shows that Public Works Department faced a regular volley of questions from the Opposition members which attracted 160 questions. Home Department stood next with 156 questions. Health & Family Welfare, Local Administration, Land Revenue & Settlement and Power & Electricity were the other Departments which faced numerous questions from the Opposition members with 116, 112, 104 and 98 respectively. The Opposition showed keenness to know the details on varied topics. Examples of three departments, namely, Public Works, Home and Health & Family Welfare may be cited in this regard. The questions reflect many problems relating to these departments. They may be brought into the following:-

### ***Public Works Department (P.W.D.)***

The Opposition members enquired about the reasons for the inordinate delay in the completion of the construction of Mizoram Legislative Assembly building, Saikuti Hall at Lunglei, P.W.D. Inspection Bungalow at Pangzawl, approach road from Zawlsei to Khuangthing, road between Sakawrdai and Zohmun, Aizawl to Sialsuk road etc.

The Opposition members also wanted to know the expenditure incurred by the Government for - the improvement of road at South Hlimen, the construction of Mizoram House at Salt Lake, Calcutta, the construction of Lunglei to Thenzawl road, the construction of Bawngkawn to Kulikawn road, the construction of Aizawl to Thenzawl road, the renovation of State Guest House at Bawngkawn etc.

The Opposition enquired about whether the Government intent to construct - Phuaibuang to Khawlian road during 1994-1995, linking road between Khawzawl-Zawngtetui, Bungzung, Vanzau, Dungtlang, truckable road of Phuaibuang, road between Aizawl Tlangnuam – Lungleng - Khawrihnim, road between Farkawn and Tiau, approach road to Thlikva, Pachhunga University College road etc.

The Opposition wanted to know the details purchase of materials from M/S Baid Commercial Ltd., name of the firm that supplied Iron Rod during 1994-1995, number of Iron Rod purchased by the department during 1994-1995, names and addresses of contractors selected for the construction of Auditorium at Aizawl, Buarpui to Thingsai road, Tuivai bridge, year of tender and expected year of completion of Chhimtuipui bridge at Kawlchaw, number of encroachment identified by the Government on the main road between Bawngkawn to Kulikawn etc.

### ***Home Department***

An examination of the questions raised by the Opposition members relating to Home Department show that the attention of the House gravitated on problems such as whether the Government intent to - open Sub-Jail at Lawngtlai, provide prisoners' vans for Kolasib and Champhai Sub-Jails, the total number of Hmar People's Convention (HPC) returnees as a result of the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), types of arms and ammunitions surrendered by HPC, terms of agreement under MOU with HPC which remained unfulfilled, the total number of illegal foreigners living in Mizoram, total number of illegal foreigners apprehended and deported from Mizoram, the total number of Residential Certificates issued by the Government during April 1994-July 1996, the total number of Inner Line Passes issued by the Government since 1989, the number of arms and explosives recovered by the Government during 1994-1995. Questions were also asked on whether the Government intent to give Union Territory for Chakma in Mizoram and Autonomous District Council to HPC within Aizawl District etc.

The Opposition also raised questions to discuss the death of Lalmuanthanga, Mizoram Armed Police, on 29<sup>th</sup> November, 1994 at Vairengte for which they demanded financial assistance to the deceased family and also demanded compensation to the victims of the riot which occurred on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1994 .

### ***Health & Family Welfare Department***

Questions relating to Health & Family Welfare Department covered many aspects of the administrative policy such as whether the Government intent to - upgrade Darlawn Hospital, provide better bedding facilities to Sialsuk Hospital, reduce the rate of hiring charge of ambulance of Aizawl Civil Hospital, renovate private cabin rooms of Aizawl Civil Hospital, provide more Drug Inspectors for Lunglei District, open Medical College in Mizoram, appoint doctor for Chhipphir Hospital, provide mattresses and furniture at Sialsuk Hospital, renovate Zawlnuam Hospital, renovate Sub-Health Centre at Bungzung, provide better supply of syringe, forcep, medicine and glove to different Hospitals, provide over-time allowances to workers of different Civil Hospitals, provide foreign training for Community Health Officers, provide better facilities to Aizawl Civil Hospital, construct Subsidiary Health Centre at Darlawn, construct Hospital at Pangzawl, construct Maternity Hospital at Luangmual etc.

The Opposition members inquired about the number of vacancy post of Health Supervisor and Community Health Officer, number of selected persons for Nurse training for the year 1998, number of free clinic organised by the Department in 1995, rate of success of family planning programme in Mizoram, number of HIV/AIDS infected persons in Mizoram, total amount of money spent by the Government on AIDS control programme etc.

The Oppositions members also wanted to know the number of persons referred to Nightingale Diagnostic Centre, Calcutta, total expenditure incurred on medical referred case during 1994-1995, total expenditure incurred on the construction of Lunglei Civil Hospital, rates of Oxygen and medicines supplied to different Primary Health Centres etc.

The Opposition members had raised a large number of questions and drew the attention of the Government to the problems concerning their constituencies as well as the State. The number of questions related to the constituency matters had been perhaps the greatest. Questions asked by three Opposition members were cited as examples for understanding the nature of the questions.

Table III shows the Department-wise Starred Questions asked by the Opposition members.

**TABLE - III**

**Details showing the total number of Starred Questions asked by the Opposition (Department-wise).**

Sl. No.	Department	Total number of questions asked	Total number of questions asked by the Opposition	Percentage
1	Public Works	182	160	87.91
2	Home	161	156	96.90
3	Health & Family Welfare	127	116	91.33
4	Local Administration	115	112	97.39
5	Power & Electricity	111	98	88.28
6	Land Revenue & Settlement	108	104	96.29
7	School Education	93	86	92.47
8	Finance	92	90	97.83
9	Rural Development	87	76	87.35
10	General Administration	86	80	93.02
11	Public Health Engineering	70	63	90.00
12	Food & Civil Supplies	62	61	98.38
13	Personnel & Administrative Reform	47	46	97.88
14	Industries	45	43	93.33
15	Transport	44	41	93.18
16	Higher & Technical Education	42	42	100.00
17	Law & Judicial	42	42	100.00
18	Sports & Youth Services	42	39	92.86
19	Agriculture	41	37	90.24
20	Trade & Commerce	40	38	95.00
21	Environment & Forests	36	36	100.00
22	Excise	27	24	88.89
23	Vigilance	27	27	100.00
24	Planning	24	23	95.84
25	Relief & Rehabilitation	22	22	100.00
26	Social Welfare	16	15	93.76
27	Labour & Employment	15	15	100.00
28	Cooperative	14	12	85.72
29	Parliamentary Affairs	14	13	92.86
30	Horticulture	11	11	100.00

31	District Council	10	10	100.00
32	Information & Public Relations	10	10	100.00
33	Soil & Water Conservation	10	9	90.00
34	Secretariat Administration	9	9	100.00
35	Taxation	9	9	100.00
36	Animal Husbandry & Veterinary	8	8	100.00
37	Political & Cabinet	8	8	100.00
38	Art & Culture	7	7	100.00
39	Sericulture	7	7	100.00
40	Printing & Stationery	5	5	100.00
41	Fisheries	5	4	80.00
42	Prisons	5	4	80.00
43	Tourism	4	4	100.00
44	Economics & Statistics	3	3	100.00
45	Election	3	3	100.00
46	Fire Service	2	2	100.00
Total		1948	1830	93.95

*Source: Compiled from the Proceedings of the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly (1993-1998), Mizoram Legislative Assembly.*

The largest number of Starred Questions was asked by F. Malsawma of MNF, numbering to 327 questions. He was closely followed by Lalsawta of MNF who asked 323 questions and Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD came in the next line with 216 questions. F. Malsawma of MNF raised questions to discuss:- (a) the original estimate for completion of Sports Complex at Ramhlun;<sup>23</sup> (b) Government intention of installing a zonal water tank at Edenthlar;<sup>24</sup> (c) the whereabouts of File No.431011/2/92 -(HFW) (Loose) subject confirmation of Group B Staff which had been out up to Deputy Secretary, Department of Personnel & Administrative Reform on 20<sup>th</sup> April, 1994;<sup>25</sup> (d) amount of money for installation of Electronic Private Automatic Branch Exchange at Secretariat;<sup>26</sup> (e) number of non-Mizos who practiced business in Mizoram;<sup>27</sup> (f) number of Rural Development Blocks covered by New Land Use Policy (NLUP);<sup>28</sup> (g) non-regularisation of Functional Manager and Deputy Director of Industries Department who were given adhoc promotion in 1989.<sup>29</sup>

23. *PMLA, Second Session, 1994, p.62.*

24. *Ibid., Fourth Session, 1994, p.100.*

25. *Ibid., Fifth Session, 1995, p. 94.*

26. *Ibid., Seventh Session, 1995, p.81.*

27. *Ibid., Eighth Session, 1996, p. 17.*

28. *Ibid., Twelfth Session, 1997, p.120.*

29. *Ibid., Seventeenth Session, 1998, p. 776.*

Lalsawta of MNF questions related to :- (a) Acts and Rules enacted by the Government of Mizoram to promote and safeguard the interests of labour working class since 1989;<sup>30</sup> (b) the reasons for delay in introducing the Mizoram Civil and Criminal Code Bill, 1990 in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly;<sup>31</sup> (c) the intention on the part of the Government to control the market rates of pork, fish and beef;<sup>32</sup> (d) actual rate of instruments provided to persons under Industries Department;<sup>33</sup> (e) number of power generated by Vawra Lui Project;<sup>34</sup> (f) number of persons died due to Drugs abuse in Mizoram during 1997.<sup>35</sup>

Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD raised questions to discuss:- (a) direct appointment of College Teacher in Selection Grade;<sup>36</sup> (b) inclusion of Aizawl West II Constituency for the beneficiary of NLUP;<sup>37</sup> (c) number of High Schools to be upgraded into deficit status during 1995-1996;<sup>38</sup> (d) whether the Government intent to set up pig farm to improve environment and sanitation;<sup>39</sup> (e) Why compensation awarded to persons who sustain injury or even death due to motor accident under Lok Adalat is less than that of Mizoram Accident Claimant Tribunal approved rate;<sup>40</sup> (f) the total number of accommodation capacity of Central Jail at Aizawl.<sup>41</sup>

Table IV illustrates the member-wise analysis of the Starred Questions asked by the Opposition members.

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30. *Ibid*, Second Session, 1994, p. 309.

31. *Ibid*, Fourth Session, 1994, p.10.

32. *Ibid*, Fifth Session, 1995, p.15.

33. *Ibid*, Tenth Session, 1996, p. 31.

34. *Ibid*, Twelfth Session, 1997, p.54.

35. *Ibid*, Fifteenth Session, 1998, p.74

36. *Ibid*, Fourth Session, 1994, p.57.

37. *Ibid*, Fifth Session, 1995, p.19

38. *Ibid*, Seventh Session, 1995, p.19.

39. *Ibid*, Tenth Session, 1996, p.112.

40. *Ibid*, Twelfth Session, 1997, p.37.

41. *Ibid*, Thirteenth Session, 1997, p.49.

TABLE - IV

**Details showing Starred Questions asked by the Opposition Members - Member-wise analysis.**

Sl. No.	Name of Member	Number of Questions asked	Percentage
1	F. Malsawma	327	16.79
2	Lalsawta	323	16.59
3	Dr. J.V. Hluna	216	11.08
4	B. Lalthlengliana	180	9.24
5	Dr. R. Lalthangliana	180	9.24
6	F. Lalremsiama	130	6.68
7	Lalhmingthanga	128	6.58
8	H. Thangkima	87	4.46
9	Lalrinchhana	87	4.46
10	R. Tlanghmingthanga	71	3.65
11	Lalkhama	34	1.75
12	Zoramthanga	20	1.02
13	H.Lalruata+	12	0.62
14	Zakhu Hlychho+	8	0.41
15	F.Lalzuala+	7	0.35
16	H. Zathuama*	6	0.30
17	K.T. Rokhaw*	6	0.30
18	L.P. Thangzika+	5	0.25
19	T. Hranghluta+	3	0.15
Total		1830	93.95

*Source: Compiled from the Proceedings of the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly (1993-1998), Mizoram Legislative Assembly.*

### ***Unstarred Questions***

The total number of Unstarred Questions admitted during the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly was 1,120 which constituted 22.38% of the total questions. The Opposition members asked 1,082 questions on various topics which constituted 96.61% of the total Unstarred Questions.

Table V illustrates the total number of Unstarred Questions admitted during the period under study and the total number of Unstarred Questions asked by the Opposition.

+ As a members of the Opposition before they defected to the ruling party on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 1994.

\* As a members of the Opposition before they joined the ruling party on 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1994.

**TABLE - V**

**Details showing the total number of Unstarred Questions asked by the Opposition members during the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly.**

<b>Session of the Assembly</b>	<b>Number of Sittings (in day)</b>	<b>Total number of Unstarred Questions admitted</b>	<b>Number of Unstarred Questions asked by the Opposition</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I	3	Nil	Nil	Nil
II	14	33	33	100.00
III	1	Nil	Nil	Nil
IV	4	25	25	100.00
V	14	59	59	100.00
VI	5	91	91	100.00
VII	3	24	24	100.00
VIII	6	85	84	98.82
IX	2	57	57	100.00
X	14	68	67	98.52
XI	2	41	41	100.00
XII	9	129	126	97.67
XIII	12	67	62	92.53
XIV	2	178	159	89.32
XV	5	104	98	94.23
XVI	1	Nil	Nil	Nil
XVII	13	159	156	98.11
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>1120</b>	<b>1082</b>	<b>96.61</b>

*Source: Compiled from the Proceedings of the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly (1993-1998), Mizoram Legislative Assembly.*

Under Unstarred Questions, Rural Development and Home Departments were in the front line with 73 questions each from the Opposition members. Public Works Department came next with 69 questions. Table VI presents the Department -wise Unstarred Questions asked by the Opposition members.

**TABLE - VI**

**Details showing the total number of Unstarred Questions asked by the Opposition – Department - wise.**

Sl. No.	Department	Total number of Unstarred Questions admitted	Total number of Unstarred Questions asked by the Opposition	Percentage
1	Rural Development	79	73	92.40
2	Home	77	73	94.80
3	Public Works	74	69	93.24
4	Local Administration	66	64	96.97
5	General Administration	63	60	95.23
6	Finance	59	59	100.00
7	Health & Family Welfare	58	54	93.10
8	Power & Electricity	58	56	96.56
9	Industries	55	53	96.36
10	Food & Civil Supplies	50	49	98.00
11	Land Revenue & Settlement	49	49	100.00
12	School Education	39	38	97.43
13	Transport	35	35	100.00
14	Environment & Forests	29	28	96.56
15	Public Health Engineering	26	26	100.00
16	Personnel & Administrative Reform	24	24	100.00
17	Higher & Technical Education	24	24	100.00
18	Relief & Rehabilitation	22	22	100.00
19	Planning	21	21	100.00
20	Sports & Youth Services	20	20	100.00
21	Law & Judicial	19	17	89.47
22	Secretariat Administration	15	15	100.00
23	Agriculture	15	15	100.00
24	Excise	11	11	100.00
25	Soil & Water Conservation	11	11	100.00
26	Trade & Commerce	11	10	90.91
27	Labour & Employment	10	10	100.00
28	Parliamentary Affairs	10	9	90.00
29	Social Welfare	10	10	100.00
30	Information & Public Relations	9	9	100.00
31	Cooperative	8	8	100.00
32	Horticulture	8	8	100.00
33	Prisons	8	8	100.00
34	District Council	6	6	100.00
35	Vigilance	6	6	100.00
36	Printing & Stationery	5	5	100.00
37	Tourism	5	4	80.00
38	Animal Husbandry & Veterinary	4	4	100.00
39	Election	4	4	100.00
40	Sericulture	4	4	100.00
41	Taxation	4	4	100.00
42	Art & Culture	3	2	66.67
43	Fisheries	3	2	66.67
44	Political & Cabinet	3	3	100.00
Total		1120	1082	96.61

*Source: Compiled from the Proceedings of the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly (1993-1998), Mizoram Legislative Assembly.*

The largest number of Unstarred Questions was received from Lalsawta of MNF with 339 questions which accounted for 30.26% of the total Unstarred Questions. He was followed by F. Malsawma of MNF and Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD with 297 and 210 questions respectively. Table VII gives the information relating to Unstarred Questions asked by the Opposition members.

**TABLE - VII**

**Details showing Unstarred Questions asked by the Opposition Members - wise.**

Sl. No.	Name of Member	Total Number of Unstarred Questions asked	Percentage
1	Lalsawta	339	30.26
2	F. Malsawma	297	26.52
3	Dr. J.V. Hluna	210	18.76
4	F. Lalremsiama	64	5.72
5	Dr. R. Lalthangliana	46	4.10
6	Lalhmingthanga	40	3.58
7	B. Lalthlengliana	28	2.05
8	H. Thangkima	16	1.42
9	R. Tlanghmingthanga	15	1.33
10	Lalrinchhana	14	1.25
11	Lalkhama	9	0.81
12	Zoramthanga	4	0.35
Total		1082	96.61

*Source: Compiled from the Proceedings of the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly (1993-1998), Mizoram Legislative Assembly.*

### ***Supplementary Questions***

Supplementary Questions arise out of the oral answer given to the original question. Without Supplementary questions, a question is of very little value. Unless Supplementaries are asked truth cannot be unearthed in many cases. A total of 1,934 Supplementary Questions were asked on the floor of the House. The Opposition members asked 1,757 questions, representing 90.85% of the total.

Table VIII gives the details of Supplementary Questions asked by the Opposition.

**TABLE - VIII**

**Details showing the total number of Supplementary Questions asked by the Opposition.**

<b>Session of the Assembly</b>	<b>Number of Sittings (in day)</b>	<b>Total number of Supplementary Questions asked</b>	<b>Number of Supplementary Questions asked by the Opposition</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I	3	Nil	Nil	Nil
II	14	285	273	95.79
III	1	Nil	Nil	Nil
IV	4	101	101	100.00
V	14	321	314	97.82
VI	5	116	104	89.66
VII	3	70	69	98.58
VIII	6	116	111	95.69
IX	2	56	52	92.86
X	14	199	187	93.97
XI	2	22	20	90.91
XII	9	130	125	96.15
XIII	12	177	152	85.88
XIV	2	43	35	81.39
XV	5	48	38	79.16
XVI	1	Nil	Nil	Nil
XVII	13	250	176	70.40
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>1934</b>	<b>1757</b>	<b>90.85</b>

*Source: Compiled from the Proceedings of the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly (1993-1998), Mizoram Legislative Assembly.*

A study of Department-wise Supplementary Questions asked reveals that Home Department was the highest scorer with 198 questions. Of these, 185 questions were asked by the Opposition, representing 93.43% of the total questions asked. It was followed by Public Works and Local Administration Departments with 117 and 107 questions respectively.

Table IX illustrates the details of Department-wise Supplementary Questions asked by the Opposition.

TABLE - IX

**Details showing the total number of Supplementary Questions asked by the Opposition-  
Department-wise.**

Sl. No.	Department	Total number of Supplementary Questions asked	Total number of Supplementary Questions asked by the Opposition	Percentage
1	Home	198	185	93.43
2	Public Works	137	117	85.40
3	Local Administration	114	107	93.86
4	Public Health Engineering	109	94	86.23
5	Power & Electricity	107	99	92.53
6	Finance	102	97	95.09
7	Health & Family Welfare	99	89	89.90
8	Rural Development	82	72	87.81
9	Land Revenue & Settlement	78	74	94.88
10	School Education	73	64	87.68
11	Food & Civil Supplies	70	62	88.58
12	Sports & Youth Services	68	59	86.77
13	Trade & Commerce	63	61	96.83
14	Personnel & Administrative Reform	56	54	94.42
15	Higher & Technical Education	51	46	90.19
16	Transport	48	46	95.84
17	General Administration	46	44	95.66
18	Law & Judicial	45	45	100.00
19	Environment & Forests	43	38	88.37
20	Industries	36	26	72.33
21	Relief & Rehabilitation	35	32	91.42
22	Agriculture	32	29	90.63
23	Vigilance	28	27	96.42
24	Parliamentary Affairs	25	24	96.00
25	Labour & Employment	25	20	80.00
26	Social Welfare	25	19	76.00
27	Excise	18	16	88.89
28	Planning	17	17	100.00
29	Cooperative	14	11	78.58
30	Economics & Statistics	12	12	100.00
31	District Council	10	9	90.00
32	Secretariat Administration	9	9	100.00
33	Soil & Water Conservation	9	9	100.00
34	Political & Cabinet	8	8	100.00
35	Animal Husbandry & Veterinary	8	7	87.50
36	Art & Culture	8	6	75.00
37	Printing & Stationery	7	7	100.00
38	Information & Public Relations	6	5	83.33
39	Fisheries	5	3	60.00
40	Sericulture	4	4	100.00
41	Taxation	4	4	100.00
Total		1934	1757	90.85

*Source: Compiled from the Proceedings of the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly (1993-1998), Mizoram Legislative Assembly.*

The maximum number of Supplementary Questions were asked by F. Malsawma of MNF with 263 questions. He was followed by F. Lalremsiama of MNF and Lalhmingthanga of MJD with 236 and 215 questions respectively. Table X gives information relating to the Supplementary Questions asked by the Opposition members - member-wise.

**TABLE - X**

**Details showing the total number of Supplementary Questions asked by the Opposition members- member-wise.**

Sl. No.	Name of Member	Total number of Supplementary Questions asked by the Opposition Member	Percentage
1	F. Malsawma	263	13.60
2	F. Lalremsiama	236	12.20
3	Lalhmingthanga	215	11.11
4	Lalsawta	195	10.08
5	Dr. J.V. Hluna	159	8.22
6	Dr. R. Lalthangliana	124	6.41
7	Lalrinchhana	103	5.32
8	B. Lalthlengliana	93	4.81
9	R. Tlanghmingthanga	93	4.81
10	Lalkhama	81	4.18
11	Zoramthanga	68	3.52
12	H. Thangkima	56	2.90
13	F. Lalzuala+	25	1.29
14	H. Lalruata+	25	1.29
15	Zakhu Hlychho+	9	0.46
16	K.T. Rokhaw*	4	0.20
17	L.P. Thangzika+	3	0.15
18	T. Hranghluta+	3	0.15
19	H. Zathuama*	2	0.10
Total		1757	90.85

*Source: Compiled from the Proceedings of the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly (1993-1998), Mizoram Legislative Assembly.*

### ***Half-an-Hour Discussion***

Rule 54 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Mizoram Legislative Assembly provided that when a member feels that an answer to a question, whether given orally or in writing, leaves some points unexplained or gives scope for further clarification, he may table a notice

+ As a members of the Opposition before they defected to the ruling party on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 1994.

\* As a members of the Opposition before they joined the ruling party on 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1994.

for a half-an-hour discussion on the particular question. In spite of the existence of this Rule, the Opposition members have rarely exercised their right in this regard. During the period of our survey, there has been only one instance of half-an-hour discussion noticed which was admitted and dis-cussed on the floor of the House.

During the period under study, covering 17 sessions of the Assembly, questions were asked for 93 days. A total of 5,003 questions (Starred, Unstarred, Supplementary and Half-an-Hour Discussion) were asked during the 14 sessions of the Assembly, out of which 4,670 questions were put up by the Opposition members which constituted 93.34% of the total questions. The following Table XI demonstrates the total number of questions asked by the members of the Opposition.

**TABLE - XI**

**Details showing the total number of questions - Starred, Unstarred, Supplementary and Half-an-Hour Discussion- asked by the opposition members.**

Sl. No.	Name	Starred	Unstarred	Supplementary	Half-an-Hour Discussion	Total
1	F. Malsawma	327	297	263	-	887
2	Lalsawta	323	339	195	1	858
3	Dr. J.V. Hluna	216	210	159	-	585
4	F. Lalremsiama	130	64	236	-	430
5	Lalhmingthanga	128	40	215	-	383
6	Dr. R. Lalthangliana	180	46	124	-	350
7	B. Lalthlengliana	180	28	93	-	301
8	Lalrinchhana	87	14	103	-	204
9	R. Tlanghmingthanga	71	15	93	-	179
10,	H. Thangkima	87	16	56	-	159
11	Lalkhama	34	9	81	-	124
12	Zoramthanga	20	4	68	-	92
13	H. Lalruata+	12	-	25	-	37
14	F. Lalzuala+	7	-	25	-	32
15	Zakhu Hlychho+	8	-	9	-	17
16	K.T. Rokhaw*	6	-	4	-	10
17	H. Zathuama*	6	-	2	-	8
18	L.P. Thangzika+	5	-	3	-	8
19	T. Hranghluta+	3	-	3	-	6
Total		1830	1082	1757	1	4670

*Source: Compiled from the Proceedings of the Third Mizoram State Legislative Assembly (1993-1998), Mizoram Legislative Assembly.*

+ As a members of the Opposition before they defected to the ruling party on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 1994.

\* As a members of the Opposition before they joined the ruling party on 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1994.

From the above Table, it is evident that the Opposition members were alert and took the opportunity to focus the attention of the House on various topics. The Table also indicates that the Opposition members were more effective during the Question Hour and the Question Hours were fruitfully utilised by the Opposition members. Thus, the Opposition make the Government realise that the latter functioned under the close scrutiny of the former.

### ***Assessment***

The success of question procedure depends upon the mutual responsiveness of the Government and the people's representatives. Question makes it possible for the Government to come to know about the grievances, problems and expectations of the people. It also helps to educate the public on the activities and programmes of the Government, its policies on various issues and the manner in which the administration is being carried on. Although a wide variety of subjects have been taken up by the Opposition members to ask questions, it is very difficult to take up all the questions. Therefore, it is proposed to deal with certain important questions only having relevance to the subject matter of our investigation.

The range of questions asked by the Opposition members is so wide that it is very difficult to define the main categories of purposes which they fall. There were, however, certain groups which were identifiable as under.

Questions pertaining administrative flaws had been a live subject on which the Opposition members made many times through the questions. While examining the functioning of governmental departments, the Opposition came across cases of corruption and abuse of administrative power. H.Thangkima of MJD wanted to know the reason for offering facilities of Deputy Speaker to one member of the Legislative Assembly during the period of vacancy of the post.<sup>42</sup> The Minister-in-charge of Parliamentary Affairs denied the allegation. In a supplementary question, H. Thangkima

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42. *PMLA, Fifth Session, 1995*, p. 11.

stated that he was certain that the answer was not true. One member was certainly offered such facilities since May, 1994. The Secretariat Department was confused as to how the auditors were going to handle the expense. Such negative answer tantamount to the contempt of the House.<sup>43</sup> The Chief Minister intervened and said that, “We always obliged to the wishes of the members in times when they were in need of vehicles. Such offers were entirely upon us and we do not need the members of the Opposition to tell us what we should do or should not do”.<sup>44</sup>

Lalsawta of MNF levelled charge of corruption against a Primary School Teacher by withdrawing the General Provident Funds of his colleagues without their knowledge. In his reply, the Minister of School Education admitted that such things happened and action has been taken against the defaulter by the Government.<sup>45</sup>

F. Malsawma of MNF found foul-play in the recruitment of Police constables without going through the interview. He challenged the Home Minister that if his allegation was true, then will the Minister be ready to step down. In his reply, the Minister confessed that there were certain persons who were selected on compassionate grounds. The Minister was forced to surrender before the Opposition’s pressure and finally stated that if a written complaint was given by the members, the list of recruitment personnels would be re-examined.<sup>46</sup>

B. Lalthlengliana of MNF brought to light what action has been taken against those Presidents of Village Councils who reported wrong information regarding the selling of Kerosene Oil and rice by Fair Price Shop dealers.<sup>47</sup> In his reply to a supplementary question, the Minister of Food and Civil Supplies Department informed the House that the matter should be investigated and action should be taken. Participating in the matter, the Chief Minister expressed his gratitude to the Opposition by pointing out such malpractices and was happy to have a responsive and constructive

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43. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 402.

46. *PMLA, Seventh Session, 1995*, pp. 136 - 137.

47. *PMLA, Twelfth Session, 1997*, p. 50.

Opposition. He assured the Opposition members that action should be taken against the wrongdoers and defaulting officers.<sup>48</sup>

Lalsawta of MNF brought to the notice of the House that there was misappropriation of funds in the Cooperation Department. The Minister also admitted that during 1994-95, an amount of Rs 26,50,000/- was missing. A police case was registered against Lalengmawii, Assistant in the Registrar Co-operative Societies Office. She was taken into police custody on 24<sup>th</sup> October, 1994 and was sent to jail on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1994 and was released on bail on 8<sup>th</sup> November, 1994. She was now under suspension since 24<sup>th</sup> October, 1994. In 1995-96, an amount of Rs 6,49,600/- for Kanhmun Fish Farmers' Cooperative Society was missing. The person responsible was Saikapthianga of Chaltlang. A police case was registered and it was still under police investigation.<sup>49</sup>

Questions had been asked very often by the Opposition members on matters of purely constituency matters. The Opposition members were anxious to show that they were vigilant in defending the interests of those whom they represent. R. Tlanghmingthanga of MNF asked a question when will the black-topping work of I.T.I. - Mualpui road be started.<sup>50</sup> Zoramthanga of MNF asked whether there is any proposal to create Public Works Department (P.W.D.) Eastern Circle at Champhai.<sup>51</sup> He also asked about the measures taken by the Government to solve water problem in Champhai.<sup>52</sup> B. Lalhlengliana of MNF wanted to know that is there any intention to work for water supply in Sateek Constituency.<sup>53</sup> H. Thangkima of MJD sought information when will doctor be provided at Haulawng Public Health Centre.<sup>54</sup> Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD wanted to know when will the Government set up separate Village Councils for Phunchawng and Tuivamit villages.<sup>55</sup> Lalrinchhana of MNF wanted to know the steps taken by the

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48. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 185.

50. *PMLA, Second Session*, 1994, p. 392.

51. *PMLA, Fifth Session*, 1995, p. 56.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 234.

54. *PMLA, Sixth Session*, 1995, p. 77.

55. *PMLA, Eleventh Session*, 1996, p. 3.

Government for Ratu and Darlawn Water supply during 1996 – 97.<sup>56</sup> Lalkhama of MNF asked a question on when will Maubawk Zonal Tank be constructed.<sup>57</sup> Lalsawta of MNF sought information of the intention of the Government to construct playground at Mission Veng, Aizawl.<sup>58</sup>

Public grievances had been the subject of many questions put on the floor of the House by the Opposition members. F. Malsawma of MNF wanted to know why the power supply for Ramhlun and Vengthar were so irregular.<sup>59</sup> Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD wanted to know whether or not the Government of Mizoram agreed to pay compensation to the victims of the riot which broke out on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1994.<sup>60</sup> Lalsawta of MNF asked a question whether the Government know that some Liquefied Petroleum Gas (L.P.G.) dealers at Aizawl were selling Gas cylinders for black marketing.<sup>61</sup> F. Malsawma of MNF asked whether the Government of Mizoram has any intention to improve the quality of construction.<sup>62</sup> Lalhmingthanga of MJD wanted to know whether the Government is aware that the consumers of electricity are discontent with the high rates of energy charged.<sup>63</sup> R. Tlanghmingthanga of MNF asked is there any intention to provide extra pay to Nurses.<sup>64</sup>

The Opposition members had resorted to a great use of questions to seek information even on trivial matters. F. Malsawma of MNF wanted to know the original estimate for the completion of Sports Complex at Ramhlun and the expenditure incurred for this purpose.<sup>65</sup> Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD asked the names of land owners within the proposed site for Lengpui Airport and the amount of compensation to be sanctioned.<sup>66</sup> Dr. R. Lalthangliana of MNF wanted to know the total expenditure incurred on

56. *PMLA, Twelfth Session, 1997*, p. 144.

57. *PMLA, Thirteenth Session, 1997*, p. 14.

58. *PMLA, Seventeenth Session, 1998*, p. 263.

59. *PMLA, Second Session, 1994*, p. 211.

60. *PMLA, Fourth Session, 1994*, p. 31.

61. *PMLA, Fifth Session, 1995*, p. 243.

62. *PMLA, Seventh Session, 1995*, p. 97.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

64. *PMLA, Tenth Session, 1996*, p. 303.

65. *PMLA, Second Session, 1994*, p. 62.

66. *PMLA, Fifth Session, 1995*, p. 8.

New Land Use Policy (N.L.U.P.) and whether the Government has any intention to introduce Voters' Photo Identity Card.<sup>67</sup> Lalrinchhana of MNF asked a question on what steps has been taken for the constitution of Sinlung Hills Development Council.<sup>68</sup> Lalhmingthanga of MJD asked a question at what rate Mizoram Agricultural and Marketing Corporation (M.A.M.C.O.) purchase 1 kg of ginger.<sup>69</sup> Lalsawta of MNF wanted to know whether the Government intent to implement 5th Pay Commission Recommendation.<sup>70</sup>

Information sought on matters of purely individual cases were often asked by the Opposition members. Such questions often raise individual grievances, cases of alleged injustice etc. B. Lalthlengliana of MNF wanted to know the name of the person who financed the expenditure incurred on the Sports Minister to witness World Cup Football, 1994 at U.S.A.<sup>71</sup> F. Lalremsiama of MNF asked whether the Government offered any type of compensation or ex-gratia to the bereaved family of Lalsangzuala, who died at the hands of non-Mizo on 26<sup>th</sup> September, 1994.<sup>72</sup> F. Malsawma of MNF wanted to know the reason why the pension of Head Pharmacist, Lalchama of Kolasib, who pensioned on 30<sup>th</sup> November, 1993, had not been settled and the whereabouts of his File No. 431011/2/92-HFW (Loose), which has been put up to the Deputy Secretary, Department of Personnel & Administrative Reform on 20<sup>th</sup> April, 1994.<sup>73</sup> B.Lalthlengliana of MNF asked a question whether the Government provide assistance to the family of Lalmuanthanga, Mizoram Armed Police, who was killed at Vairengte on 29<sup>th</sup> November, 1994.<sup>74</sup> Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD wanted to know what steps the Government of Mizoram has taken regarding the complaints made by Mizo Zirlai Pawl (Mizo Students' Association) General Headquarters demanding investigation on the assault of C . Lalthazuala by Border Security Force on 9<sup>th</sup> October, 1995.<sup>75</sup> Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD also wanted to know the name of Aizawl Thana Police Assistant Sub-Inspector,

67. *PMLA, Eighth Session*, 1996, p. 45.

68. *PMLA, Tenth Session*, 1996, p. 81.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 174.

70. *PMLA, Fifteenth Session*, 1998, p. 74.

71. *PMLA, Fourth Session*, 1994, p. 96.

72. *PMLA, Fifth Session*, 1995, p. 10.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

75. *PMLA, Seventh Session*, 1995, p. 157.

who tortured Lalkailiana on 20<sup>th</sup> February, 1996.<sup>76</sup> R . Tlanghmingthanga of MNF asked about how far investigation has been going on regarding the killing of Lalmalsawma of Vairengte by the Assam Forest Guard on 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1995.<sup>77</sup> Lalsawta of MNF wanted to know who is responsible for the killing of Vanlalpeka of Khuangleng village on 4<sup>th</sup> August, 1996.<sup>78</sup> Dr. R. Lalthangliana of MNF asked a question on the reason why R . Lalbiaksanga, Principal, Lunglei Government College, has been transferred from one place to another within less than one year at five different places.<sup>79</sup>

Petty matters were also raised during Question Hour. F.Malsawma of MNF asked about the total number of vehicles in Sericulture Department.<sup>80</sup> B. Lalthlengliana of MNF also asked a question regarding the duty performed by the Police constable.<sup>81</sup> Lalsawta of MNF wanted to know in which month and year in the future will the Government remove corruption in Mizoram.<sup>82</sup> Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD asked the names of the senior most and second senior most Officers in the Department of Health & Family Welfare.<sup>83</sup> F. Lalremsiama of MNF wanted to know who is the highest paid person under the Government of Mizoram, total emoluments per month including all the allowances, House rent etc.<sup>84</sup>

Certain questions were stimulated by Press reports. Lalsawta of MNF asked a question from the Home Minister whether the attention of the Government had been drawn towards news published in ‘Assam Tribune’, 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1993 which reported that the Union Trade and Commerce Minister intended to revoke Inner Line Regulation (I.L.R.) in North-Eastern Area. His other question was also based on the news report of the ‘Statement’, 24<sup>th</sup> December, 1993, wherein the Union Home Minister repeated the same statement in the North Eastern Council meeting.<sup>85</sup> Dr.

76. *PMLA, Eighth Session*, 1996, p. 217.

77. *PMLA, Tenth Session*, 1996, p. 239.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 364.

79. *PMLA, Thirteenth Session*, 1997, p. 1132.

80. *PMLA, Second Session*, 1994, p. 134.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 312.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 402.

83. *PMLA, Fifth Session*, 1995, p. 22.

84. *PMLA, Eighth Session*, 1996, p. 88.

85. *PMLA, Second Session*, 1994, p. 298.

J.V. Hluna of MJD pointed out that a news report in a particular paper stated that there was an intention to decrease the pay scale of Trained Teacher from Rs 2,000/- to Rs 1,640/-.<sup>86</sup>

The Half-an-hour discussion had its origin in an Unstarred Question No. 24 jointly tabled by Lalsawta of MNF and F. Lalremsiamia of MNF on 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1998 regarding supply of L .P .G. In the question, the two Opposition members drew the attention of the Minister, Food & Civil Supplies Department, and wanted to know: - (a) the total number of monthly receipt of filled L.P.G. cylinders to each L.P.G. distributors within Aizawl town during August, 1997- January 1998; and (b) how far the recommendations of the High Power Committee regarding cooking gas has been implemented.

The Minister concerned responded to the questions that the total number of filled L .P. G cylinders received by the six distributors within Aizawl town during the said period were 2,20,379 cylinders. Food & Civil Supplies Department constituted L.P.G. Cell as recommended by the High Power Committee to supervise and monitor the distribution of cooking gas at different distributors' showrooms. Area-wise demarcation for each distributor has been made and transfer of consumer card to each area distributor would be finalised soon.

Initiating the discussion, Lalsawta of MNF raised a matter arising out of the replies on 23<sup>th</sup> March, 1998 during Half-an-hour discussion. He said that the State capital has been reeling under acute shortage of cooking gas. Many consumers have complained that they had to wait day and night to get the cylinders. The real reason behind the shortage was the imbalance of demand by supply. The cooking gas has been distributed by the distributors in accordance with their own conveniences but this caused a serious hardship to the consumers. Moreover, the distributors failed to furnish the total number of consumers. As a result, the Official record and the report of Indian Oil Company has differed from one another. So, to overcome the problem, he urged the Government to increase the number of

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86. *PMLA, Sixth Session, 1995*, p. 82.

distributors and take preventive measures to ensure that the shortage of cooking gas did not become so critical in future.<sup>87</sup>

Taking part in the discussion, F. Lalremsiama of MNF confessed that while serving as Secretary cum Director of Food & Civil Supplies Department, even official failed to control the distribution of cooking gas. The Report of High Power Committee recommended home delivery of cooking gas and distribution at specified area. However, this remained unfulfilled even today. He earnestly request the Government to implement the recommendations of the High Power Committee.<sup>88</sup>

Zoramthanga of MNF said that if the Government is really determined to overcome the problem, home delivery of cooking gas is an ideal solution for consumers. If not possible, timely and regular delivery may redress the grievances of the people. It is important for the Government to give utmost priority before we reach the dark side of unexpectation.<sup>89</sup>

Participating in the discussion, F. Malsawma of MNF said that the problem of cooking gas has been a live subject which has been discussed many times in this august House. It is a shame on the part of the Government that no desired results could be seen inspite of repeated discussion. He suggested to call the service of Central Bureau Investigation or to appoint Special Enquiry in order to clarify the said problems.<sup>90</sup>

Replying to the discussion, P.C. Bawitluanga, Minister-in-charge, said that the Government has pursued a consistent and principled policy on the subject. There was no question of the Government's policy being dictated by the distributors. Home delivery of cooking gas should be done whether the distributors agreed or not as per the area-wise demarcation. Anyone who are found unworthy to distribute L .P. G. as per Explosive Act, their licenses should be cancelled. To overcome the shortage of cooking gas, the Government had initiated certain steps to improve and was making efforts to make available of cooking gas in adequate quantity.<sup>91</sup>

87. *PMLA, Fifteenth Session, 1998*, pp. 171 - 172.

88 *Ibid.*, p. 172.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

91. *Ibid.*, pp. 175 - 177.

The questions asked by the Opposition members during the period of our study were varied. Subjects covered ranged from non-function of x-ray in the hospital to the burning question of cooking gas shortage. The questions put forward by the Opposition members show that they tried to make substantial use of this weapon. Questions have helped to focus light on issues of important matters. For example, replies to Starred Question No. 43 asked by the Opposition member on 16<sup>th</sup> September, 1996, relating to the alleged irregularities in the implementation of Greater Lunglei Water Supply Scheme, led to the appointment of Assembly Committee of Enquiry. If it had not come in the open, perhaps no action would have been initiated.

The Opposition attacked the inherent irregularity, corruption, nepotism, favouritism etc in the governmental administration. The study also shows that the Opposition used Question Hour to highlight the inefficiency of administration in government departments. During the Question Hour, the Opposition succeeded in drawing the attention of the concerned Ministers in their failure in implementing the government-sponsored developmental schemes, which would benefit a large section of the people in the State. Throughout the period of our survey, the Opposition appears to have been successful in using Question Hour to elicit information on matters of public importance. A vigilant Opposition did succeed in focusing attention on a number of issues.

## CHAPTER V

# ROLE OF THE OPPOSITION IN BUDGET DISCUSSION

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### ROLE OF THE OPPOSITION IN BUDGET DISCUSSION

A Budget is the financial plan of a Government, indicating the goals and objectives of a Government. It is an instrument of scheduling and evaluating government activities. The term 'Budget' has been derived from a French word 'Bougette' which means a pouch or a leather bag. The first reference to the expression of the word occurred in England in a pamphlet called 'Opening the Budget' in 1733 directed against the Chancellor of Exchequer, Sir Robert Walpole's financial plan for the ensuing year. The Chancellor of Exchequer used to carry his paper in a leather bag to the House of Commons and used to open it in the House as he set off to present the papers containing the financial plans before the House.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the term has been used those papers themselves for financial schemes or statement of annual income and expenditure of the government.

The Budget document becomes a comprehensive statement of the Government's financial programme and work plan for the year in question. It contains not only tabulations of estimates and numerical projections, but also written descriptions and justifications of the activities of the various departments of the Government.

Today, Budget is an instrument of the economic and social policies of the Government. The activities of the Government are fast expanding and they tend to cover almost all aspects of social life. The Government is dedicated to the welfare of the people and as such has to perform a variety of social services like, housing, health, sanitation, employment, education, development etc. All this means 'money'. But where from the money comes? There is a limit to the resources the State can raise. Taxation, duties, borrowings etc can not be regarded as unending sources. To allocate scarce resources to the various governmental activities,

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1. C.P.Bhambhri, *Public Administration*, Jai Prakash Nath & Co., Meerut, 1972, p. 505.

the need for budgeting arise. Budget is a programme of action with a financing plan and an expenditure plan or simply, it is a proposal of how much is to be spent on what and how much of it will be contributed by whom or from where. Government budgeting is one of the major processes by which the use of public resources is planned and controlled. The Budget plays a vital role in the economy of a welfare State. From the budget, the citizens can know what benefits they are going to derive from the various plans and programmes of the government and how much tax they will have to pay.

The Annual Financial Statement or the Statement of the Estimated Receipts and Expenditure of the Government of the State of Mizoram in respect of every financial year shall be presented to the House on such day as the Governor may appoint. This is known as the 'Budget'. The Budget is first presented to the House by the Finance Minister after considering the suggestions of the Estimates Committee.<sup>2</sup> The Budget is introduced to the House in the month of March because the State's financial year begins on 1<sup>st</sup> April. The Finance Minister makes speech introducing the Budget and the documents together with a copy of the Finance Minister's speech to the House is presented. There is no discussion of the Budget on the day it is presented to the Legislature. Obviously, the Budget is presented well in advance before the commencement of the financial year so as to enable the members to study and to acquaint themselves with the figures, which the mass of material circulated to them contains.

The Rule provides that the Budget should be dealt with by the Assembly in two stages, namely, (a) a general discussion; and (b) the voting of demands for grants.<sup>3</sup> General discussion on the budget commences on a day previously appointed by the Speaker not earlier than two days subsequent to the day on which the budget is presented and for such time as the Speaker may allot for this purpose. At the stage of the general discussion, the members are at liberty to discuss the Budget as a whole or any question of principle involved therein. The entire work of administration

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2. *Rule* 143.

3. *Ibid.*, 145.

is reflected in the Budget so that the legislature can review it comprehensively at close quarters. Any item of expenditure may be subject to criticism. The general discussion of the Budget enables the House not only to consider the broad issues of the financial policy of the Government but also to prepare for a more detailed and effective scrutiny of the Budget. This occasion has been generally used for discussing the financial policy of the Government in specific and other policies in general. Members have full liberty to discuss over the entire financial structure of the Government. No motion is moved and the Budget is not submitted to the vote of the House. The Finance Minister makes a general reply at the end of the discussion.<sup>4</sup>

The Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Mizoram Legislative Assembly require that a separate demand shall ordinarily be made in respect of the grants proposed for each Department; provided that the Minister-in-charge of Finance Department may include in the demand grants proposed for two or more Departments, or make a demand in respect of expenditure which cannot readily be classified under the particular Departments. Each demand shall contain first a statement of the total grant proposed, and then a statement of the detailed estimate under each grant divided into items.<sup>5</sup>

The demands for grants are not moved in the House by the Minister concerned. The Minister can, however, initiate discussion on the demands by explaining the salient features, programmes, achievements etc of his Ministry. Discussion on a demand has to be confined to the policies, programmes and administration of the Ministry in question. Members can raise only those matters which fall under the purview of the Ministry of whose Demands for Grants are under discussion. Discussion on Demands for Grants offers an occasion for the close scrutiny of each Department. After the discussion, the Minister concerned is called upon to wind up the debate. The Minister is generally required to reply to the multitude of points which had been raised by the members. Thereafter, the Demands for Grants are put to the vote of the House.

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4. *Ibid.*, 147.

5. *Ibid.*, 146.

After the Demands for Grants have been passed by the House, the Appropriation Bill to provide for the appropriation out of the Consolidated Fund of the State of all moneys required to meet the grants so made by the Assembly, and the expenditure charged on the Consolidated Fund of the State, but exceeding in any case the amount shown in the Budget presented to the Assembly, is introduced, considered and passed.<sup>6</sup> The Appropriation Bill is intended to give authority to Government to incur expenditure from and out of the Consolidated Fund of the State.

In the Budget discussion, the Opposition finds an opportunity to criticise the financial policy of the Government and also uses it as a medium through which grievances of their respective constituencies are focused.

**1994-1995 Budget:** On 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1994, presenting the Budget for 1994-1995, the Finance Minister, Lalhmingthanga stated that the economy and Budget of Mizoram are heavily dependent on the general health of the economy of the country. The State is dependent, almost fully, on the Central Government for funds required for running the administration and for implementing various developmental schemes. During 1994-1995, the Finance Minister estimated the revenue receipt at Rs 458.39 crore and revenue expenditure at Rs 398.26 crore and the financial deficit at Rs 4.24 crore. The Budget provisions gave top-most priority to Agriculture and allied sectors with the objectives of moving towards self-sufficiency in food production and providing permanent settlement to the farm sector; acceleration of the tempo of hydel projects in hand; communication and social services such as water supply, sanitation and education.<sup>7</sup> The discussion on the Budget took place on 21<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>th</sup> March, 1994.

Initiating the discussion, Lalrinchhana of MNF said that the Budget was a sure continuity of the previous policy of the Congress Ministry and there was no major departure from it. He wanted to know whether the Budget provide security to the people or to the Government itself. In some cases, persons who worked as Muster Roll employees for ten years were dismissed. For the security of the people, there are rules wherein foreigners

6. *Ibid.*, 157.

7. PMLA, *Second Session*, 1994, pp. 53-57.

are not allowed to enter into Mizoram without valid permission. Today, the number of foreigners had been increasing. He further said that the physical achievement of New Land Use Policy (N.L.U.P.), the flagship programme of the Government, was dismal and that all the programmes were running far behind the physical targets.<sup>8</sup>

T. Hranghluta of MNF did not see any big projects in the Budget for employment generation. He felt that the Budget should concentrate on big projects like Paper Industry, Plywood factory, Bairabi Hydel Project etc, which could generate employment opportunities, instead of investing a lot of money for small projects. He also felt that the current Budget and the Budget for 1994-1995 neglect Chhimtuipui District and urged the Government to pay attention of the said District.<sup>9</sup>

F. Lalzuala of MNF said that the Budget appeared to be more conducive to Aizawl District demands than Lunglei and Chhimtuipui Districts needs. He requested the Government to make additional provisions for the two Districts to expedite the connectivity of the rural areas of the two Districts with the mainstream. He also pointed out that proper attention would have to be paid to Medical Department in the two Districts.<sup>10</sup>

H. Lalruata of MNF said that no attention was paid towards removing regional disparity in the Budget proposals. For example, the estimate under non-plan for Public Works Department of Mechanical Division for Aizawl District is Rs 50 lakhs while it is only Rs 9 lakhs for Lunglei District. In his opinion, the financial distribution would be 50% for Aizawl District, 30% for Lunglei District and 20% for Chhimtuipui District. He also felt that the Government should pay special attention to solve unemployment problems in the State.<sup>11</sup>

F. Malsawma of MNF said that the figures for the Budget showed a high fiscal deficit and no convincing explanation had been provided for this state of affairs. Though Agriculture and allied sectors had been given top-most priority, the Budget allocation of Rs 2,402 lakhs is much less than the allocation made in the current financial year which is Rs 2,627 lakhs. Likewise, the Budget allocation

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8. *Ibid.*, pp. 197-198.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 198-199.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 199.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

for improvement of School buildings for the Budget of 1994-1995 is Rs 806 lakhs as compared to the current financial year of Rs 882 lakhs. Similarly, the Budget allocation for Art & Culture Department for 1994-1995 is Rs 65 lakhs while the allocation made for the current financial year is Rs 70 lakhs. He also stressed the need to bring radical changes in the education system to make it employment oriented.<sup>12</sup>

Zoramthanga of MNF criticised the Government policy on Hydel power by opting small projects and urged the Government to take up Bairabi Hydel Project with a generating capacity of 120 megawatts which would provide self-sufficiency in power for Mizoram. He also suggested privatisation of Mizoram State Transport which incurred heavy loss to the State exchequer.<sup>13</sup>

F. Lalremsiama of MNF has voiced his protest against the handling of funds allotted to different Departments. Diversion of funds allocated for certain purposes to other purposes clearly indicated disrespect to the Department concerned and neglect of Department's priority. In spite of the various assistances from the Central Government and the 9<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission to remove the financial deficit in the forms of financial grants and remission of loans, the financial deficit keep on increasing. Is it not the failure of fiscal management on the part of the Government? he asked. Since Mizoram do not have any significant source of revenue, he suggested the imposition of tax on agricultural land.<sup>14</sup>

Participating in the discussion, Dr. R. Lalthangliana of MNF said that economy in public expenditure is the duty of the Government. There had to be a transparent mechanism in the management of finance. Despite repeated criticism, the expenditure was growing too fast and the burden of debt was weighing heavily. He brought up a particular case of wasteful expenditure on Steel Wire Iron amounting to Rs 300 lakhs by purchasing at the rate of Rs 1,900/- per metre while the market rate is less than Rs 100/- per metre. To keep down the level of unnecessary and un-productive expenditure, he suggested rigorous policy of retrenchment within the prescribed scope and purpose.<sup>15</sup>

Lalkhama of MNF charged the Government with not having paid

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12. *Ibid.*, pp. 235-237.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 239.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 241-242.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 245.

due regard to the interests of the public. He said that the Government has throughout ignored constructive suggestions offered by the Opposition for improving the financial position of the State.<sup>16</sup>

B. Lalthlenglina of MNF criticised the Government for its inability to supply medicines and medical equipments to Government Hospitals and suspected diversion of fund for other purposes. He expressed concern over the Government's undue delay in regularisation of the Staff of the three Colleges, namely, Kolasib, Zirtiri Women's and Saiha, which were provincialised way back in 1992. He charged the Government of being completely unconcerned and oblivious of the sufferings of the Staff of the three Colleges. He also objected to the manner in which supply of Science kits and instruments were being awarded to the Company based at Calcutta in the Department of State Council of Educational, Research and Training.<sup>17</sup>

Zakhu Hlychho of MNF said that though Agriculture and allied sectors are given top-most priority, the budgetary allocation for the benefits of the farmers was very minimal. He charged the Government in adopting unsympathetic attitude in regard to farmers. He criticised the Government's failure in addressing Saiha Hospital. Being the only hospital in the District with 72 beds, the hospital needs to be enlarged and urged the Government to provide better facilities and equipments.<sup>18</sup>

R. Tlanghmingthanga of MNF criticised the poor conditions of roads within Aizawl town. He said most of the roads around the town are muddy, potholed stretches in desperate need of repairs. The drainage system is so poor that a single shower is enough to flood the main road. The improper drainage system, the small outlets remain clogged most of the time. Rainy season is a nightmare for the locality. He said that priority should be accorded to solve the problem.<sup>19</sup>

L.P. Thangzika of MNF laid stress on the need for reforming education system. He brought to notice of the absence of perspective planning and the total neglect of Primary Schools in rural areas.<sup>20</sup>

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16. *Ibid.*, p. 248.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 251-252.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 253.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 254.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 255.

**1995-1996 Budget:** Presenting the Budget for 1995-1996 on 16<sup>th</sup> March, 1995, the Finance Minister, J. Lalsangzuala said the broad strategy of the Budget was to continue on Agriculture with emphasis on elimination of jhuming, self-sufficiency in food grains and horticulture; generation of power for meeting the huge gap between production and demand through internal generation; achievement of full literacy; provision of safe drinking water and communications in rural areas; and employment generation through agro-forest based industries. The discussion took place on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>th</sup> March, 1995.

Lalrinchhana of MNF initiated the discussion and pointed out that the partisan approach followed by the Government in giving grant for development to the people. He said that the Government was seeking to gain political ends and to destroy the Opposition parties using alleged nepotism. In the name of giving equal opportunities to all people, they were preferring only those people belonging to the ruling party and ignoring the claims of the members of the Opposition parties, however deserving they were. The Government's action tended to create and widen the differences among the people which would be ruinous to the larger interests of the State.<sup>21</sup>

Lalsawta of MNF observed that the present Government had utterly failed to provide an efficient, clean, impartial and accountable administration. All development programmes were directed for the benefit of the members of the ruling party. As regards Industry Department in which there was allegation of financial irregularities by the Cashier amounting to Rs 4.80 lakhs, he criticised the Government's approach to such misappropriation of funds.<sup>22</sup>

B. Lalthlengliana of MNF criticised the Budget because of increased deficit financing. He said for a small State like Mizoram, the Budget was quite satisfactory provided if it is utilised properly. The question that needed consideration was as to when would the common man get the desired relief. He cited some specific instances of squandering of public

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21. *PMLA, Fifth Session, 1995*, p. 80.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

money. In some villages, all the money sanctioned for village development were used for the entertainment of the Ministers when they visit their constituencies. The Forest Department sanctioned fund for afforestation of 140 hectares of land near Tlawng river. But they actually covered only 4 hectares and thus squandering fund for 136 hectares. He also urged the Government to create new Excise Force at Kolasib and Champhai in order to contain the flow of drugs into Mizoram.<sup>23</sup>

F. Lalremsiama of MNF brought to the notice of the House that on 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1994, the House unanimously passed a resolution regarding reformation of Village Council. Even after a year has passed, there was hardly any evidence towards its enactment. There was a big gap between promises and performances of the present Government. This Government had promised plenty, attempted little and achieved almost nothing.<sup>24</sup>

Taking part in the discussion, Lalkhama of MNF said that the Central Government is kind enough to give the State more grants than its due because the State had lagged behind in all fronts. If Mizoram is to be raised to a higher level, there can be no escape from taxation for all sections of the society. The State must, therefore, rise to the occasion and raise resources through its own efforts.<sup>25</sup>

R. Tlanghmingthanga of MNF expressed his deep concern on the deforestation in the State and appealed to the Government to take stern actions against the defaulters. He alleged that the Government had purchase land at Shillong and Luangmual at exorbitant rate and demanded an explanation from the concerned Minister. He also brought to the notice of the House that the Government had agreed to increase the pay scale of Police constable from Rs 825/- to Rs 850/- and pleaded for its immediate implementation.<sup>26</sup>

Zoramthanga of MNF said that the quality of the soil in Mizoram is fertile and any kinds of vegetables, fruits and staple food can be grown. As Agriculture sector continued to enjoy the top-most priority of the Budget

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23. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 113-114.

with the allocation of Rs 21.90 crore, we have enough funds to yield sufficient food grains if the Budget is properly utilized.<sup>27</sup>

F. Malsawma of MNF emphasised the need to balance both economic programmes and developmental programmes. In the economic programmes, it is imperative to find ways to increase production and to have permanent source of revenue. In order to increase production, we have to explore the availability of market for the productions at national and international levels.<sup>28</sup>

Lalhmingthanga of MJD termed the Budget of 1995-1996 as 'non-work oriented Budget'. Since less than 40% of the Budget is allotted for progress work oriented, the whole Budget needs re-oriented. Most of the Budget are allotted for stock suspense and depot and it would not improve the plight of the people, he added.<sup>29</sup>

H. Thangkima of MJD stressed the need for proper direction of various programmes not for the benefits of the members of the ruling party only but in the interest of the development of the State and with public welfare in mind. In order to develop the State and attain self-sufficiency, it is necessary to develop our morals.<sup>30</sup>

Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD alleged that the Government did not show interest in shifting of Assam Rifles to Zokhawsang area. He recounted that shifting of Assam Rifles has been passed by the Cabinet of the Mizoram Government in its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> October, 1986 and the then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi also announced in July, 1986 that the Assam Rifles will be shifted within three years. A sum of Rs 92 lakhs had been sanctioned for the same. He wanted to know as to what action the Government has taken on the matter.<sup>31</sup>

**Interim Budget 1996-1997:** The Finance Minister, J. Lalsangzuala, presented the Interim Budget in the House on 14<sup>th</sup> March, 1996, which was for part of the fiscal year 1996-1997, sought a 'Vote-On-Account' to enable the Government to discharge its responsibilities and to meet all the essential expenditure during the first four months from April to July, 1996. This was

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27. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

necessitated because of the ensuing General Elections in the country on account of which the Central Government had deferred finalization of Plan outlay and the Central fund support for 1996-1997.

Again, due to unforeseen political developments at the Centre, the reconstitution of Planning Commission was delayed and the Finance Minister had to obtain the approval of the House for 'Vote-On-Account' for further two months' requirement for the months of August and September, 1996 on 17<sup>th</sup> July, 1996.

**1996-1997 Budget:** The Finance Minister, J. Lalsangzuala, presented the Budget for 1996-1997 to the Assembly on 12<sup>th</sup> September, 1996. The Budget laid emphasis on :- 100% coverage of provision of safe drinking water in rural and urban areas; 100% coverage of primary health service facilities in rural and urban areas; universalisation of primary education; provision for Public Housing Assistance to all shelterless poor families; extension of mid-day meal programme in primary schools, to all rural blocks and urban slums and disadvantaged sections; provision of connectivity to all unconnected villages and inhabitants; and streamlining the Public Distribution System with focus upon the poor. The discussion of the Budget took place on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> September, 1996.

Initiating the discussion, F. Malsawma of MNF pointed out that the Budget made no reference to the amount of product from Agriculture sector. We mainly talked about how many buildings were constructed and how much assistance were given to the people by the Government. It is time to give paramount importance to self-sufficiency. Besides, many projects of the Government were suffering from cost, thereby increasing the burden on the exchequer. He felt that the Government could have planned the Budget more properly and implemented the plans meticulously to inspire the workers and the people more effectively.<sup>32</sup>

Lalhmingthanga of MJD was critical over extravagant public expenditure and deficit financing of Rs 53.32 crore as a clear indication of financial mismanagement. The Government has made restriction to the

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32. PMLA, Tenth Session, 1996, p. 67.

Government employees on the withdrawal of their General Provident Funds, House Building Loans and Interim Reliefs. He bitterly criticised the Government for its lack of strict control over expenditure and measures to combat it.<sup>33</sup>

Lalsawta of MNF charged the Government with adopting a policy of favouritism in the award of supply of materials worth lakhs of rupees to the non-tribals. He pointed out that the Government should evolve a uniform procedure in the purchase of materials.<sup>34</sup>

Lalkhama of MNF alleged that sufficient steps had not been taken by the Government with regard to employment in the Budget. There was a need to bring radical changes in the education system to make it employment oriented. He urged the Government to create the possibilities of employment in various fields like industry, poultry, farming and agriculture. Moreover, the Government should concentrate on mini hydel projects instead of big hydel projects that would take at least 5-10 years for completion.<sup>35</sup>

B. Lalthlengliana of MNF criticised the Government's financial policy by pointing out that 'Budget Deficit' is the word which has always been a major topic in every session. There should be well defined financial dealing and transparency in financial management. Though Horticulture and Trade and Commerce Departments has spent lakhs of rupees annually, they have not achieved the physical targets thereby resulting in heavy loss. He regretted the Government's failure to provide proper market mechanism and alleged that the interests of the workers were not being protected.<sup>36</sup>

Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD said that in the matter of selection and distribution of beneficiaries for the centrally sponsored schemes, the Government patronised only the ruling party members. The Government encouraged the farmers to grow pineapple, ginger, tea, passion fruits etc, however, the Government has been unable to purchase the products from these poor farmers. He accused the Government of deceiving the farmers with false promises.<sup>37</sup>

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33. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 69

35. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

Dr. R. Lalthangliana of MNF reminded the Government the poor road condition of Lunglei-Thenzawl and within Aizawl town which had been neglected for long and demanded improvement. He suggested the setting up of PWD Sub-Division Office at Mualthum or Lawngtlai, if not, there has been no hope for having better quality of road in Lunglei District. The Government spent a large amount of money on the improvement of Hnahthial-Thingsai road, but little has been done so far. He also informed the House of the acute crisis of teachers in Primary Schools. There are certain cases of one teacher looking after one school and demanded rationalisation of teachers by deployment of faculty from surplus schools to deficit ones. He criticised the Government for its inability to create adequate infrastructures, provide medical facilities and supply of medicines and water at various Government hospitals. He recalled the passage of Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act, 1995 by the House but the Government failed to take efforts for successful implementation of this Act. He referred to the absence of a single provision in the Budget for the recruitment of enforcement staff or purchase of vehicles for Excise Department.<sup>38</sup>

H. Thangkima of MNF expressed concern over the Government's undue delay in constructing Koladyne bridge, the foundation of which was laid long before. This clearly demonstrated the negligence of Chhimtuipui District by the present Government.<sup>39</sup>

Participating in the discussion, Zoramthanga of MNF said that though the Government has spent crores of rupees for N.L.U.P. programme, but not a single positive outcome could be seen. The poor performance of the programme may be attributed to the lack of sincere desire to motivate the farmers and a mere populist measure to catch vote for the party. He also made a scathing attack on the Government's negligence of border trade with Bangladesh and road communication.<sup>40</sup>

Lalrinchhana of MNF said that there was a provision for the trifurcation of Aizawl District in which Rs 60 lakhs has been allotted. Small districts were suitable and useful from the point of view of development as well as for administrative reasons. But this has not been materialized till

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38. *Ibid.*, pp. 91 - 93.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

date and he questioned as to what action the Government has intended to take.<sup>41</sup>

R. Tlanghmingthanga of MNF regretted that the Budget contained no policies and programmes for solving drinking water problem. The existing Aizawl Water supply scheme was inadequate to meet the requirement of the people and there was acute scarcity of water supply. It was the responsibility of the Government to ensure steady and regular water supply to the people and asked the Government to make sincere efforts to solve the problem.<sup>42</sup>

**Interim Budget of 1997-1998:** On 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1997, the Finance Minister, J. Lalsangzuala, presented the Interim Budget of 1997-1998 and sought a Vote-on-Account for four months, i.e., April to July, 1997. This was necessitated because the total size of the next year Plan has been fixed by the Planning Commission of India, but sectoral allocations are yet to be finalised by them. The Plan allocations as made in the Budget at present are tentative and these would require to be revised later in the light of the sectoral allocations as approved by the Planning Commission.

**1997-1998 Budget:** The Finance Minister, J. Lalsangzuala, while presenting the Budget for 1997-1998 on 15<sup>th</sup> July, 1997, disclosed that the fiscal deficit was envisaged at Rs 117.14 crore. The present fiscal crisis is a culmination of our tendency of living beyond our means for quite long. The solution to the present impasses lies in augmenting our revenue and disciplining the expenditure growth. In order to mobilise resources, the Budget proposed, *inter alia*, enhancement of road transport fares by five paise per kilometre; tax on new motor vehicle; increase in the rate of land revenue and land record fee from hundred to five hundred per cent; and enhancement of power and water tariffs.<sup>43</sup> The discussion of the Budget took place on 16<sup>th</sup> July, 1997.

In the course of the discussion, the whole financial policy of the Government was subject to severe criticism by the combined Opposition. All the Opposition members who took part in the discussion joined to assail the Government for its spending policies. Each member of the

41. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

43. PMLA, Thirteenth Session, 1997, p. 27.

Opposition attacks the Budget from the point of view of his ideology with the result that the same types of arguments tend to be repeated. Initiating the discussion, F. Lalremsiama of MNF held the Government responsible for a high fiscal deficit due to excess expenditure. He said that when the Finance Minister presented the Interim Budget in the month of March, 1997, the fiscal deficit stood at Rs 76.74 crore. Four months later, the financial deficit turn out to be Rs 117.14 crore. The factor contributing to the growth of the heavy expenditure was exposed with the aid of the Finance Minister's statement of the tendency of living beyond our means. He pressed the Government to explain the reason why a ginger process plant at Sairang, involving Rs 45 lakhs, was now in a condition of abandon. He accused the Finance Minister for his inability to control the expenditure and emphasised the need for correct budgeting and rigid control over expenditure.<sup>44</sup>

Zoramthanga of MNF described the Budget Statement of the Finance Minister as 'shameful, distressed and perplexed statement'. Due to extravagant and heavy expenditure which resulted in a sudden upward in fiscal deficit, the Finance Minister was compelled to admit that the 'sword of Reserve Bank of India is on his neck all the time'. The Finance Minister further admitted his failure in restraining the growth of non-plan expenditure and we have reached a stage that required a surgical operation rather than a homeopathic treatment of the problem. If the Chief Minister has admitted the Finance Minister's statement, it means dissolution of the Government. If not, the Finance Minister has to resign.<sup>45</sup>

Lalsawta of MNF termed the Budget Statement of the Finance Minister as 'despond and disgrace'. His speech was a strong indictment of the Finance Minister. He alleged that the Finance Minister had utterly failed in financial management and held him responsible to the present financial crisis. He demanded the resignation of the Finance Minister. He further observed that one reason for the non-observance of financial procedure was purchase of land at an exorbitant rate in which more money has been spent than should have been.<sup>46</sup>

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44. *Ibid*, pp. 53-54.

45. *Ibid*., pp. 56-57.

46. *Ibid*., pp. 58-59.

Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD said that the Government's subservient attitude to the Central Government had resulted in the State not getting its due share in matter of development schemes. He expressed doubt whether the Government had identified the Below Poverty Line (B.P.L.) families. He complained that the problem of favouritism of the ruling party members would hinder the benefits reaching the real target families of BPL.<sup>47</sup>

Lalhmingthanga of MJD recalled that when he was a Finance Minister, he prepared economic package to solve financial crisis, but this package was left unnoticed. He further accused the Government of following a wrong financial policies with having no fixed principle which caused the present acute financial crisis. The Government was trying to mobilise more resources by imposing heavy burden on the people. So, he and his colleagues would not vote as a mark of disapproval of the Budget.<sup>48</sup>

R. Tlanghmingthanga of MNF strongly criticised the Government and stated that the State had been brought to an economic crisis. He declared that the present Government is the most incapable and directionless Government. He accused the Government of its inability to provide food security for the poor at subsidised rate.<sup>49</sup>

Dr. R. Lalthangliana of MNF described the Budget as a big disappointment. The Budget did not have anything to highlight the Government's achievements and any concrete programmes. He said that a large number of people have been affected by landslides in Chhimtuipui District. The Government has sanctioned Rs 400 lakhs for the rehabilitation of the victims. He expressed concern at the reports of acts of corruption by some elements. He also sought information from the Government about the steps taken to fulfill the assurances given by the Chief Minister who visited the affected area. The lists of complaints was quite long: scarcity of water supply, shortage of power supply and cooking gas, late payment of Government employees' salary, corruption in different Government Departments, non-payment of Muster roll employees' salary.<sup>50</sup>

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47. *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 74-76.

Lalkhama of MNF said that the present financial situation could be improved only by efficient financial control. To keep a proper check over the expenditure and to ensure strict control over finances, the Finance Minister should shoulder greater responsibility by devising practical methods to check the over-spending tendencies of the Departments. Those found guilty of misappropriating public funds deserved no mercy but should rather be dealt with promptly and severely. He viewed seriously fiscal indiscipline amongst the officers and stood for the severest punishment to the offending officers. He also said that the number of unemployed persons had been increasing continuously and the problem had emerged as the biggest challenge for the State. He urged the Government to increase the possibilities of employment and to utilise the limited resources properly. The youth had to be provided with information regarding the generation of small scale employment.<sup>51</sup>

F. Malsawma of MNF said that to overcome such a state of affairs, there was an urgent need to devise more methodical and more systematic procedure whereby the Budget was prepared on a more accurate data. To check waste and extravagance, the Finance Department was to keep its eyes and ears open to prevent any financial activity of the Government escaping its scrutiny. The Finance Department is the watchdog to prevent extravagant or unnecessary expenditure and to see that the money has been spent, within the scope of which it has been duly sanctioned, by the spending Departments. He brought to the notice of the House the scarcity of cooking gas. Artificial scarcity of cooking gas was created because of hoarding and diversion of LPG cylinders for black marketing. The filled LPG cylinders were sold at an exorbitant price thereby causing great hardship to the people.<sup>52</sup>

Lalrinchhana of MNF said that the Budget overlooks our real needs and aspirations and is not responsive to our demands. Most of the projects announced would not see the light of the day as has happened with several projects announced last year. It is necessary to carry out a very detailed investigation of the causes which contributed to a steady increase

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51. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

in expenditure. We really want a substantial change of policy and not merely playing with reports and statements from various Departments, he said. What we want is change of policy. He stressed the need to direct developmental programmes and production oriented.<sup>53</sup>

**Interim Budget of 1998-1999:** On 19<sup>th</sup> March, 1998, J. Lalsangzuala, Finance Minister, presented the Interim Budget of 1998 - 1999 and sought the approval of the House and obtained 'Vote-on-Account' for expenditure to cover the period from April-July, 1998. This was necessitated because of the General Elections held in February-March, 1998 in the country and the Central Government has not finalised the State Plan for 1998-1999.

**1998-1999 Budget:** The Finance Minister had presented Rs 79.36 crore deficit Budget of 1998-1999 on 14<sup>th</sup> July, 1998, his last budget during the present government. Solution of the acute perpetual financial problem of the State can only be achieved by way of reducing the expenditure drastically and at the same time mobilise additional resources.

The Budget discussion was more engrossed in the financial affairs of the State; and social and economic needs of the community had been relegated to a second position. The Government faced strong criticism from the combined Opposition for its inability to check heavy fiscal deficit. Opening the discussion, Dr. R. Lalthangliana of MNF said that the Budget was a traditional Budget with no concrete programmes and ideological thrust for policy change and evoked neither cheers nor jeers. He complained that not a single Resolution passed by the House had been fulfilled. The continued loss on the working of the Departments of State Transport and Power & Electricity was liable to be construed as evidence, to some extent at least, of unsuccessful and inefficient financial administration. The Government employees were facing a lot of difficulties as proper deal was not given by the Government. The Government could not run away from its responsibility to give Travelling allowances, Pay interim relief and demanded to reverse the restriction on the withdrawal of General Provident Fund. Though the Government has spent crores of rupees on various Hydel

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53. *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

Projects, these projects failed to generate power as a result of which the State was witnessing frequent electricity shut-downs and break-downs. With the enormous growth in governmental expenditure, in the wake and as a result of the impact of successive extravagant and heavy expenditure, the Government intended to initiate financial control at the fag-end of the Assembly term. The financial situation could have been improved had the Government paid attention to the complaints and suggestions the Opposition had made so often, he added.<sup>54</sup>

Lalrinchhana of MNF said that the Budget had only length and no depth and was full of hoaxes and inexactitudes intended to cover up the comprehensive failure of the Government in almost every front. He emphasised the need to prepare the Budget in a systematic and proper direction. The reason for such financial disorder was the absence of proper financial control mechanism. Such an unsatisfactory method resulted in spending of money on unimportant activities thereby neglecting the real needs of the society. To cite an example, he pointed out that though the Forest Department was spending lakhs of rupees annually, revenue generated from that department was very minimal.<sup>55</sup>

B. Lalhlengliana of MNF described the Budget as one high on promise but short of substance. He expressed the view that the Budget had nothing to offer for the upliftment of the cultivators. He accused the Government of spending huge amount of money for unproductive expenditure. To illustrate his allegation, he pointed out that this could best be realised if the figures of expenditure for the purchase of vehicles were looked into. In the year 1996, a sum of Rs 136 crore was spent for the purchase of vehicles, in 1997, the expenditure had gone up by Rs 147 crore and a sum of Rs 65 crore had already been spent upto May 1998. He stressed the need for proper leadership to solve the problems facing the State and appealed to the ruling party members to denounce their unworthy leaders.<sup>56</sup>

Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD recalled the Congress election manifesto's commitment to deport illegal foreigners from Mizoram but expressed his

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54. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-65.

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-74.

disappointment of the negligence shown by the Government on this issue. Expressing his concern on the deforestation, he said trees worth over lakhs of rupees had been illegally cut by Chakma foreigners for jhum cultivation at Kawisalam Wildlife Sanctuary. He questioned as to what actions the Government had taken. Expressing his resentment over the increasing expenditure on unproductive, he criticised the Budget allocations of Rs 118 lakhs for Khadi and Village Industries at Saitual; Rs 111 lakhs for Mizoram Food and Allied Industries Corporation at Sairang; Rs 259 lakhs for Fruit Juice Concentration Plant at Chhingchhip and Rs 341 lakhs for Food Processing Plant at Zemabawk, all of them having no production at all. He also accused the Government of collecting 5% of Central Transport Subsidy in the Industries Department for party purposes.<sup>57</sup>

H. Thangkima of MNF said that the extent of the State's financial problem can be gauged from the fact that the Government was unable to pay the salary of Muster Roll and Workcharged employees. He opposed the move to create more Districts, Sub-Divisions and Rural Development Blocks, saying that it would lead to further financial problem.<sup>58</sup>

Lalsawta of MNF supported the proposed measures suggested by the Finance Minister for the improvement of the financial conditions of the State. He made vigorous demand for curtailment of expenditure of all the Government Departments. He brought to the notice of the House that half of the Muster-Roll and Work-charged employees were fake. He accused the Government of showing favouritism by appointing a person as Superintendent of Engineer for Mizoram House, New Delhi, having no work to be executed at all. He solicited the cooperation of all political parties and the problem would have to be fought with united will and determination.<sup>59</sup>

Lalhmingthanga of MJD kept up the slogan of economy and retrenchment. He said that the Government which failed to ensure regular supply of power and water had lost the confidence of the people. In order to improve the financial conditions of the State, the Government proposed to ban the creation of new posts, at the same time the Government intended

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57. *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.

to create new Districts and Sub-Divisions which would ensure to the creation of new posts. He demanded the Government to resolve its contradictory proposals.<sup>60</sup>

F. Malsawma of MNF criticised the Budget allocation of Rs 10 lakhs for Sinlung Hills Development Council (SHDC) as unrealistic because the Budget allocation for SHDC remained the same for the past four years. He stated that most of the Budget allocation for SHDC had not been based on a realistic appraisal of the schemes and their execution possibilities. He charged the Government of being completely unconcerned for the upliftment of the minority community. He also alleged that the Government failed to provide water, electricity and furniture to the De-Addiction Centre at Bualpui.<sup>61</sup>

Zoramthanga of MNF held the Chief Minister and Finance Minister responsible for the present financial crisis for their inefficiency and total mishandling of the financial administration. Efficiency in financial administration could only be achieved if the leaders are honest, sincere and fully conscious of their responsibilities and duties. He also alleged that during the Congress rule, the Government led the State to a situation which created vast economic imbalance whereby the rich had become richer and the poor, poorer. The extent to which it is possible to impose further burdens on the people is now very limited. He further charged that the Government's wrong financial policy has resulted in the State not getting its due share from the Central Government.<sup>62</sup>

Taking part in the discussion, R. Tlanghmingthanga of MNF said that the Congress party had no mandate as it had come to power on the basis of political opportunism and compromises. He said that the defectors had been voted on an anti-Congress platform, and betrayed the electorates by supporting the Congress. He termed the formation of the Government purely power hungry and opportunistic with no principle as the persons in the Government had fought elections against each other. He alleged that the

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60. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

61. *Ibid.*, pp. 137-138.

62. *Ibid.*, pp. 151-153.

Government remained unresponsive to all constructive suggestions made by the Opposition.<sup>63</sup>

F. Lalremsiama of MNF termed the Budget as ‘an annual ritual’ containing no policy direction. He felt that throughout the years, the Government had not shown any genuine desire and determined effort for financial control mechanism. He emphasised the need to evolve an elaborate and systematic remedial measures for instituting rational and efficient fiscal management. For the upliftment of the farmers, he said that the market standardisation of the agro-products would only benefit the farmers and urged the Government to take necessary measures to help the farmers.<sup>64</sup>

**Critical Appraisal:** A survey of the speeches made by the Opposition during the Budget discussion shows that the Opposition cared little for the topic. The speeches on the Budget covered almost everything even though it may have little relevance on the complicated structure of the economy and public finance. Very few members confined themselves to the Budget and its proposals. As such, the Speaker had to remind the participants repeatedly that they should adhere to the topic only. The general tendency seems to have been that the Opposition members thought it sufficient to mention, at the start of their speech, whether they favour or disfavour the Budget, and after mentioning it, they discussed topics which had only a remote relation with the Budget. It appears that the time for the Budget discussion had been wasted more in verbosity. The Opposition members made references to all those matters which came to their mind and so speeches were mostly off the mark and irrelevant. In almost all the Budget discussions, the Government of Mizoram had to face angry Opposition for its failure to check the growing heavy expenditure resulting huge fiscal deficit. During the period of our survey, the Opposition has used various Budget discussions as forums for ventilating public grievances and in assailing the Government for its lapses as well. The Opposition was successful in obtaining assurances from the Government on a number of public issues. Without Opposition, these would have remained unnoticed and uncared for.

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63. *Ibid.*, pp. 155-156.

64. *Ibid.*, pp. 160-163.

## CHAPTER VI

# OPPOSITION AND THE MOTION

## CHAPTER VI

### OPPOSITION AND THE MOTION

#### **Opposition's Role in Adjournment Motions, No-Confidence Motion and Censure Motion.**

The term 'Motion' has a wide connotation in parliamentary procedure. The term refers to, in a restricted sense, those special proceedings which provide an opportunity for consideration by the House in which is moved some specific matter, policy or operation of the Government.

A motion is a proposal made by a member to the House that the House do something or order something to be done or express an opinion with regard to some matter. In the words of May, "A Motion is a proposal made for the purpose of eliciting a decision of the House".<sup>1</sup> A Motion is the generic name given to any proposal submitted to the House for formal decision.<sup>2</sup>

In Mizoram Legislative Assembly, the general rule is that a motion on a matter of general public interest can be discussed with the consent of the Speaker.<sup>3</sup> Notice of a motion is required to be given in writing that is addressed to the Secretary of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly. No Member shall, except with the permission of the Speaker, be permitted to send notice of more than three motions during one session of the Assembly. If the number of motions admitted by the Speaker is more than one, a ballot shall have to be held for giving precedence to a particular motion.<sup>4</sup>

In order that a motion may be admissible, it should raise substantially one definite issue; not contain arguments; inferences, ironical

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1. Erskine May, *Op. Cit.*, p. 382.

2. Gilbert Campion, *An Introduction to the Procedure of the House of Commons*, Macmillan and Co.Ltd., London, 1958, p. 20.

3. *Rule* 139(1)

4. *Ibid.*, 139(2)

expression, imputations or defamatory statements; avoid reference to the conduct or character of persons except in their public capacity; be restricted to a matter of recent occurrence; not raise a question of privilege; not revive discussion of a matter which has been discussed in the same session; not anticipate discussion of matter which is likely to be discussed in the same session; not relate to any matter which is under adjudication of a Court of law having jurisdiction in any part of India; and not relate to a matter which is not primarily concern of the Government of Mizoram.<sup>5</sup>

No motion which seeks to raise discussion on a matter pending before any statutory tribunal or statutory authority performing any judicial or quasi-judicial functions or any commission or Court of enquiry appointed to enquire into or investigation, any matter shall ordinarily be permitted to be moved, although the Speaker may, in his discretion, allow such matter being raised in the House as is concerned with the procedure or subject or stage of inquiry, if the Speaker is satisfied that it is not likely to prejudice the consideration of such matter by the statutory tribunal, statutory authority, Commission of Court of enquiry.<sup>6</sup>

The Speaker decides on the admissibility of a motion and may disallow a motion or a part thereof. The Speaker may prescribe a time limit for speeches.

A motion shall not raise a question substantially identical with one on which the Assembly has given a decision in the same session. The Speaker's decision on the point whether the question is substantially identical with the previous one shall be final. When substantially identical motions stand in the names of two or more members, the Speaker, unless the members have agreed, shall decide whose motion shall be moved and the other motions shall thereupon be deemed to be withdrawn.<sup>7</sup>

As regards the discussion of a motion, the following procedure is followed. On being called by the Speaker, the member in whose name the motion stands on the list of business formally moves the motion and makes his speech. Thereafter, the Speaker places the motion before the House. Amendments or substitute motions, as the case may be, if any, are

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5. *Ibid.*, 139 (3).

6. *Ibid.*, 140.

7. *Ibid.*, 286.

then moved by members and discussion follows. After the members and the Minister concerned have participated in the discussion, the mover of the motion may speak again by way of reply. The amendments and substitute motions, if any, are put to vote of the House and disposed of, after which the main motion may be put to the vote of the House. If the motion is adopted by the House, it is transmitted to the Minister concerned.<sup>8</sup> A member who has moved an original motion or an amendment may withdraw the same with the leave of the House.<sup>9</sup>

The following pages would examine the Adjournment Motions, No-Confidence Motion and Censure Motion moved by the Opposition members.

### ***Adjournment Motion***

In ancient Greece, Assemblies were adjourned at once to honour the Divine disapproval found in the forms of storm, earthquake and eclipse.<sup>10</sup> A modern Assembly is not superstitious to wait for divine disapproval to adjourn its session. Rules have been framed to guide them as to when and how the Assembly can be adjourned. G. V. Mavalankar, the first Speaker of Lok Sabha explained the scope of an adjournment motion in his ruling in the Provisional Parliament on 21<sup>th</sup> March, 1950, “The crucial test always is as to whether the question proposed to be raised has arisen suddenly and created an emergent situation of such a character that there is prima facie case of urgency and the House must therefore leave aside all other business and take up the consideration of the urgent matter at the appointed hour. The urgency must be of such a character that the matter really brooks no delay and should be discussed on the same day the notice has been given”.<sup>11</sup>

The motion for adjournment is a motion for an adjournment of the business of the House for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance with the consent of the Speaker. The essence of an adjournment motion is that it is necessary to change the programme of

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8. *Ibid.*, 292.

9. *Ibid.*, 288.

10. Will Durrant, *The Story of Civilization* (Part II): *Life of Greece*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1939, p. 256.

11. M.N. Kaul and S.L. Shakhder, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 444 - 445.

business to discuss some recently occurring matter of emergency and to give precedence to it over the programme of business through an adjournment motion. The matter sought to be brought before the House is so urgent that it can no longer wait and it is more important than the business already fixed for the day. May has observed that, “the adjournment motion is designed to give the discussion of some recently occurring matter of emergency precedence over the programme of business previously arranged”.<sup>12</sup>

The primary object of an adjournment motion is to draw the attention of the Government to a matter of urgent public importance so as to criticise the decision of the Government in an urgent matter in regard to which a motion or resolution with proper notice will be too late.<sup>13</sup> Ranajit Basu mentioned the two purposes of adjournment motion as (a) with a view to censure the Ministry; and (b) with a view to focus the attention of the House to specific events of urgent public importance.<sup>14</sup>

An adjournment motion is moved, generally, with a view to getting information from the Government, raising discussion on a matter or censuring the administration. Besides eliciting information, adjournment motion facilitates immediate discussion of specific issues. Adjournment motion, therefore, offers ample opportunity to the Opposition to go into the entire problem and point out the callousness in the Government and its complacency.

In Mizoram Legislative Assembly, any member, with the consent of the Speaker, can move an adjournment motion for adjournment of the business of the Assembly for discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance. The Speaker shall decide whether the matter to be discussed is definite and it is of urgent public importance.<sup>15</sup>

The right to move an adjournment motion shall be subject to the following conditions:-

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12. Erskine May, *Op.Cit.*, p. 327.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 443.

14. Ranajit Basu, *Speaker's Rulings and Decisions*, Biswa Jnan, Calcutta, 1983, p. 163.

15. *Rule 61*.

- (a) not more than one such motion shall be made at the same sitting;
- (b) not more than one matter can be discussed on the same motion, and the motion must be restricted to a specific matter of recent occurrence;
- (c) the motion must not revive discussion on a matter which has been discussed in the same session;
- (d) the motion must not anticipate a matter which has been previously appointed for consideration, or with reference to which a notice of motion has been previously given;
- (e) the motion must not deal with a matter on which a resolution could not be moved;
- (f) the motion shall not deal with any matter which is under adjudication by a Court of Law having jurisdiction in any part of India;
- (g) the motion shall not raise a question of privilege; and
- (h) the motion must not relate to a matter which is not primarily the concern of the Government of Mizoram.<sup>16</sup>

A member has to submit notice of an adjournment motion, before the commencement of the sitting of the day on which the motion is proposed to be moved, to the Speaker, the Minister concerned and the Secretary of the Assembly.<sup>17</sup> If the Speaker gives his consent that the matter proposed is in order, he asks the member who gives the notice for adjournment to rise in his place and ask for leave to move the adjournment of the House. If the Speaker refused to give his consent or is of opinion that the matter proposed to be discussed is not in order, he may, if he thinks it necessary, read the notice of motion and state the reason for refusing consent or holding the motion as being not in order.

In case an objection to leave being granted is taken, the Speaker requests those members who are in favour of leave being granted to rise in their seats. If at least six members rise accordingly, the Speaker declared that leave is granted.<sup>18</sup>

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16. *Ibid.*, 62.

17. *Ibid.*, 63.

18. *Ibid.*, 65.

The motion shall be taken up at such hour as the Speaker may decide. The Speaker also prescribes time limit for speeches to each members. A maximum of two hours of debate is allowed.

At the appointed hour fixed by the Speaker, the mover moves his motion and speaks. Then other members and Ministers speak. The mover of the motion has a right to reply. The Minister concerned may speak after the mover has replied with the permission of the Speaker whether he has previously participated in the debate or not. On the conclusion of the debate, the Speaker shall put the motion to the vote of the House. The result of the division shall be announced by the Speaker.<sup>19</sup>

As the motion of adjournment interrupts the regular business and consumes much time of the House, the Speaker has been very strict in admitting such motions. The use of adjournment motion as a device for discussion on matters of urgent public important has been very sparingly permitted. If the motion is adopted by the House, it indicates a strong disapproval of the policy of the Government and has the effect of a censure motion.

On 7<sup>th</sup> November, 1994, Lalrinchhana of MNF tabled an adjournment motion which sought to discuss the decisions and assurances made by the Chief Minister of Mizoram with the Chief Minister of Assam on 16<sup>th</sup> October, 1994 at Kumbigram Airport, Silchar, Assam. After Question Hour, the members of the Opposition insisted on taking up the motion for discussion on the same day. The Speaker did not agree on the ground that he would give his ruling on the admissibility of the motion after due consideration. He further said that the Home Minister would make a statement on the issue on the floor of the House. A battle of words took place between the members of the Opposition and the ruling members on the question on the admissibility of the motion.

Even after the Home Minister made a statement on the matter, members of the Opposition were dissatisfied and insisted upon the discussion of an adjournment motion being allowed. There were noisy

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19. *Ibid.*, 316.

exchanges which led to an obstruction in the disposal of regular business. The Speaker adjourned the House for 30 minutes due to pandemonium created by the Opposition. The House re-assembled after 30 minutes but again the Speaker adjourned the House for one hour.

When the House re-assembled, the Opposition members continued with the demand that the motion should be discussed in the House. However, the Speaker was not prepared to give in to the Opposition's compulsion. The decision of the Speaker provoked the Opposition and as a mark of protest, the entire Opposition members there - upon staged a walk-out of the House and boycotted the proceedings of the House for the rest of the day.<sup>20</sup> However, the adjournment motion was discussed on 9<sup>th</sup> November, 1994.

Replying to the motion, Lalthanhawla, Chief Minister, said there was a need to go into the causes of the incident. A ghastly incident had taken place on 26<sup>th</sup> September, 1994 near Bhaga Bazar, Cachar District of Assam in which five non-Mizo desperadoes stabbed one Mizo driver, Lalsangzuala, who later succumbed to the injuries. The news of the murder spread like a wildfire out of control in Mizoram, sparking a rampage by a mob. The mob resorted to violent and arson at Aizawl and spread to different places in Mizoram. It had been reported that about 5 shops were set on fire, 92 other shops were looted which caused considerable damage to properties and 55 vehicles were also damaged. In a retaliatory gesture, National Highway - 54, which connects Mizoram with Assam and the main life line of Mizoram, was blocked. The road block adversely affected the people of Mizoram, leaving hundreds of Mizo and vehicles stranded at Cachar District.

The Chief Minister further said that the Government has time and again appealed to all concerned to eschew violence and not to do anything which might infringe communal harmony and the unity and integrity of the country. As regards to finding a solution, he said that despite various difficulties, the Government had all along made an honest and sincere effort in these matters. Two rounds of tripartite talks, involving the Government

20. *PMLA, Fourth Session, 1994*, p. 38.

of Mizoram, the Government of Assam and the Government of India, were held on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> October, 1994 at Silchar and Kumbigram Airport, Silchar, respectively, in which some agreements had been reached like reopening of National Highway- 54 and payment of compensation to the affected families on the basis of the reports made by the Gupta Commission, constituted by the Government of Mizoram for this purpose.<sup>21</sup>

At the end of the discussion, the Speaker moved substitute motion in the following form - “The House do approve the decisions and assurances made by the Chief Minister, Mizoram, with that of the Chief Minister, Assam, on the 16<sup>th</sup> October, 1994”.<sup>22</sup> The motion was put to the vote of the House and was adopted.

Another adjournment motion moved by R. Tlanghmingthanga of MNF was tabled to discuss the deportation of Chakma foreigners from Mizoram before December, 1995. The discussion of the motion took place on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1995.

Supporting the motion, F. Malsawma of MNF said that in the western belt of Mizoram, the local population has been turned into a minority community over time by the sheer number of cross-border migrants from Bangladesh. The trend of illegal migrants from Bangladesh changed the demographic composition of certain areas and turned those areas into Chakma majority region. It may be only a matter of time before a demand for a merger of that region with Bangladesh is made.<sup>23</sup>

Lalkhama of MNF said that the last forty years recorded very high growth rate of Chakma population in Mizoram which indicated massive illegal migrants of Chakma from Bangladesh. The decadal population growth rate of Chakma in Mizoram was 59 % during 1951 - 1961; between 1961 - 1971, it was 20 %; between 1971 - 1981, it was 77 % and between 1981 - 1991, it was 34 %. The growth rate of all-India population during 1981 - 1991 was 22 %. It appeared that the growth rate of Chakma population in Mizoram has been far higher than the all-India aggregate. Such abnormal

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21. *Ibid.*, pp. 61-67.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

23. *PMLA, Sixth Session*, 1995, p. 40.

and very high growth rate can be attributed only to illegal immigrants of Chakma from Bangladesh.<sup>24</sup>

In the absence of the Chief Minister, Home Minister, J. Lalsangzuala replied to the motion and said that the problem faced by Mizoram has been the same that confronted by other States having international borders. The Government was taking determined steps to curb infiltrations and deport illegal immigrants. Moreover, the motion contained communal tendencies which could spread the virus of communalism in Mizoram. It might cause a sentiment of hatred and animosity towards a particular community. Besides, the motion demanded a time bound action programme for the Government and it is impossible for the Government to implement within a short period of time. He, therefore, requested the mover to withdraw the motion.<sup>25</sup> The mover refused to withdraw the motion and the motion was put to the vote of the House and was negatived.

On 23<sup>th</sup> March, 1998, an adjournment motion was moved by Zoramthanga of MNF on “the stoppage of fund release by the Reserve Bank of India to the Government of Mizoram”. Moving the motion, Zoramthanga said that the Reserve Bank of India announced through Radio and Television that no payment was made to the Government of Mizoram due to too much overdraft. He alleged that the State’s finances were in shambles because of the wrong policy followed or pursued by the Government. Its wrong financial policy had caused stagnation in development activities. The masses of Mizoram are living in a state of penury and great distress in many parts of the State. The Government had forfeited its right to continue in office as its extravagance and wasteful expenditure had emptied the State exchequer. If the present Ministry had any sense of self-respect, it would have resigned immediately.<sup>26</sup>

Supporting the motion, Lalhmingthanga of MJD vehemently criticised the Government’s financial policy. He bitterly criticised on the unnecessary heavy expenditure and extravagant expenditure. The

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24. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

26. *PMLA, Fifteenth Session, 1998*, pp. 122-123.

Government had brought the State to bankruptcy and development activities were at a standstill. So long as the financial policy remains what it is, the Government would bring the State to the verge of economic collapse. He contended that it would be in the interest of the State if the Government could be moved out in the shortest possible time.<sup>27</sup>

Lalsawta of MNF said that the State was passing through turbulent times due to the wrong financial policy followed by the Government. The shortfall was mostly due to heavy expenditure. To keep down the level of expenditure, he advocated rigorous policy of retrenchment. He emphasised the need to reduce unnecessary expenditure of all the Government departments.<sup>28</sup>

Participating in the discussion, the Chief Minister said that Mizoram was not the only State with an overdraft problem; other States too had overdraft problems. Being a poor State entirely depending upon the Central Government, it was not a surprise to have overdraft of Rs 16 crores and deficit amounting to Rs 117 crores. He expressed the hope that the Central Government would come forward to redress the financial problem of Mizoram.<sup>29</sup>

Replying to the motion, the Finance Minister, J. Lalsangzuala admitted that he was responsible for an overdraft problem as he used to release fund in excess. The entire provision of Mizoram Budget is sustained by the Central support. He assured the House that all necessary efforts were being taken to solve the financial problem. He sought the cooperation of all the members, irrespective of their party affiliations, for the State's development.<sup>30</sup>

At the end of the discussion, the mover of the motion said that his purpose had been served and he did not want to press for it any more. The motion was hence withdrawn.

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27. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 132-134.

An adjournment motion is a procedure resorted to by the Opposition members to claim the attention of the House on any matter which they wish to raise. It is used by the Opposition members to hold the Government to account for its lapses and faults in the day to day functions. An adjournment motion is intended to ensure that public grievances may be ventilated and the Government was compelled to give a satisfactory answer. As Laski puts it, “the power to ventilate grievance means the power to compel attention to grievance. A Government that is compelled to explain itself under cross examination will do its best to avoid the grounds of complaint. Nothing makes responsible government so sure”.<sup>31</sup>

During the period of our study, many of the adjournment motions tabled by the Opposition members were found to be rejected by the Speaker on the ground that they were not concerned with specific matter of recent occurrence. As the term ‘specific matter of recent occurrence’ has not been properly defined and explained, what appeared specific matter of recent occurrence to the Opposition members appeared not so to the Speaker and hence rejected the adjournment motions. Further, the Speaker’s power to decide whether a subject was a fit one for adjournment motion inflicted severe damage to the Opposition’s motions. Many of the adjournment motions tabled by the Opposition members were rejected by the Speaker with this discretionary power. The study shows that at the time of discussion on all adjournment motions, the two Opposition parties unanimously criticised the Government for its failure to solve the problems of the State. The speeches from the opposition bench were effective as the Minister concerned made statements on the facts of the cases. The adjournment motion has enabled the Opposition to keep the Government on its toes and call for explanation on vital matters of public importance. An adjournment motion enables the Opposition members to ventilate grievances, seek redressal and extract information and assurances from the Government. It makes the Government realise that its functioning is under close scrutiny and it is accountable for its performance.

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31. Harold J. Laski, *Op. Cit.*, p. 149.

## ***No-Confidence Motion***

Parliamentary procedures provide several constitutional devices to the Opposition to ventilate public grievances, namely, Question Hour, Adjournment Motion, Cut Motion, Calling Attention Notice, Short Duration Discussion, Debates on various matters of public importance, Discussion on Budget, Demands for Grants, No-Confidence Motion etc. Among them, the most effective and dreadful instrument which the Opposition can avail is the No-Confidence Motion. No-Confidence Motion is the most direct and decisive weapon in the hands of the Opposition to oust the government from power by defeating it on the floor of the House. A No-Confidence Motion also implies that the House does not have faith in the policies and activities of the Government.

A No-Confidence Motion is a legislative attempt to withdraw support given to the Government. It is an effective weapon in the hands of the Opposition to make a frontal attack on the Government since the activity of the government as a whole is brought under review. The Government stands trial and the attention of the public is directed on the issue raised during the discussion. Failure on the part of the ruling members to counter the charges made by the Opposition results in the loss of prestige to the Government. Discussion of No-Confidence Motion, in spite of the remote possibility of voting a government out of power, has the effect of inducing the government to re-assess its performances and reconsider its policies and programmes.

While using this powerful weapon of No-Confidence Motion, the Opposition in Mizoram Legislative Assembly was fully conscious of its value and this weapon was rarely used. In the history of Mizoram Legislative Assembly during 1972 to 1998, only four No-Confidence Motions were moved.

Under Rule 141 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Mizoram Legislative Assembly, a motion of expressing want of confidence in the whole Ministry or a motion censuring a Minister or a

group of Ministers or a motion disapproving the action or actions of a Minister may be made with the consent of the Speaker. In Mizoram Legislative Assembly, a motion of No-Confidence should be moved against the Ministry as a whole and not against an individual Minister, although the action of a particular Minister can be the cause of the motion.

The consent of the Speaker regarding No-Confidence Motion is subject to the following conditions:-

- (a) the member desiring to move the motion has, before the commencement of the sitting of the day, to give a written notice to the Secretary of the Legislative Assembly of his intention to move the motion together with a copy of the motion;
- (b) leave to make the motion has been asked for the questions and before the list of business of the day is entered upon.<sup>32</sup>

If the motion is found in order, the Speaker reads the motion to the Assembly and requests those members who are in favour of leave being granted to rise in their places. The motion can be admitted if it is supported by at least six members of the House. The Speaker intimates that leave is granted and that the motion is taken on such day, not being more than ten days and not less than twenty four hours from the time at which leave is asked, as he may appoint.<sup>33</sup>

The Speaker at the appointed hour on the allotted day or the last of the allotted days, as the case may be, forthwith put every question necessary to determine the decision of the House on the motion. The Speaker may also prescribe a time limit for speeches.<sup>34</sup> The fate of a No-Confidence Motion is decided by voting at the end of the debate. After a No-Confidence Motion has been discussed and negatived by the House, another No-Confidence Motion cannot be moved in the same session.

The Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Mizoram Legislative Assembly have not prescribed any specific form and contents

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32. *Rule* 141 (2).

33. *Ibid.*, 141 (3).

34. *Ibid.*, 141 (6).

of a motion of No-Confidence and the members are at liberty to move such motion without setting out the specific grounds for the lack of confidence in the Council of Ministers. However, the records of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly revealed that the motions of No-Confidence have been submitted in either of the two forms: - (a) a detailed motion, or (b) a single line motion. A detailed motion of No-Confidence sets out the grounds for lack of confidence; whereas a single line motion need not mention the grounds. It is evident from the records that out of a total of four No-Confidence Motions moved during 1972 - 1998, only one motion of 1972 was submitted in a detailed form.

During the period under study, only one No-Confidence Motion was moved by the Opposition. On 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1998, the Speaker informed the House that he had received a notice of motion of No-Confidence in the Council of Ministers from the Leader of the Opposition, Zoramthanga. The motion read as: “That this House expresses its lack of confidence in the Council of Ministers”. The Speaker requested those members who were in favour of leave being granted to the motion to raise their hands. As 11 members had raised their hands in support of the motion, the Speaker announced that leave of the House was granted. He added that the discussion on the motion might be taken up the next day, i.e., 30<sup>th</sup> July, 1998 at 10:30 A.M.

The Government faced a No-Confidence Motion a few months before the Assembly election. The immediate context of the No-Confidence was the reports of the Assembly Committee to Enquire into Greater Lunglei Water Supply Scheme (GLWSS) on the various allegations made on the floor of the House from time to time. The charges were not new but they were placed forcefully and with profuse data from the written reports of the Assembly Committee that crores of public money have been wasted on account of defective contractual agreements between the Government of Mizoram and M/S Subhash Project and Marketing Limited, Calcutta. Moving the motion on 30<sup>th</sup> July, 1998, Zoramthanga said that he was distressed and hesitant to bring the motion at the fag-end of the term of the Assembly when only three months remained. However, the motion was borne out of

the deep sense of responsibility towards the people of Mizoram as not doing so would amount to the betrayal of the people. It was not a question of trial of strength and lust for power but a matter for discussion of the misdeeds of the Government on the floor of the House. If the present Government continued to persist its destructive wrong policy, it would not only be bad for the present but would be bad for the future as well. He pointed out the case of GLWSS under Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) and alleged that it was a case of wide controversy. In the course of replies to the Assembly Starred Question No.43 asked by F. Malsawma of MNF on 16<sup>th</sup> September, 1996, relating to alleged irregularities in the matter of implementation of GLWSS, the Minister-in-charge PHED submitted to the House for constitution of an Assembly Committee to enquire into various allegations made on the floor of the House. After hearing the deliberation and with the consent of the House, the Speaker constituted a Committee called 'Assembly Committee to Enquire into Greater Lunglei Water Supply Scheme', with a view to unearthing the actual facts of the case under the Chairmanship of Lalbiakzuala of Congress with six other members on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1996 with an instruction to submit its report within six months. The Committee, however, could not submit its report within a stipulated period of six months. The Speaker extended the term of the Committee six times. Finally, the Committee submitted its report to the Speaker on 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1997 and the same was laid on the Table of the House on 21<sup>th</sup> November, 1997. However, as there had not been proper discussion of this report, the public was not well-informed of the GLWSS and other related matters.

Quoting from the Enquiry Committee Report, Zoramthanga said that *Turnkey tender\** was called in March, 1989 amounting to Rs 810.00 lakhs for the execution of GLWSS. The Work Advisory Board (WAB) recommended M/S Subhash Project and Marketing Limited, Calcutta, who offered the lowest evaluated tender price of Rs 12,44,39,313.00, much higher than the tender amount. The recommendation of the WAB for award of contract with M/S Subhash Project and Marketing Limited was put to

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\* *Turnkey Tender* denotes that there would be pre-arranged price of the project which would be paid at the completion of the project.

the Chief Minister for his approval since the concerned Minister was abroad and the same was approved on 20<sup>th</sup> September, 1989. The contractor was paid an interest free advance of Rs 124.44 lakhs. According to the work order issued, the contractor was to start the work on 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1989 and complete it within three years. However, the work was started on 19<sup>th</sup> October, 1990. The contractor got a direct benefit of Rs 91.17 lakhs by way of interest at the bank rate besides keeping Government money more than one year, not utilising for the purpose for which it was sanctioned or paid.

Pointing out the defective contractual agreements between the Government of Mizoram and M/S Subhash Project and Marketing Limited, Zoramthanga said that the contractor was unduly favoured through its terms and conditions. The agreement was prepared by the contractor and simply signed by the representatives of the Government of Mizoram as its terms and conditions are such as imposing heavy duties on the Government of Mizoram while at the same time the contractor has almost nothing to lose. This agreement is suspected to be a result of fraud perpetrated jointly by the representatives of the Government of Mizoram and that of the company. Timely payment shall constitute to be the essence of the contract and all payment shall be released within 12 days on the presentation of the bills. Any delay of payment beyond 15 days, the contractor will claim for idle time at the rate of Rs 12,475.00 per day.

The project could not be completed within the stipulated time, and instead of penalising the contractor for delay in completion of the project, the time for completion of the work for the project was extended three times. In each of the three intimations for the extension, the contractor had been clearly informed that no price variation escalation will be entertained after 9<sup>th</sup> October, 1992; that is escalation on cost of materials and labour will be fully borne by the contractor and no further claims of interest will be entertained for delayed payment beyond the said date. In spite of all these, the contractor had been paid Rs 1,59,29,818.00 on price variation charges and Rs 3,85,521.00 on delayed payment after 9<sup>th</sup> October,

1992. Besides, the contractor was claiming an amount of Rs 8,53,34,649.88 as outstanding dues.

He further said that the Government of Mizoram appeared to be lending a deaf ear to all the hue and cry in the Legislative Assembly since 1991 and continued making payments to the contractor till the constitution of the Assembly Committee in October, 1996. The tolerance of the Government towards the contractor has been indeed remarkable. It appeared that the Minister, including the Chief Minister, who did not appear to intervene in the matter, did not function meaningfully as being responsible for executive actions of the Government.

Zoramthanga further alleged that the Chief Minister had been patronising the contractor against the interests of the people of the State. It was a clear case of systematic loot of public money over the years thereby resulting in heavy losses to crores of Rupees to the State exchequer. He, however, heaved a sigh of relief at the forthcoming Assembly general election which, he was sure, would be the real no-confidence of the people and the waterloo for the Congress party.<sup>35</sup>

The debate was extremely bitter with personal allegations being thrown against each other. The subject matter of the No-Confidence Motion was a highly personalised charge of corruption. B. Lalthlengliana of MNF accused the Chief Minister of misusing his position to make money and favour non-Mizo contractors and suppliers involving crores of rupees. He said that contract and supply orders were issued to non-Mizo in return for favour. These favours included renovation of Mizoram State Guest House, Guwahati, amounting to Rs 40 lakhs with the Chief Minister receiving 40 % as kickbacks. He also accused the Government of nepotism as the relatives of the Ministers were always getting benefits through various acts of omissions and commissions. He further pointed out that the assessment of requirements by the Public Works Department was wide off the mark and saw no justification of the surplus stores of hammers for unduly long period for 40 years.<sup>36</sup>

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35. *PMLA, Seventeenth Session*, 1998, pp. 1224-1226.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 1233-1235.

Lalsawta of MNF said that the motion was being moved with a view to bringing to the notice of the august House and also to the people, as to how the Congress Government was running the affairs of the State. Referring to the proverbial saying 'where there is no vision, people perished', he observed that because of the Chief Minister's short sightedness and lack of vision, there continued inefficiency and rampant corruption. He also accused the Government's failure in financial management and as a result of which the State has been brought to an economic crisis due to extravagant and heavy expenditure. Quoting the report of Comptroller and Auditor General, he said that the Government of Mizoram created liabilities to the tune of Rs 200 crores within one year. If one look into the performances of the Government, then one could say that this Government should not stay any longer.<sup>37</sup>

F. Malsawma of MNF pointed out financial irregularities and misappropriation of funds. He accused the Government of purchasing lands at exorbitant rates. He cited several examples to prove the charges. The Government has purchased land at Silchar, Assam, for Transport Department for Rs 60 lakhs whereas the actual price was Rs 50 lakhs. Likewise, the estimated cost of land at Mualpui, Aizawl was Rs 18 lakhs, but the Government purchased that land at a very high amount of Rs 61 lakhs. The estimated expenditure for the construction of Sesawng playground was Rs 5 lakhs - Rs 9 lakhs, but the actual expenditure incurred on it was Rs 55 lakhs. He pressed the Government to explain the reasons for the heavy expenditures. Whenever such cases of irregularities came to light, he noticed, efforts were made to explain them away, instead of making efforts to locate the defects, punish and charge the defaulters, with the result that there was no fear of the authority and cases of irregularities went on mounting.<sup>38</sup>

Lalrinchhana of MNF said that the Government did not govern the State with the popular will of the people as it was a minority Government because it enjoyed the support of 8 defectors. He accused the Government of having assumed power through the back door and for having encouraged

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37. *Ibid.*, pp. 1237-1239.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 1243-1244.

defection of members. The combination of defectors and the Congress, with no common policies and programmes, would solve none of the basic problems of the State. People expected a clean and efficient rule and the Government had failed to achieve the progress of the State. The present Government had utterly failed in providing an efficient administration and charged the Government of being incapable of running the State.<sup>39</sup>

Supporting the motion, Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD criticised the Government for its alleged lacklustre performances and its failure to provide clean, efficient, corrupt-free and transparent administration. He also expressed the view that other States had left Mizoram behind in the race for progress. He said that the number of unemployed persons in the State had been increasing continuously and the problem emerged as the biggest challenge for the State. He vehemently criticised the Government and alleged that the Government had nothing to offer to solve the growing unemployment problem.<sup>40</sup>

R. Tlanghmingthanga of MNF drew the attention of the House that the State's law and order situation had deteriorated over the past few years following a sharp rise in incidents of murder and the police had failed to apprehend the culprits. It was an utter failure and negligence on the part of the administration. He also referred to the alarming situation in the western belt of Mizoram where large scale inclusion of foreign nationals in the electoral rolls took place. Detection and deportation of foreign infiltrators remained an insuperable problem because of the patronage of the ruling party.<sup>41</sup>

F. Lalremsiama of MNF said that the Government had promised a clean and efficient administration and also assured that measures would be taken to prevent corruption and favouritism and to probe the corrupt charges against the defaulters. However, the Government had deviated from these promises and was deceiving the people with false promises. It belied the expectations of the people. Referring to nepotism, he said that in all developmental programmes, the benefits had been harvested by the relatives of the Ministers and members of the ruling party.<sup>42</sup>

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39. *Ibid.*, pp. 1259-1260.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 1264-1266.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 1281-1283.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 1296.

Dr. R. Lalthangliana of MNF admonished the Government for its financial mismanagement. The Government was accused of inaction and held responsible for the increase in civil expenditure and particularly unproductive non-plan civil expenditure. His speech was a strong indictment of the Government's heavy and extravagant expenditure. During this four years period, complaints were repeatedly made by the Opposition members that expenditure was growing too fast and the burden of debt was weighing heavily. Despite criticism, the expenditure went up year after year. According to the latest report of the Comptroller and Auditor General, the liabilities of the Mizoram Government as on 31<sup>th</sup> March, 1998 stood at Rs 67,165 lakhs. He brought up certain cases of wasteful expenditure. Referring to Serlui 'B' Hydel Project, he said that the original estimate was Rs 4,156 lakhs and the expenditure incurred on it so far was Rs 544 lakhs. However, the project has been abandoned. The original estimate for the construction of Lengpui Airport was Rs 450 lakhs while the actual expenditure had been Rs 10,101 lakhs. He also pointed out that the total expenditure for the purchase of lands during 1989 - 1998 had been Rs 11, 272 lakhs. He accused the Chief Minister of expensive life style by spending Rs 136 lakhs for his travelling expenses. He also referred to the murder of Lalnghakliana and Lalventhanga and the spate of killings in Lunglei and Aizawl Districts to show how bad the law and order situation was in the State. Emphasising his concern about unnecessary and unproductive expenditures, he charged the Government with not having paid due regard to the interests of the people. He said that the Government had throughout ignored constructive suggestions offered by the Opposition members for improving the economy in expenditure. The Government has no moral right to continue in office as it had brought the State to bankruptcy.<sup>43</sup>

Taking part in the debate, Lalhmingthanga of MJD said Mizoram has abundant water resources to produce hydel power. He charged the Government by surrendering all major hydel projects like Tuirial, Tuivai, Chhimtuipui and Tlawng to central sector and only 12% of the royalty belonged to Mizoram. It is a matter of regret that the Chief Minister and

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43. *Ibid.*, pp. 1311-1314.

Power and Electricity Minister gave a misleading picture of the situation. He cautioned the Government that it would never be forgiven by the coming generations for such surrender. He further pointed out that the financial position of the Government was in the doldrums and the Government was functioning with loans and overdrafts from the Central Government and Reserve Bank of India. Due to the wasteful and heavy expenditures by the Government, each and every person in the State, even a new born baby, had been burdened with a liability of Rs 9,949.71. Moreover, these expenditures overlooked the real needs of the people and not responsive to the public demands.<sup>44</sup>

Replying to the debate, the Chief Minister, Lalthanhawla said that he was happy to listen to the valuable views, suggestions and constructive criticisms given by the members. He thanked the Opposition members for bringing the motion as it provided him a chance to highlight the achievements of his Government. He admitted that as human beings, they did not claim infallibility. He rebutted all the charges and accusations levelled against his Government. He repudiated Opposition's charges that wasteful expenditure had emptied the State's exchequer. In order to curb excess and extravagant expenditure, the Government was taking austerity measures to reduce expenditure by constituting Departmental Purchase Boards (DPB). The DPB ensured that the funds asked for expenditure were properly estimated and expended and keep control over expenditure. As regards corruption, whenever charges of corruption were levelled against any officers, the Government has shown promptness in taking every action against the defaulting officers after instituting enquiry against them. His Government was determined to root out corruption and claimed that the Government's campaign against corruption was not a propaganda stunt but a sincere and earnest effort to cleanse public life. New Districts had been created and new Civil Sub-Divisions were also to be created soon. Regarding GLWSS, he said that an Enquiry Committee had been constituted and its report was already submitted. His Government had never hidden facts from the public and there was no proof of misappropriation of funds.

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44. *Ibid.*, pp. 1331-1333.

He enumerated the State's achievements during the previous four years and the State was going to have an Airport at Lengpui and National Highways. Efforts had been made to upgrade all roads in the State as per international standards. The Government had taken steps to open inter-State roads linking Mizoram with Tripura, Assam and Manipur. The Government also tries to remove anomalies in the electoral rolls. He further said that NLUP had been introduced in place of the traditional jhumming system to modernise the agricultural policy. The Government had left no stone unturned in pursuing the matter of solving unemployment problem and the Government intended to provide training to educated youth.<sup>45</sup>

The motion was debated for 10 hours and 46 minutes in which 32 members participated. The motion, when put to vote, was defeated with 24 members voting against and 12 members voted in favour.

The study shows that the Opposition proved incapable of using the No-Confidence Motion effectively. But surprisingly, the two hostile groups of the Opposition, MNF and MJD, were united in their attack on the Government. In the course of the discussion and at the voting of the motion, the combined Opposition maintained unity.

The apathetic attitude of the Government was demonstrated by the fact that out of the total strength of 28 ruling members, 24 members voted against the motion. This has indicated that there were differences of opinions among the ruling members.

It would be clear that the Congress party enjoyed comfortable majority in the Assembly and in fact there is no question of getting the motion carried, even if the Opposition had united. The Opposition did not refrain from using the No-Confidence Motion when their numerical strength was far more inferior against the total strength of the ruling party. The use of the No-Confidence Motion leads us to the conclusion that the motion was motivated by a desire to censure the Council of Ministers rather than to press for alternative Government.

A question may arise here as to why a No-Confidence Motion was moved by the Opposition at the fag-end of the Assembly term. Why

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45. *Ibid.*, pp. 1344-1352

did the Opposition actually bring the motion? Was it in order to overthrow the ruling party and form an alternative government? A true answer can be measured by the fact that a No-Confidence Motion was used by the Opposition indirectly as a preparation for the next Assembly election and the motion provided an opportunity to frame its strategy. Under the pretext of this No-Confidence Motion, the Opposition had indeed started their election campaign and the motion was brought to create propaganda against the Government to gain political mileage for the forthcoming Assembly general election.

### ***Censure Motion***

There is no separate provision for moving a Censure Motion in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly. It can be moved in any form convenient to the members. This procedure is distinct from No-Confidence Motion. A motion censuring a Minister or a group of Ministers or a motion disapproving the action or actions of a Minister may be made with the consent of the Speaker.<sup>46</sup> A Censure Motion has to set out the charges or the grounds on which it is made and is moved for specific purpose of censuring an individual Minister or a group of Ministers for certain definite commissions or omissions. All that is required for a member is to give a written notice of the motion to the Speaker. The Speaker may admit the motion without fixing a date for its discussion. Leave of the House is not required for moving a Censure Motion. A Censure Motion does not get any priority.

In the history of Mizoram Legislative Assembly, only one Censure Motion was moved and it was during the period of our study. On 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1995, the Speaker admitted a Censure Motion submitted by Lalsawta of MNF against Hrangthanga Colney, Minister-in-charge of Excise Department. The discussion took place on 30<sup>th</sup> March, 1995.

Lalsawta of MNF moved a Censure Motion in the following form:- “That Shri Hrangthanga Colney, Minister-in-charge Excise Department, has failed completely to contain liquor and drugs which caused

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46. Rule 141 (1).

death to a large number of Mizo youth”.

Initiating the discussion, Lalsawta said that the widespread availability of liquor and drugs had claimed large number of lives in Mizoram. Since the Minister-in-charge of Excise Department is solely responsible, he felt it necessary to censure the Minister. Though he did not have any personal grudge against the Minister, his genuine concern and love for the people compelled him to move the motion. Besides, the Minister also holds Industries portfolio and his attention was diverted to Industries Department and thus neglecting the Excise Department. He demanded the resignation of the Minister since he failed to discharge his responsibilities effectively. He suggested that a House Committee be constituted to undertake the necessary task so that Mizoram could be saved from the menace of such social evils.<sup>47</sup>

Lalhmingthanga of MJD welcomed the motion and said it was in tune with what he called ‘people’s disenchantment’ with the liquor and drugs have spread widely in the State. He informed the House that a large quantity of liquor had been regularly transported in a petrol-tanker from Silchar to Aizawl by a holder of petrol permit named P.B.Nath, who was patronized by higher officials. The Government as well as the concerned Minister were fully aware of this matter, but due to their negligence, liquor and drugs are easily available in different places.<sup>48</sup>

F. Malsawma of MNF wanted the members to realise the seriousness of the problem and rise above party line while considering the motion. The problem of liquor and drugs had become a matter of serious concern. The censuring of Excise Minister would open our eyes and enable us to take effective steps in this regard. The efforts of the concerned Department alone are not enough for checking and controlling the spread of liquor and drugs and actions have to be taken from higher level. The moral standard of the society has deteriorated considerably and unless immediate and effective actions are taken, a bleak future awaited us in the horizon.<sup>49</sup>

47. *PMLA, Fifth Session*, 1995, pp. 406-407.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 408.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 409.

Supporting the motion, Dr. R. Lalthangliana of MNF expressed his dissatisfaction over the handling of the problem. He underlined the need to give specific attention to the problem. The destructive impact of liquor and drugs could be felt as a good number of young people have lost their lives. There is an urgent need to put up a united fight against these social evils which are destroying the society.<sup>50</sup>

The need for action against the problem of drugs and liquor has been immensely expressed by F. Lalremsiama of MNF. He said that there is no strict and painful punishment either from the public or from the Government for those who were involved in these illicit trafficking. He urged the Government to take urgent steps to contain this fatal enemy and formulate some policies to deal sternly with those who engaged in illicit trade.<sup>51</sup>

H. Thangkima of MJD criticised the apathetic and inactive stand adopted by the Government in controlling drugs and liquor. The situation was getting worse every passing day. He said that the recent years had witnessed the number of drug related death was increasing. He appealed to the Minister concerned to acknowledge the voice of the plight of countless families whose children died of drug abuse to contain the abusive substances.<sup>52</sup>

Zoramthanga of MNF said that despite the best efforts offered by each family, Churches and social organisations to control illicit liquor and drugs trafficking, the ultimate responsibility rests with the Excise Minister. High priority must be given to prevent the future spread of the two dangerous substances. He urged the concerned Minister to take necessary actions which include the formation and enforcement of new rules and regulations. It might not be possible to wipe out completely from the society, but it could be restricted to a great extent had the Excise Minister performed his obligations effectively. He also mentioned the need to sanction more funds and increased the strength of men power of Excise Department.<sup>53</sup>

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50. *Ibid.*, p. 411.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 413.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 414.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 415 - 416.

Replying to the debate, Excise Minister, Hrangthanga Colney thanked the mover of the motion and said that the various suggestions and statements made by the members could serve as the guiding factors while discharging his duties. Quoting the Medical Report, the Minister stated that alcoholism had never been the reason for the loss of life but the misuse of Proxyvon capsules seemed to be the main cause of death among the youth. According to the Excise Department Record, during 1992-1995, misuse of Proxyvon capsules have claimed 70 lives. The Government has repeatedly urged the Central Government to ban this particular drug. However, the Central Government responded by stating that drugs like Phensydyl, Corex, Proxyvon etc cannot be branded as narcotics and thus cannot be banned. The Minister informed the House that on 21<sup>th</sup> December, 1994, the District Magistrate issued an order under Rule 144 of Criminal Penal Code which empowered the police to seize and arrest the drug smugglers but no such empowerment was conferred on the Excise forces. The Excise Act, 1973 was enforced in Mizoram since 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1984. This Act prohibits the sale and import of liquor without license and a fine of not more than Rs 500/- could be imposed on the offenders.

The Minister further informed the House that lack of men power and facilities had been the problems faced by the Excise Department. In spite of limited resources available to them, in the past eight months, 50,000 capsules of Proxyvon have been seized by the Excise Department. The Minister also informed the House that he had been in-charge of Excise Department barely for eight months. He said the need of the hour was to forget internal differences and strive for creating an atmosphere of mutual confidence and harmony in the State and working towards strengthening Mizoram. The endeavour of the Government alone could not achieve the desired goal, and, therefore, the Government and the Opposition should stand united to face the challenge or the threat posed by the dreadful killers of our youth.<sup>54</sup>

Intervening in the debate, the Chief Minister, Lalthanhawla mentioned his suspicion on the possible involvement of certain officials of

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54. *Ibid.*, pp. 416 – 417.

the Excise Department in this illegal business. He admitted the Government's failure to control and check liquor and drugs due to the lack of men power, arms, vehicles and other facilities. In spite of limited facilities at its disposal, the Excise Department had made tremendous achievements. The Government has been trying its best to check and control the two chemical agents. Mere imposition of fine as punishment has been found to be quite lenient, and, therefore, strict and severe punishment should be more effective. As such, the Government decided to set up a Special Court and the approval of the Chief Justice, Gauhati High Court is awaited. This responsibility should not be left in the hands of a single Minister, instead it should be shared by all, he added.<sup>55</sup> When the motion was put to the vote of the House and was negative.

A study of the above censure motion revealed that the attitude of the Government has been fair in the sense that the time for the discussion of censure motion has not been denied. The Government, because of its unshaking majority in the Assembly, faced the motion fearlessly. The question of censuring a Minister for disapproving his actions may arise only after he has been in office for some time. But, it is astonishing that a censure motion has been tabled against a Minister who has not worked even for a year. Though defeated, the immediate objective of the motion may not have been achieved. However, the other purposes of the motion may have secured on two folds: - (a) it was hoped that the Government would searchingly review its past performances, and (b) correcting the errors of omissions and commissions of the Government.

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55. *Ibid*, pp 418 – 419.

## CHAPTER VII

# OPPOSITION AND THE RESOLUTION

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### OPPOSITION AND THE RESOLUTION

In England in the House of Commons, a distinction is drawn between Orders and Resolutions. ‘By its Orders’, as May expresses it, ‘the House directs its Committees, its members, its Officers, the order of its own proceedings and the acts of all persons whom they concern; by its resolutions, the House declares its own opinions and purposes’.<sup>1</sup> In the Indian Legislatures, no such distinction is made. Resolution means a motion for the purpose of discussing a matter of general public interest. By a resolution, the legislature merely expresses its opinion with regard to the matter before it; by its nature a resolution is only recommendatory and is not binding upon anybody.<sup>2</sup> A motion when accepted becomes a resolution, if it is in the form of a declaration of an opinion of the Legislature. Thus, a resolution is a device facilitating deliberation by which a Legislature makes a formal recommendation for action to the executive and makes known its definite views and determination on any given matter.

Resolutions may broadly be divided into three categories:-

1.     **Resolutions which are mere expression of opinion by the House:-** Since the purpose of such resolutions is merely to obtain an expression of opinion of the House, the Government is not bound to give effect to opinions expressed in these resolutions. It entirely rests on the discretion of the Government whether or not to take action suggested in such resolutions.
  
2.     **Resolutions which have statutory effect:-** The notice of a statutory resolution is given in pursuance of a provision in the Constitution or an Act of Parliament. Such a resolution, if adopted is binding on the Government and has the force of law.

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1. Erskine May, *Op. Cit.*, p. 412.

2. A.R. Mukherjee, *Parliamentary Procedure in India*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1983, p.137.

**3. Resolutions which the House passes in the matter of control of its own proceedings:** - Such a resolution has the force of law and its validity cannot be challenged in any Court of law. The House by such a resolution evolves, sometimes, its own procedure to meet a situation not specifically provided for in its Rules.<sup>3</sup>

Under the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, a resolution may be in the form of a declaration of opinion or a recommendation, or may be in the form so as to record either approval or disapproval by the House of an act or policy of Government, or convey a message; of comment, urge or request for action; or call attention to a matter or situation for consideration by Government; or in such other form as the Speaker may consider appropriate.<sup>4</sup>

Regarding the subject matter of a resolution, it should be a matter of general public interest. In order to be admissible, a resolution:-

- (a) shall be clearly and precisely expressed and shall raise one definite issue;
- (b) shall not contain arguments, inferences, ironical expressions, imputation, innuendoes or defamatory statements;
- (c) shall not refer to the conduct or character or any person except in his official or public capacity;
- (d) shall not relate to any matter which is under adjudication by a Court of law having jurisdiction in any part of India;
- (e) shall not reflect upon the conduct of the President as distinct from the Government of India or any Governor as distinct from the State Government;
- (f) shall not reflect upon the conduct in the exercise of his or its judicial functions of any judge of Court of law having jurisdiction in any part of India; and

3. M.N. Kaul and S.L. Shakdher, *Op. Cit.*, p. 577.

4. *Rule 122.*

- (g) shall not refer to a matter which is not primarily the concern of the Government of Mizoram.<sup>5</sup>

In the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business provide two kinds of Resolutions: - Private Members' Resolution and Government Resolution.

### ***Private Members' Resolution***

“Private Member” has been defined in the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly as “a member other than a Minister”.<sup>6</sup> A private member who wishes to move a resolution has to give a notice in writing, along with the copy of the resolution, at least ten clear days' before the date appointed for the disposal of private members' resolution. The notice is addressed to the Secretary of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly. No member shall, except with the permission of the Speaker, be permitted to send in notice of more than five resolutions during one session of the Assembly. Not more than one resolution in the name of a member shall be included in the order of business for the day in question, except with the permission of the Speaker.<sup>7</sup> Campion observes that resolutions by private members “are generally used to test the feeling of the House with regard to proposals which are still indefinite or ahead of public opinion”.<sup>8</sup> All such notices received by the Secretary shall be entered in the concerned Register called ‘Notice Register for Resolutions’ maintained by the Assembly Secretariat and shall be entered in a serial order for each ballot according to the date of receipt.

When notices are received, the Secretary shall submit a copy of the Resolution to the Speaker. The Speaker shall decide whether a resolution or part thereof is or is not admissible under these rules and may disallow any resolution or a part thereof when in his opinion it is an abuse of the right of moving a resolution or calculated to obstruct or pre-judicially affect the procedure of the House or is in contravention of these rules.<sup>9</sup>

5. *Ibid.*, 123.

6. *Ibid.*, 2(s).

7. *Ibid.*, 121.

8. Gilbert Campion, *Op. Cit.*, p. 110.

9. *Rule* 125.

No resolution which seeks to raise discussion on a matter pending before any statutory tribunal or statutory authority performing any judicial or quasi-judicial functions or any commission or court of enquiry appointed to enquire into or investigate, any matter shall ordinarily be permitted to be moved. Provided that the Speaker may in his discretion allow such matter being raised in the House as is concerned with the procedure or subject or state of enquiry if the Speaker is satisfied that it is not likely to prejudice the consideration of such matter by the statutory tribunal, statutory authority, commission or court of enquiry.<sup>10</sup>

The ballot for Private Members' Resolution shall be generally held on Friday falling seven days before the non-official day. If the date fixed for the ballot of the resolution is a holiday, the ballot will be held on the last working day before that day.<sup>11</sup> The ballot shall be held at 4:00 P.M. at a place to be notified by the Secretary to the members. Any member who wish to attend the ballot may do so. Numbered metal or disc bearing as many numbers as there are notices, shall be thoroughly mixed up and placed in a cloth bag. The Secretary or some persons directed by him shall take out one disc at a time and the first number taken out shall entitle the member whose name appears against that name in the Notice Register, to the first priority, to move the resolution, the second number to the second priority and so on until all numbers have been drawn. The priority obtained in the ballot will determine the order in which items are to be taken up in the Assembly. All notices not finding a place in the ballot shall lapse.<sup>12</sup> According to the practice of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, Fridays are usually set apart for the transaction of Private Members' Business and are allotted alternatively for Resolutions and Bills.

There are two options before a member, either he could move the resolution or could withdraw. The relevant rule was, either - (a) decline to move the resolution, in which case he shall confine himself to a mere statement to that effect, or (b) move the resolution, in which case he shall commence his speech by a formal motion in the terms appearing on the list of business.

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10. *Ibid*, 126.

11. *Direction* 34.

12. *Ibid*, 35.

If a member when called was absent, the resolution standing in his name shall be considered to have been withdrawn, provided that with the consent of such absent member in writing and with the permission of the Speaker, any other member could move the resolution.<sup>13</sup>

After a resolution has been moved, any member may, subject to rules relating to resolution, move an amendment to such resolutions, a copy of which shall be given to the member moving the resolution.<sup>14</sup> A copy of such amendment has to be sent to the Secretary one clear day before the day fixed for discussion of the resolution. If it was not followed, any member could object to the moving of the amendment and the objection prevailed unless the Speaker, in his discretion, allowed the amendment to be moved. If time permits, the Secretary shall circulate the printed copy of every amendment among the members for information.<sup>15</sup>

No speech on a resolution can exceed fifteen minutes in duration. However, the mover of a resolution and the Minister concerned when speaking for the first time, may speak for thirty minutes or for such longer time as the Speaker may permit.<sup>16</sup>

A member who has moved a resolution or amendment to a resolution shall not be withdrawn except by the leave of the House. A resolution which has been listed for discussion on a particular day, if it is not discussed on that day, shall be renumbered with other resolution of which ten clear days' notice is given and listed for discussion on the next private members' days after their priority is determined by a fresh ballot held in accordance with these rules.<sup>17</sup> A resolution which has been admitted, but not discussed during the session, shall stand lapse.<sup>18</sup>

A copy of every resolution, which has been passed by the Assembly, shall be forwarded to the Government of Mizoram.<sup>19</sup>

During the period under study, a wide range of subjects have been chosen from time to time for resolutions. Table I gives the details of the resolutions by the private members in the Assembly.

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13. *Rule* 127.

14. *Ibid.*, 129.

15. *Ibid.*, 130.

16. *Ibid.*, 131.

17. *Ibid.*, 133.

18. *Ibid.*, 136.

19. *Ibid.*, 137.

**TABLE - I**

<b>SESSION</b>	<b>RECEIVED</b>		<b>ADMITTED</b>		<b>REJECTED</b>		<b>DISCUSSED</b>		<b>ADOPTED</b>	
	<b>Oppos- ition</b>	<b>Ruli- ng</b>	<b>Oppos- ition</b>	<b>Ruli- ng</b>	<b>Oppos- ition</b>	<b>Ruli- ng</b>	<b>Oppos- ition</b>	<b>Ruli- ng</b>	<b>Oppos- ition</b>	<b>Ruli- ng</b>
I	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
II	10	1	10	1	-	-	3	1	1	1
III	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IV	7	-	5	-	2	-	1	-	-	-
V	12	-	12	-	-	-	4	-	3	-
VI	12	-	11	-	1	-	1	-	-	-
VII	9	-	8	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
VIII	12	-	10	-	2	-	1	-	-	-
IX	4	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
X	14	-	13	-	1	-	3	-	1	-
XI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
XII	9	-	6	-	3	-	2	-	-	-
XIII	14		13	-	1	-	2	-	2	-
XIV	7	12	7	11	-	1	1	-	-	-
XV	9	1	9	1	-	-	-	1	-	1
XVI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
XVII	13	3	13	3	-	-	1	-	-	-
Total	132	17	121	16	11	1	19	2	7	2

*Source: Compiled from the Resolution Register, 1993-1998, maintained by the Legislative Section Assembly Secretariat, Mizoram Legislative Assembly.*

An analysis of the above Table shows that a total of 149 notices of private members' resolutions were received during the period under study. Out of the 149 resolutions received, 132 resolutions were put up by the Opposition members while the ruling members put up 17 resolutions. The number of private members' resolution admitted during this period came to 137. It was seen that 11 resolutions from the Opposition members were rejected and only 1 resolution from the ruling member was rejected. Out of the 137 resolutions admitted, 121 resolutions were in the name of the Opposition members and 16 resolutions accounted for the ruling members.

In all, 21 private members' resolutions were discussed in the House. Out of the 21 resolutions discussed, 19 resolutions belonged to the Opposition

members and 2 resolutions were from the ruling members. Of the 9 private members' resolution passed in the House, as many as 7 resolutions of Opposition members found favourable verdict of the House and 2 resolutions passed by the House belonged to the ruling members. The Table also demonstrates that the maximum number of private members' resolutions, i.e., 4 were moved in which 3 resolutions were adopted during the Fifth Session of the Assembly.

During the period under survey, only about 15.70 % of the total number of private members' resolutions admitted could come up for discussion and the rest, an impressive percentage, just lapsed. The main hurdle in the path of private members' resolutions is the inadequacy of the time allotted for their consideration.

The following Table gives information relating to Opposition Members' Resolutions.

**TABLE - II**

Name	Party	No. of Notice	Admitted	Rejected	Discussed	Adopted
Lalhmithanga	MJD	27	25	2	1	-
Dr. J.V. Hluna+	MJD	20	15	5	1	1
F. Malsawma	MNF	13	12	1	3	1
Lalsawta	MNF	12	12	-	2	-
Zoramthanga	MNF	10	10	-	3	1
Lalrinchhana	MNF	9	9	-	1	1
R. Tlanghmithanga	MNF	9	9	-	2	-
F. Lalremsiamia	MNF	8	7	1	1	1
B. Lalthlengliana	MNF	7	5	2	1	-
Lalkhama	MNF	7	7	-	-	-
Dr. R. Lalthangliana	MNF	5	5	-	3	2
H. Thangkima	MJD	3	3	-	-	-
H. Lalruata*	MNF	2	2	-	1	-
Total		132	121	11	19	7

*Source: Compiled from the Resolution Register, 1993-1998, maintained by the Legislative Section Assembly Secretariat, Mizoram Legislative Assembly.*

+ On 18.3.1994, resolution of Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD, a coalition partner of the Government, was discuss and adopted. When the MJD withdrew their support to the Government on 29.4.1994, Dr. J.V. Hluna ceased to be a member of the ruling party. Thus, Dr. J.V. Hluna moved 1 resolution and got it passed as a member of the ruling party.

\* On 11.3.1994, a resolution of H. Laruata of MNF, an opposition member, was discussed in the House and was negatived. On 3.5.1994, H. Lalruata defected to the Congress and ceased to be a member of the Opposition. Thus, H. Lalruata submitted 2 notices of resolutions and 1 was discussed as a member of the Opposition.

The above Table shows that the resolutions moved by the Opposition members have little chance of adoption by the House. The resolutions discussed in the House bear testimony to the fact that the Opposition members have been giving attention to problems related to all the different aspects of life of the State. The resolutions of the Opposition members faced repeated rejection or lapsing due to the shortage of time. However, the discussions on the resolutions of the Opposition members drew the attention of the Government on their failure and through imparting public education build a strong public opinion against the failure of the Government.

The following pages would be devoted to analysis the details of the Opposition members' resolutions adopted.

**TABLE - III**

Date of Discussion	Session	Name of Mover and Party	Topic	Result
18.3.1994	II	Lalrinchhana (MNF)	Reform of Village Council	Amended form was adopted unanimously
24.3.1995	V	Dr. J.V. Hluna (MJD)	Establishment of Central University in Mizoram	-do-
31.3.1995	V	F. Lalremsiama (MNF)	Protecting the privileges of Scheduled Caste when they converted into other religions	-do-
31.3.1995	V	Zoramthanga (MNF)	Rehabilitation for Alcoholics and Drug Addicts	Adopted unanimously by voice vote
20.9.1996	X	Dr. R. Lalthangliana (MNF)	Establishment of State Hospital	Amended form was adopted by vote
25.7.1997	XIII	F. Malsawma(MNF)	Adoption of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 in Mizoram	Amended form was adopted
31.7.1997	XIII	Dr. R. Lalthangliana (MNF)	Establishment of State Election Commission in Mizoram	-do-

*Source: Compiled from the Resolution Register, 1993-1998, maintained by the Legislative Section Assembly Secretariat, Mizoram Legislative Assembly.*

1. ***Reform of Village Council:*** - Lalrinchhana of MNF moved the resolution on the subject on 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1994 to urge the State Government that the rules, remunerations, powers and responsibilities of the Village Council be amended. Initiating the discussion, Lalrinchhana emphasised on four points which need amended. Firstly, he felt that the monthly remuneration of the members of the Village Council of Rs 40/- is very meagre and should be substantially increased. The members of the Village Council have to spend lot of their valuable time in supervising and monitoring developmental works in their respective area. If the remuneration of the members of the Village Council is increased substantially, talented persons will come forward to become members and this will help in the effective functioning of the Village Council. Therefore, the remuneration of the members of the Village Council should be revised.

Secondly, lack of finances came in the way of the effective functioning of the Village Council. Due to the paucity of funds, the Village Council has not been able to discharge its functions to the satisfaction of the people. So, he suggested that separate Budget Head be made for the Village Council.

Thirdly, the ability of the Village Council to discharge its functions depends to a large extent on the availability of funds. The incomes of the Village Council are the grants received from the State Government and money locally raised by itself. The yields from internal resources are quite meagre and the Village Council almost entirely depends on the State Government. If the Village Council is vested with the power of levying taxes on houses, professions, vehicles etc, it shall augment its income and the financial difficulties will be lessened. He, therefore, suggested that Rules should be enacted by the State Government wherein the powers of the Village Council should be enhanced including the power to levy taxes on certain items or subjects.

Fourthly, the Village Council also performs judicial functions within its respective areas and has the power to impose a fine not exceeding

Rs 50/- for an offence. The power in the hands of the Village Council to impose fine is very small in the present situation. He also suggested that the Village Council should be empowered with ‘magisterial power’.

In conclusion, Lalrinchhana said that the Village Council has been entrusted by various Departments to undertake and monitor the developmental works in its areas. For the Village Council, it is very difficult to understand its multi-responsibilities. So, he urged the various Departments to specify and classify the responsibilities imposed upon the Village Council in simple terms.<sup>20</sup>

His views were endorsed by all the members. All the members who participated in the discussion commenced on the importance of the Village Council and underlined the need for enhancement of the remuneration of the members of the Village Council and were also strongly in favour of decentralisation of power. Armed with Rule 129 of the Rules of Procedure, Lalbiakzuala of Congress, moved an amendment to the resolution.<sup>21</sup> The mover of the resolution agreed with the amendment as it did not alter the spirit of his resolution. Accordingly, the House adopted unanimously the resolution in an amended form which is as follows:- “This House is of the opinion that the rules, remunerations, powers and functions of the Village Council need ratification and the Committee be formed immediately to pursue this”.

A copy of passed resolution was forwarded to the Chief Secretary, Government of Mizoram, with a copy to the Secretary, Local Administration Department (L.A.D.), Government of Mizoram.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, a Committee on ‘Village Council Affairs’ was constituted with the following members:- 1. Minister of State, L.A.D. - Chairman, 2. Commissioner, L.A.D. - Member, 3. Secretary, Law and Judicial - Member, 4. Pu S.R. Valla, M.L.A. - Member, 5. Pu P.B. Nikhuma - Member, 6. Pu Lalrinchhana, M.L.A. - Member, 7. Dr. J.V. Hluna, M.L.A. - Member, 8. Deputy Commissioner, Aizawl - Member, 9. Pu Lalhuapzauva, Joint Secretary, Finance Department - Member, 10. Pu J.H. Thangliana, Chairman,

20. *PMLA, Second Session, 1994*, p. 144.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

22. NO.MAL.56/94/36, dt 31.3.1994.

Mizoram Village Council Welfare Committee - Member, 11. Joint Director, L.A.D. - Member, and 12, Director, L.A.D. -Member-Secretary. The term of the Committee was one year. The terms of references were to determine the existing laws relating to Mizoram Village Council, remuneration of the Village Council members and their powers and responsibilities and to recommend change or changes to suit to the present day condition.<sup>23</sup>

2. ***Establishment of Central University in Mizoram***: - On 24<sup>th</sup> March, 1995, Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD, moved a resolution for the transfer of post-graduate departments of Geology, Commerce, Linguistics, History and Archeology and the School of Agricultural Sciences and Rural Development Department, which functioned in the Nagaland Campus of North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), prior to the creation of Nagaland University, to the NEHU Campus, Mizoram.<sup>24</sup> Liansuama, Minister, suggested to add to its prefix “Pending establishment of Central University in Mizoram” to the title of the resolution.<sup>25</sup>

Dr. R. Lalthangliana of MNF drew the attention of the House that in the previous Assembly term, he moved a resolution concerning for the establishment of a Central University in Mizoram. He further said that in the year 1992, the amount of fund allotted for the development of Mizoram’s Campus by NEHU was less than 5%. As NEHU comprised Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya, allotment of less than 5% was discrimination of highest order when one section got a very meagre amount of fund while the other were enjoying all sorts of facilities. If we have a separate University, our major problems involving admission to higher studies and unemployment could be solved to a great extent. Above all, it will be a tremendous achievement for our State. He, therefore, strongly recommended the passing of this resolution.<sup>26</sup>

All the members who participated in the discussion welcomed the resolution and supported it and spoke highly on its content. They said

23. NO. LAD/VC-83/94/14, dt 24.8.1994.

24. *PMLA, Fifth Session*, 1995, p. 250.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 253-254.

if a Central University would be set up, it would enable to create an environment conducive to higher education and the local students would get the best education which would enable them to go higher in the societal ladder.

The Government's reaction to the resolution was encouraging. The Chief Minister, Lalthanhawla said, "it is appropriate that this House should pass this resolution".<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, the resolution was accepted and passed in an amended form which is as follows:- "Pending establishment of Central University in Mizoram, the post-graduate departments of Geology, Commerce, Linguistics, History and Archeology and the School of Agricultural Sciences and Rural Development be immediately started in NEHU Campus, Mizoram".

On 5<sup>th</sup> April, 1995, a copy of passed resolution was forwarded to the Secretary, Higher and Technical Education Department, Government of Mizoram.<sup>28</sup> Reminder was issued on 28<sup>th</sup> November, 1995 to the Secretary, Education and Human Resources Department, Government of Mizoram.<sup>29</sup> On December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1995, the Speaker announced in the House that the Government has informed the Vice-Chancellor of NEHU and requested him to look into the matter personally and initiate suitable action to establish Post-Graduate Departments in NEHU Campus, Mizoram.<sup>30</sup>

3. ***Protecting the Privileges of the Schedule Caste when they converted into other religions:-*** One vital subject, namely, "India being a secular State, Schedule Caste who have changed their religions must have the same rights and this must be forwarded to the Centre" was a subject matter moved by F. Lalremsiama of MNF on 31<sup>th</sup> March, 1995. While moving the resolution, the mover pointed out that the Fundamental Rights of Article 25 clearly states the Right to Freedom of Religion which shows how free a person is to practice and preach the religion of his choice. The importance of this resolution must be considered in the background of our Constitution where equality of all citizens has been provided. Our Constitution makers had

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27. *Ibid*, p. 252.

28. NO.MAL. 56/94/134, dt 5.4.1995.

29. NO.MAL. 75/91-92/5, dt 28.11.1995.

30. Letter No.D.O.B. 16027/2/87-END Volume 11/5, dated 19.6.1995

contemplated to build up an egalitarian society where there will be no social distinction. The Directive Principles of State Policy must be carried on without the slightest hesitation. Benefits in every way must be given to all people of every religion, caste or creed as this has been an important factor in the Constitution. The reservation percentage for Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe must be kept and in fact increased.<sup>31</sup>

All the members who participated in the discussion of the resolution welcome and support it. The Chief Minister, Lalthanhawla said he was delighted to see a resolution like this. He, therefore, suggested that members of different political parties must form a delegation and meet the Prime Minister. He requested other members in the House to pass this resolution unanimously.<sup>32</sup>

Taking the scene of the House and keeping in mind the spirit of the discussion, verbal amendment was suggested by the Deputy Speaker, R.L. Valla, from the Chair in the following form:- “In this Indian Secular State, Schedule Caste should have the Right to Freedom of Religion and their privileges should not be taken away when they convert to other religions. The Central Government must be inform and to thrust on this subject”.

The resolution was passed unanimously in an amended form. On 5<sup>th</sup> April, 1995, a copy of passed resolution was forwarded to the Secretary, General Administration Department (G.A.D.), Government of Mizoram.<sup>33</sup> The matter was transferred to the Home Department, Government of Mizoram by the G.A.D.<sup>34</sup> The Home Department forwarded the passed resolution to the Secretary, Ministry of Welfare, Government of India.<sup>35</sup>

4. ***Rehabilitation for Alcoholics and Drug Addicts***: - On 31<sup>th</sup> March, 1995, Zoramthanga of MNF moved a resolution in the following form: - “Mizoram must make a better place to look after and turn back Alcoholics and Drug Addicts to a normal life, as soon as possible”. Narrating the danger and effects of alcohol and drugs, Zoramthanga said the two evils

31. PMLA, Fifth Session, 1995, pp.434-435.

32. Ibid, pp. 440-441.

33. NO. MAL. 56/94/135, dt 5.4.1995.

34. NO. I.D.NO. H. 11015/1/95-G.A.D., dt 16.4.1995.

35. NO. 11014/2/95-HMP(SCT), dt 22.6.1995.

are chemical agents that are disabling and killing Mizo youth in alarming numbers. The two evils do not kill not only instantly but their destructive impact on society turn out to be equally fatal. The victims' families also suffered prolonged agony equally. Alcohol and drug addicts observed no boundaries; it affects the wealthy, the middle class and even the poor alike. The two evils are damaging the lives of hundreds of young people in the State. He urged the Government to help the affected persons to make a fresh start instead of slavery to addiction of drugs and alcohol. He said the existing facilities of detoxification, de-addict and rehabilitation centres run by the Government, Churches and Voluntary organisations were inadequate to meet the requirement. He urged the Government to set up more Centres in which the victims should be given love, affection and utmost care with a hope of leading a normal life.<sup>36</sup>

The need for action against the problem of alcohol and drug addicts has been immensely expressed by all the members who took part in the discussion. Participating in the discussion, Lalthanhawla, Chief Minister, admitted that a good number of young people lost their lives due to alcohol and drug addictions. The two evils have crippled the lives of many young people in the State. These abusive substances come to Mizoram from Myanmar along with foreign goods. The Proxyvon capsules which are used by the youth for addiction came from Cachar of Assam from different sources. He strongly supported this resolution and appealed to the members to come together to fight these dreadful slow-motion killers of the youth.<sup>37</sup> The resolution was put to the vote of the House and was adopted unanimously in its original form by voice vote. A copy of passed resolution was forwarded to the Secretary, Social Welfare Department, Government of Mizoram.<sup>38</sup>

5. ***Establishment of a State Hospital:-*** On 20<sup>th</sup> September, 1996, Dr. R. Lalthangliana of MNF moved a resolution urging the State Government to establish a State Hospital. The member said that in the present days, the

36. PMLA, Fifth Session, 1995, pp. 442-443.

37. Ibid, pp. 448-449.

38. NO. MAL. 56/94/136, dt 5.4.1995.

advanced countries were well equipped medically and life expectancy has been higher with advanced medical sciences wherein top priority has been given to medical development and well-beings of the people. As the country adopted western medical system, it required more and more sophisticated equipment to cope with the increasing needs. In Mizoram, we have a number of Hospitals, Primary and Sub-Health Centres equipped with specialist doctors. But they could not grow due to lack of medical equipment and facilities. As a result, many people had to go outside Mizoram for medical treatment which involved huge expenditures and immense problems. He said that the resolution was moved primarily with the objective of establishing a full-fledged State Hospital equipped with modern and sophisticated tools and facilities, capable of undertaking any investigation or treatment. The proposed Hospital would be a big asset for the entire community, particularly for the poor section who could not afford outside treatment.<sup>39</sup>

All the members who took part in the discussion supported the resolution and profusely praised the mover of the resolution with all earnestness. But surprisingly, two members from the ruling party requested the mover to withdraw his resolution on the plea that the Minister-in-charge, Health & Family Welfare, has pointed out that steps had been taken by the Government for the establishment of the said Hospital.<sup>40</sup>

C.L. Ruala, Minister, brought an amendment to the resolution on the ground that the Government has gone a long way in the process of setting up a State Hospital which was worth mentioning.<sup>41</sup> The amendment was, however, rejected by the mover of the resolution and requested the House to pass in its original form.

The resolution in an amended form was put to the vote of the House:-

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39. *PMLA, Tenth Session, 1996*, pp. 201-202.

40. Speeches of John Rotluangliana and K.T. Rokhaw, *PMLA, Tenth Session, 1996*, p.202 and p.204 respectively.

41. *PMLA, Tenth Session, 1996*, p.208.

Ayes	-	19
Noes	-	7
Absentees	-	14

The resolution was passed in an amended form as follows:- “The steps taken by the Mizoram Government for immediate establishment of a State Hospital is highly appreciated, and for its immediate materialisation, the State Government should continue its active involvement by taking this crucial task as a Special Project”.

In pursuance of the resolution passed in the House on 20<sup>th</sup> September, 1996, the Government has taken steps in this regard. The Consultative Committee of Health and Family Welfare Department along with some MLAs have on the spot verification on 8<sup>th</sup> October, 1996 at Kelsih, Falkawn and Hualngohmun. The detailed report being awaited. For the initial work on this project, Rs 3 lakhs has been allotted in the Annual Plan of 1996-1997. Steps have also been taken to appoint ISHA, Bangalore, to make a project report for a 500 bedded Hospital. During the visit of the Prime Minister, H.D. Deva Gowda, on 23<sup>th</sup> October, 1996, a memorandum was submitted. It is also expected that special fund would be released from the Central Government for this project.<sup>42</sup>

6. ***Adoption of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 in Mizoram:-***  
F.Malsawma of MNF moved the above resolution on 25<sup>th</sup> July, 1997. Moving the resolution, he said that corruption has become the most talked about political problem across the breadth and length of the State. He alleged the prevalence of rampant corruption in Mizoram. He said that corruption has penetrated our soil, perlocated into our blood, permeated our culture, pervaded our economy and, thereby poisoned our polity and polluted our society. In spite of the legal provisions against corruption, it has become a way of life. The existing rules and regulations to combat corruption are not found to be effective in eliminating corruption at all levels. Legislation to simplify the rules and streamline procedures in the administrative system

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42. PMLA, Eleventh Session, 1996, p. 8.

are necessary. Motivation and ethical values of administration are essential to contain corruption. In order to eradicate the menace of corruption, we have to make radical changes in our social, economic and political structures. Each individual has to strictly adhere to the moral and ethical codes of social and private life. He urged the members to support his resolution to prevent and curb corruption.<sup>43</sup>

Supporting the resolution, Lalsawta of MNF said corruption is an intricate issue and a complex phenomenon. It is not unique to one country or one institution or one group. It is global in nature though the degree varies. Corruption is basically a deviation from a code of conduct laid down in any walk of life. Corruption has grown to alarming proportion in public life in Mizoram. Although political leadership, in general, favoured institutions to control corruption, yet, the genuineness of their feeling in this regard was hardly reflected in their behavior. Efforts have been made in the past to combat corruption, but failed to fruitify, for such measures were not pursued with required will, vigour, vitality and absence of commitment at the top. He appealed to the members to pass this resolution in order to save Mizoram from the clutch of corruption.<sup>44</sup>

Taking part in the discussion, Dr. R. Lalthangliana of MNF said that corruption has percolated into the body politic, administrative system and society very deeply. It has totally uprooted the values of the society. Execution of public works is a gold mine for the perpetrators of corruption. Spending lakhs of rupees on unnecessary things is quite common in public life today. For incurring these expenses, our officials are indulging in corrupt practices. Therefore, corruption distorts welfare goals, marginalised development process and material progress and brings disaster to the well-beings of the society. It threatens the value system, corrodes the culture and destroys civilized life. He supported the resolution and asked the members to rescue Mizoram from the menace of social cancer of corruption.<sup>45</sup>

43. *PMLA, Thirteenth Session, 1997*, pp. 722-724.

44. *Ibid*, pp. 737-739.

45. *Ibid*, pp. 776-777.

Participating in the discussion, Lalthanhawla, Chief Minister, admitted that corruption is rampant in the society. Corruption has penetrated into our polity, bureaucracy, business and finally into our cultural fabric. Corruption is a ubiquitous phenomenon with its tentacles spread across the breadth and length of the State. It has deep struck roots in every soil. Eradication of corruption is, therefore, a herculean task. The failure of the existing system and mechanisms to prevent and curb corruption is yet another cause of corruption. The slow-moving investigation, prosecution and judicial processes do not have any impact on the corrupt system. He, therefore, emphasised the need through community effort to contain corruption.<sup>46</sup> The resolution was put to the vote of the House and was passed in amended form. The passed resolution was forwarded to the Chief Secretary, Government of Mizoram on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1997.<sup>47</sup>

7. ***Establishment of State Election Commission:*** - On 31<sup>th</sup> July, 1997, Dr. R. Lalthangliana of MNF moved a resolution seeking for the establishment of State Election Commission in Mizoram. Highlighting the importance of election, he said that the integrity of the electoral system and of the electoral process is the very foundation of democratic legitimacy. Free and fair elections are the basic postulate of a democratic form of government. In a democratic polity, elections are the medium through which we elect our representatives. The importance of the care and fairness with which electoral rolls have to be prepared, and of their accuracy, completeness and being kept updated formed the backbone of the electoral process. Although voting eligibility is the same for Parliament, Assembly, District Council and Village Council, the electoral rolls for District Council and Village Council are different. He drew the attention of the House that a large number of errors and discrepancies could be found in the Parliamentary electoral rolls of 1996 and the Village Council electoral rolls of 1997. For instance, in South Kawlalian village of Zawlnuam Constituency in Aizawl District, while the number of electors in the Parliamentary electoral roll was 68, in the electoral roll of Village Council, as many as 331 voters were

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46. *Ibid*, pp. 730-731.

47. NO. L.A. 56/LEGN/96/125, dt, 1.8.1997.

enrolled, an increase of 263 voters. The inaccuracies in the electoral rolls may be the result of the inefficiency and a flawed system but certainly some of it is also the result of purposeful tampering which may happen due to partisan attitude of the officials who may have their own local affinities or may be brought over by vested interests. The accuracy, completeness and correctness are the basic components of the entire electoral process.

He further said that the Chief Electoral Officer, the District Election Officers and Electoral Registration Officers were all formally appointed by the Election Commission of India (ECI), though in consultation with the State Government. This showed that an independent and efficient machinery is not available at the State level for the proper conduct of elections. The ECI has not been able to look promptly into all the complaints of irregularities made between the calling of an election and the polling date. Quick decisions are needed and urgent decisions may be impeded by the ECI. Observers, who were appointed by the ECI on the eve of the poll, would not be familiar with the situation in the State in their jurisdictions; they have had no detailed knowledge of the problems and of developing situations in different constituencies. He, therefore, strongly advocated the establishment of State Election Commission in Mizoram. If there was State Election Commission in position, it would have given close and continuous attention from an early stage of the preparation of electoral rolls and could have prevented some omissions and curb, to some extent, the transgressions that occurred.<sup>48</sup>

Supporting the resolution, Lalhmingthanga of MJD said that the influx of illegal migrants from Bangladesh is turning certain areas in Mizoram into a Chakma majority region. This silent and invidious demographic invasion of Mizoram may result in the loss of vital areas of Mizoram. As a result of illegal migrants from Bangladesh, the spectre of the indigenous people of Mizoram being reduced to a minority in their home State. This resolution offered an opportunity to establish a State Election Commission which should be able to ensure that the

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48. *PMLA, Thirteenth Session, 1997*, pp. 1143-1146.

electoral rolls are accurate and up-to-date; for eligible citizens to have their names enrolled and for getting wrongly enrolled names deleted.<sup>49</sup>

Lalsawta of MNF said that as the accuracy of the voters' list is an important aspect of the elections, we need to have a State Election Commission to prepare accurate electoral rolls. To have a permanent State Election Commission was needed to conduct not only general elections after a regular interval of five years, but also to conduct mid-term polls, by-elections and elections to local bodies.<sup>50</sup>

Lalrinchhana of MNF expressed his views that free and fair elections are the foundations of a democratic form of government. To ensure this purity of electoral process, it becomes essential to have a State Election Commission. The preparation of electoral rolls and conduct of elections to Village Council is the responsibility of the Local Administrative Department. The staff officials sometimes adopt partisan attitude because of the pressure from the State Government. In order to overcome the shortcomings, the establishment of a State Election Commission is necessary.<sup>51</sup>

The resolution was put to the vote of the House and was passed in amended form. The adopted copy of the resolution was forwarded to the Chief Secretary, Government of Mizoram.<sup>52</sup>

### ***Government Resolution***

A resolution moved by a Minister is called 'Government Resolution'. There are no separate rules relating to the procedure for Government Resolutions. Government Resolutions are distinguished from Private Members' Resolutions in some important aspects. Government Resolutions are not subject to the procedure of draw of lots like Private Members' Resolutions. No period of notice as such has been prescribed for Government Resolutions. Government Resolutions may be taken up on any day allotted for Government business. Barring these special features, Government Resolutions are generally subject to the same rules as Private Members' Resolutions. A resolution, of which a notice is given by a Minister, has been admitted by the Speaker and it is published in the Bulletin under the heading

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49. *Ibid.*, pp. 1155-1157.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 1160-1161.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 1163-1164.

52. NO. 56/LEGN/96/155, dt 1.8.1997.

‘Government Resolution’. The time for discussion of a Government Resolution is recommended by the Business Advisory Committee and the date is fixed in consultation with the Leader of the House.<sup>53</sup> The resolution may be moved by the Minister in whose name it stands or in his absence by any other Minister on his behalf.

Government Resolutions are moved to seek the approval of the House. They serve the purpose of mobilising and ascertaining the views of the House with regard to important public issues. They may prove to be stepping stones in the direction of the formulation of important Government policies or they may be helpful in enlisting the support of the House regarding policies which have already been undertaken by the Government.

During the period under study, four notices of Government Resolutions were received. Out of the four Government Resolutions received, two were moved and passed unanimously, one was withdrawn and one could not be moved due to receipt of No-Confidence Motion against the Council of Ministers.

The following Table gives the details of the Government Resolutions.

**TABLE - IV**

Date of Discussion	Session	Name of Mover	Topic	Result
26.8.1994	III	J. Lalsangzuala, Minister i/c Home	Continuation of Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873, in Mizoram	Adopted unanimously
4.10.1995	VI	C. Chawngkunga, Minister i/c Health & Family Welfare	Authorising Parliament to pass Law to regulate the use of Tobacco and Tobacco Products	-do-
12.9.1996	X	J. Lalsangzuala, Minister i/c Parliamentary Affairs	Increase the number of Assembly Constituencies in the State of Mizoram from 40 to 60	Withdrawn
29.7.1998	XVII	S.T. Rualyapa, Minister i/c L.A.D	Extension of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 to Mizoram.	Could not moved due to receipt of No-Confidence Motion

*Source: Compiled from the Resolution Register, 1993-1998, maintained by the Legislative Section Assembly Secretariat, Mizoram Legislative Assembly.*

<sup>53</sup>. Rule 237.

The Opposition members had been found supporting resolutions moved by the Government. Here an attempt has been made briefly to show their support and participation of the resolutions moved by the Government.

1. On 26<sup>th</sup> August, 1994, J. Lalsangzuala, Minister-in-charge Home Department, moved a resolution in the Emergency Session of the Assembly on the continuation of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873, popularly known as the Inner Line Regulation (I.L.R.), in Mizoram. Moving the resolution, he said that the main purpose of ILR was that the British wanted to keep the Lushai Hills (Mizoram) segregated from the influence of the plains people by arguing that the latter would assimilate and exploit the tribals to their detriment. Quoting from newspaper reports, he said that the Union Home Minister has said that the Government of India had contemplated to revoke the ILR. He further said that in the North-Eastern Region Chief Ministers' Conference convened by the Union Home Minister at New Delhi on 19<sup>th</sup> July, 1994, one of the most important agendas was the ILR. In order to safeguard the interests of the Mizo people, the continuation of ILR is imperative, he added.<sup>54</sup>

Lalsawta of MNF charged the Central Government of adopting unsympathetic attitude towards Mizoram. Referring to a newspaper report of 'Assam Tribune' on 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1993, he informed the House that Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Union Commerce Minister, has allegedly made a speech at Calcutta on 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1993 in which, according to the newspaper report, he said that the ILR in North-East India should be revoked in order to promote trade and tourism. He also proceeded to say that in the North Eastern Council Meeting held on 23<sup>th</sup> January, 1994 at Shillong, the Union Home Minister, S.B. Chavan, emphasised the need to revoke the ILR immediately. The Union Home Minister again reiterated the same issue in June, 1994 at Shillong. Labelling the Central Government as wanting to exploit the people of North Eastern States in the name of trade and tourism, he urged all political parties, non-governmental organisations and Churches to join hands to meet the challenge. He also accused the Central Government of violating the Memorandum of Settlement signed by the Government of India, Government of Mizoram and MNF in which under paragraph 8, it is

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54. *PMLA, Third Session, 1994*, pp. 2-3.

stated that ‘the ILR, as now in force in Mizoram, will not be amended or repealed without consulting the State Government’.<sup>55</sup>

Zoramthanga, Leader of the Opposition, lamented that the Central Government’s attitude was clearly in defiance of the Memorandum of Settlement. ILR was more important than political parties, be it Congress, or MNF or MJD. ILR served as an instrument of the survival of the Mizo people. He expressed the need to take concrete steps that the ILR stay. He, therefore, suggested to constitute a Joint Parliamentary Delegation of all political parties to place the matter before the Prime Minister and Home Minister, Government of India.<sup>56</sup>

Intervening in the discussion, Lalthanhawla, Chief Minister, appreciated the sentiments and feelings of the members and was happy to listen to the valuable views and suggestions offered by the members. He asked the members to make serious efforts to solve this problem without pinning the blame on each other. He emphasised the need to ensure that the ILR continued. He agreed to the suggestion to constitute a Joint Parliamentary Delegation of all political parties.<sup>57</sup>

Everyone who participated in the discussion thanked the mover for moving such an important resolution and extended support. After prolonged discussion lasting for about 5 hours and 15 minutes, the resolution was put to the vote of the House and was adopted unanimously.

A copy of passed resolution was forwarded to the Chief Secretary, Government of Mizoram.<sup>58</sup> The matter has been referred to Shri R.K. Ahooja, Special Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.<sup>59</sup>

2. On 4<sup>th</sup> October, 1995, C. Chawngkunga, Minister-in-charge Health and Family Welfare, moved a resolution on ‘Authorising Parliament to pass law regulating the use of tobacco and tobacco products’. Apprising the background of the resolution, the Minister stated that a Conference of Health Ministers of State Legislatures was held at New Delhi on 19<sup>th</sup> July, 1993 under the auspices of the Government of India. The Conference focused on the ban of tobacco and

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-22.

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 61-64.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

58. NO. MAL. 56/94/47, dt 30.8.1994.

59. NO. F. 2215/54/90-HMP, dt. 19.9.1994.

tobacco products. Since the matter was under the State subject, the Conference urged each State to enact a law on it. This commitment has put tremendous responsibility on the part of the Government of Mizoram and accordingly, the Council of Ministers in its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> July, 1994 decided to move a resolution on the subject.<sup>60</sup>

Participating in the discussion, Zoramthanga, Leader of the Opposition, said that health is an important aspect of human resource development. Good health care facilities and services are essential for creating citizen and society that can effectively contribute to social and economic development. The health aspects of a person is much influenced by his living style and habits. Knowledge of the harms of tobacco consumption is overwhelming. Despite that, it has taken many years to confront the issue. One major reason for this is that most of the harms from tobacco occur after years of use. All those who smoke endanger the non-smokers. Those who suffered from respiratory diseases may be due to excessive smoking. Mental functioning became clouded due to the depression of the central nervous system caused by tobacco consumption.<sup>61</sup>

Dr. J.V. Hluna of MJD said that the progress that has been made in reducing smoking prevalence can best be attributed to a combination of public education, restrictions on advertising and promotion, restrictions on where and when smokers can smoke. Hard-hitting, realistic and anti-smoking advertisement raise public awareness in reducing smoking prevalence. Tobacco contains such agents which are very harmful to the health. Smoking is a harmful habit which seriously reduces the expectation of good health and shortens life. Smoking increases the incidence of lung cancer, chronic bronchitis. In central nervous system, it aggravates the cramps and strokes. The optic nerve may get damaged.<sup>62</sup>

Replying to the discussion, the Minister said that the resolution did not seek the total ban on smoking. Rather, it would seek tobacco control and ban smoking in workplaces and public places. Smoking ban in workplaces and public places would protect not only non-smokers but also lead to reduction in tobacco consumption among the smokers.<sup>63</sup>

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60. *PMLA, Sixth Session*, 1995, p. 266.

61. *Ibid*, pp. 275-276..

62. *Ibid*, p. 278.

63. *Ibid*, p. 279.

The resolution was put to the vote of the House and was adopted unanimously. A copy of passed resolution was forwarded to the Secretary, Health and Family Welfare Department. Government of Mizoram.<sup>64</sup>

3. On 12<sup>th</sup> September, 1996, when the Speaker called J. Lalsangzuala, Minister Parliamentary Affairs, to move his resolution on ‘Increase the number of Assembly Constituencies in the State of Mizoram from 40 to 60’, he declined to move it and confined himself to a mere statement to that effect. He said, “If tabling of the resolution is deferred. I want to get consensus on it”.<sup>65</sup>

4. A resolution on ‘Extension of the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992, to Mizoram’, which was standing in the name of S.T. Rualyapa, Minister L.A.D., and which was included for the list of business on 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1998, could not be moved due to receipt of No-Confidence Motion against the Council of Ministers on 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1998.<sup>66</sup>

Resolution provides an opportunity to the members of the Opposition to criticise, advice and influence the Government on matters of general public interests. The significance of the resolution lies in generating public debate on the questions of general interests, in drawing the attention of the Government, in obliging it to come out with proper response on the floor of the House which may end up in appropriate administrative action or legislative enactment. Resolutions in any subject provide another opportunity to the Opposition members to project their ideas on various issues. Discussion on them enable the House to debate their merits and demerits and inform and educate the Ministers.

The study shows that Opposition members’ resolutions were either an indictment of the Government for its lapses and failures, or advice, warning or articulation of public opinion on a policy or act of the Government. Though the Opposition succeeded in utilising this parliamentary device effectively, when viewed as a whole, the attitude of the Government towards Opposition members’ resolutions were not encouraging. Even after having discussed that a few of the Opposition members’ resolutions were welcomed at least in principle, the Government was reluctant in adopting it. For example, during the Eighth Session

64. NO. MAL. 56/94/206, dt. 9.10.1995.

65. *PMLA, Tenth Session*, 1996, p. 41.

66. *PMLA, Seventeenth Session*, 1998, p. 1195.

on 20<sup>th</sup> March, 1996, a resolution named 'Lok Ayukta be constituted by the Government of Mizoram in order to regulate and examine public money distribution system and to punish those who are guilty against it', was moved by Lalsawta of MNF. Even when the ruling members appreciated the spirit of the resolution, the Government on its part opposed it.

When the two Government Resolutions were moved, the Opposition extended its unstinted support to the resolutions because the resolutions contained just and reasonable demands of the State of Mizoram. The resolutions were adopted with full support from the Opposition.

The behaviour of the Opposition on matters relating to resolutions showed that it brought forward on its own on several matters of public importance. The Opposition was found supporting Government Resolutions which they considered to be in the interest of the people of the State as a whole. So, moving and discussing of various problems in the shape of resolutions were an important activity of the members of the Opposition. Thus, the Opposition could be said to have functioned as a responsible Opposition.

## CHAPTER VIII

## CONCLUSION

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Vesting of vast powers in the administration generates the possibility of abuse and misuse of powers, maladministration and corruption. An urgent problem of the day, therefore, is to evolve a mechanism to contain these dangers. It is in this context that the existence of an effective and strong Opposition is necessary so that better check and control over the functioning of the Government may be instituted and the basic rights of the people preserved. The Opposition is not manufactured but grows. The growth and success of the Opposition largely depends upon the attractiveness of its alternative policies and programmes and the manner in which it exposes the Government whenever the latter is at fault. Scrutinizing the performance of the Government and offering constructive criticism and correct exposition of the mistakes of the Government enables the Opposition to win the favour of the electorate.

The effective functioning of the Opposition inside the Legislature imposes upon them the duty to make the best use of the recognised parliamentary devices. For this purpose, the Opposition has to participate actively in the deliberations of the House. The Opposition in Mizoram Legislative Assembly did their utmost to make the Assembly and the public at large feel that there was in fact a functioning Opposition in the Assembly. Though their achievement may not be spectacular, they were never deterred from lashing out at the Government with scathing criticism when occasions so demand.

During the period under study, the Opposition in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly consisted of two political parties - the MNF and MJD. During this period, the Opposition functioned in collaboration, though they had not entered into any formal alliance. The spirit of co-operation within the House strengthened the Opposition to give a balanced Opposition to the Government. The co-operation that was displayed by Opposition parties in the form of sponsoring motions and resolutions was confined only inside the Legislature because the Opposition parties had nothing in common except opposing the ruling party.

Discussion on Governor's Address provides the first opportunity to the Opposition to have a wordy duel with the Government. The Governor's Address is fundamentally a statement of the broad policies of the Government. The objective of the Governor's Address is to announce the executive policies and the legislative programmes of the Government. It is the duty of all members of the Assembly to show high respect and give a patient hearing to the Governor's Address while he is addressing the members as a part of the Legislature and as the Head of the State. The Opposition in Mizoram displayed a very high degree of tolerance on such occasion and graced the occasion of Governor's Address as an ideal constitutional occasion.

Like other parliamentary devices for ventilating grievances, the Governor's Address provides an opportunity to Opposition members to place before the Government their grievances of their respective constituencies and to expose the Government for its alleged acts of omissions and commissions. The Opposition members in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly fully utilised this opportunity. An examination of the discussion showed that several problems, which were not included in the Address, were discussed by the Opposition members. The Opposition members often stressed particular problems even when rising general matters. Particular mention is made frequently of the Government's failure to check and deport illegal influx of foreigners from neighbouring countries. Charges of corruption are made year after year alleging that the evil has flourished unabated and unchecked. Although the Rules of Mizoram Legislative Assembly permit only a discussion of 'the matters referred to' in the Address, very often the Opposition members wander about into the distant realms of administration on a wide variety of subjects. It is very natural that the Opposition members may hold dissenting views about some particular matter of policy statement enshrined in the Address. The participation of the Opposition in the discussion of the Governor's Address has been mainly in the form of expressing unhappiness for the non-inclusion of certain important issues in the Address.

Question Hour is generally the most interesting part of the day's proceedings in the Legislature. The device of question is used to extract information,

to seek redressal of grievances, to attract the attention of the Government towards a particular problem, to secure assurances for fulfillment of some work etc. During the Question Hour, more light is thrown on several aspects of administration when the Opposition members seek to obtain or elicit information on a matter of public interest on the floor of the House. Answers to questions reveal at once how each Department is functioning and its level of efficiency. The importance of this device underlines the need for a purposeful and efficient use of it to make it really effective.

In the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, although the number of questions for oral answer listed for a day is limited to 20, however, even this list is never completed. On an average, 4.75% or nearly 5 questions were usually answered, though on some days the number has fallen to as low as 1, and on certain days, which is very rare, as many as 16 questions have been covered. The floor time of the House is too precious that it, however, needs it to put to the most effective and efficient use. It was found that majority of the supplementaries asked by the Opposition members become a sort of speech and involve great waste of time of the House. Large number of supplementaries take the major share of the allotted time. For instance, during the period of our study, 1,948 Starred Questions were admitted and only 442 questions were orally answered on the floor of the House. 1,506 Starred Questions placed on the list of questions for oral answer were not called for answer within the time available and written replies to the questions were circulated.

The Question Hour is not for a diatribe nor is it for making long speeches. The Opposition members of the Assembly must have a clear understanding of what they are going to ask and should put it directly and precisely. There is a need for self-restraint on the part of the Opposition members in tabling questions and in putting supplementaries. The Opposition members must realise that there are other members also in the House who have an equal right to put supplementaries and it has to be a fair distribution.

Questions have indeed helped to focus light on important issues. To give instance of the far-reaching effect of question, a Starred Question No.43

asked by an Opposition member on the floor of the House on 16<sup>th</sup> September, 1996, led to the appointment of 'Assembly Committee to Enquire into Greater Lunglei Water Supply Scheme', relating to the financial irregularities in the implementation of the scheme. Through the device of question, financial irregularities had been exposed. If it had not come in the open, perhaps no action would have been initiated. Thus, questions are powerful and must be make use of them in an effective manner.

One of the most commonly criticised aspects of questions is that there are far too many questions and that the Question Hour is not enough to dispose off all questions. The principle and widespread complaint in regard to question is that too few are answered orally within the Question Hour, as a result of which an increasing number of members have to be content with a written answer. The root of the problem undoubtedly lies in the fact that supplementary questions are far more frequent and longer and the answers longer than they used to be.

It was observed that there are discrepancies of the Question Hour that questions are asked disproportionate to the time allotted for the purpose. It was found that an hour set apart for questions is too meagre considering the increased volume of questions admitted. It is suggested that in order to enable the members to make greater use of Question Hour, the Question Hour may be extended by at least half-an-hour. Further, it may be suggested that the number of Starred Questions allowed per member per day be reduced from 5 to 2. It is also advisable that to ask supplementary question should be limited to those who ask the original question. Another suggestion is that when a question is asked, the Speaker of the Assembly should not allow the exchanges to go very long period and should curb the unusual flow of supplementaries.

It was also observed that during the Question Hour, the Government was not prompt enough in furnishing the replies in full. The correctness of the reply given was also challenged by the members. Sometimes, the Government fails to answer questions due to the negligence of the Department concerned. For instance, on 17<sup>th</sup> July, 1997, Starred Question Nos. 41, 43 and 48, which were

listed for answers, could not be answered by the Government for the fault of the Department concerned for not providing the answers.

In order to avoid such situation, it is suggested to constitute 'Question Committee' to look into the matter so that it may not be repeated in future. The Question Committee shall be nominated by the Speaker of the Assembly from all political parties who has representative in the Assembly. The main functions of the Committee may be suggested to be performed on the following points: - (a) replies to the questions in case the members are not satisfied; (b) matters relating to questions, replies to which are not given by the Government, or are not given in time, or when given, they are not complete; (c) matters relating to the replies to the questions in case members challenge the replies; and (d) any other matters arising out of the aforesaid matters. The Committee may call the files of the different Departments concerned for examination. After going through the matter thoroughly, the Committee may prepare a report and submit the same to the House.

It is through questions in the Assembly that the Opposition members maintain their day-to-day contact with their constituencies and the public in general, whose grievances of executive or administrative character are brought to the notice of the Government. The study shows that the Opposition members tried to make use of this weapon to discredit the Government in the eye of the public. Several times, the Opposition members attacked the Government by alleging nepotism in some of the appointments in the governmental departments, corruption and financial irregularities in the administration. The Opposition members also succeeded in bringing to light the failure in implementing the Government-sponsored departmental schemes.

The general discussion on the Budget gives an opportunity to the Opposition for criticising the Government's policy. The discussion on the Budget aroused a lot of interest among the Opposition members and they narrated their grievances. The two Opposition parties stood in unison for criticising the financial irregularities and corruption in the governmental administration is notable point. To cite just one of the many instances of such alleged financial irregularities has been made by Lalsawta of MNF on 30<sup>th</sup> March, 1995, when he alleged that

corruption was rampant in Industry Department when a sum of Rs 4.80 lakhs of financial mismanagement was found.

A survey of speeches made by the Opposition members during the general discussion showed that the Opposition members cared little for the topic. Their speeches on the Budget covered a very wide degree of subjects even though it has little relevance on the Budget. Very few members from the Opposition confined themselves to the Budget and its proposals. The general tendency seemed to be that the Opposition members thought it sufficient to mention, at the beginning of their speeches, their disfavour of the Budget, and thereafter, they discussed topics which had only remote relation with the Budget.

Our study shows that the Legislature has become ineffective due to the Opposition members' inability to confine themselves to topics of discussion during the general discussion on Budget. The frequent deviations from the topics and indulgence of the Opposition members in irrelevant and insignificant issues defeated the purpose of the discussion. It was observed that the Opposition can arrange a more useful discussion by confining to a few specific items of the Budget. A purposeful discussion on these few items will be far more effective than a diffused and discursive discussion on many items.

From the Budget discussion, it was found that the Budget and its documents containing mass of materials were not very much helpful to the Opposition members for understanding the Budget. The Budget documents had been full of financial words and figures which make it difficult for the members to understand. It was felt that the information contained in the Budget document should be simplified so as to make them understandable and improve the readability and then it would be very helpful to the members of the Opposition for having fruitful and purposeful discussion. It was also observed that the time available for the discussion of the Budget on the floor of the House was inadequate to enable the Opposition members to make a comprehensive, critical review and assessment of Government's actions, financial policy and operations.

Adjournment Motion is a device to raise the discussion on a matter which has occurred suddenly and which is not on the agenda, but is of urgent

public importance. Adjournment Motion provides an opportunity to members to seek precedence for a recently occurred matter of urgency over the previously arranged programme of the Assembly. The purpose of an Adjournment Motion is to draw the attention of the House to a definite matter of urgent public importance and seek discussion on the subject forthwith by adjourning the business before the House. As the Adjournment Motion disturbs the scheduled programme and consumes much time of the House, the Speaker has been very strict in admitting such motions. It has been sparingly permitted by the Speaker. Only those notices of Adjournment Motions have been allowed to be discussed which were definite, urgent in public interest and importance.

The present day Adjournment Motions in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly are generally intended only to draw the attention of the House and the Government to the importance of events taking place in the State and need to take urgent measures to meet such situation or to condemn the Government for inefficiency in or indifferent to any serious matter. During the period under study, only 3 Adjournment Motions moved by the Opposition were admitted and discussed in the House. Adjournment Motion offers ample opportunity to go into the entire problem and point out the callousness of the Government and its complacency. At the time of discussion, the Opposition was able to pin-point the inefficiency of the Government in tackling the problems of the State. The Minister's preparedness to look into a certain matter demonstrates its effectiveness. Detailed explanations are given by the Minister with assurances. Sometimes, an Adjournment Motion withdrawn after wresting assurance is almost effective as one that has been passed. For instance, on 23<sup>th</sup> March, 1998, Zoramthanga of MNF withdrew his Adjournment Motion after having been moved and discussed as a result of the assurance given by the Finance Minister. Thus, Adjournment Motion is another tool in the hands of the Opposition to unearth and bring to light the Government's inefficiency in solving the burning problems of the State.

Of all the devices available to the Legislature, the No-Confidence Motion is the most direct and effective weapon in the hands of the Opposition to oust the Government. The Opposition moved only one No-Confidence Motion during the term of the Third Assembly. While discussing the Motion, the Opposition

managed to line up charges against the Government. The Government was made to stand on trial and public opinion was directed towards the allegations during the debate. The Opposition members could substantiate their arguments and allegations with facts and figures. The study shows that the two Opposition parties could make use of this weapon as an effective instrument to discredit the Government in the eyes of the public. Though defeated, the Opposition succeeded in meaningful arguments to expose the problems of the people by pointing out specifically with adequate information, while pin-pointing the financial irregularities and the failures in the administration.

It is suggested that the present practice of moving one-line motion should be discontinued. It should be laid down in the Rules of the Assembly that a motion of No-Confidence should be self-explanatory by setting out the specific grounds for the lack of confidence. The debate should be confined to the stated points only. This would make the disposal of a No-Confidence Motion possible within reasonable time and also raise the standard of debate. Further, in order to check the unnecessary overflow of No-Confidence Motion, it is suggested that a No-Confidence Motion should not be allowed to be moved for the second time within a period of six months. The present Rules of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly prescribe that the leave to a No-Confidence Motion has to be granted if 6 members of the House rise in support of the motion. In order to check the misuse of the right to move a No-Confidence Motion and save the time and energy of the House, it is suggested that the minimum requirements for the leave of the House should be enhanced to 10 members.

Censure Motion gives an opportunity to the Opposition members to criticise the Minister concerned by bringing to surface his failure or inadequate action. The device is used to take into consideration a policy of the definite matter of the Department concerned. During the period under study, only one Censure Motion against the Minister of Excise was moved and discussed. The nature of the debate enabled the Opposition members to criticised the Minister with specific matters of his Department. The Opposition raised a hue and cry about the serious situation which prevailed in the State owing to the failure of the Minister to contain

drugs and liquor which caused death to the youths. The Opposition unanimously criticised the Minister for his inability to contain the two social evils and demanded his resignation. The Minister has to state his case more fully and it is hard for him to evade the issue. Though the Censure Motion was defeated, the Opposition succeeded in giving a shock treatment to the Minister.

A resolution is a device facilitating deliberation by which the Legislature makes a formal recommendation for action of the Government and makes known its definite views and determination on any given matter. A resolution is a recommendatory and not mandatory in nature. The responsiveness of the Government to the resolution adopted is chiefly indicated by the action taken on them.

During the period under survey, the Opposition moved 19 resolutions, out of which 7 were adopted. The impact of resolutions on Government was not uniform. Some of them were accepted by the Government and were implemented; some were accepted but not implemented; and still some were not accepted and were consequently rejected by the House, but their purposes had been carried out by discussing on the floor of the House.

The real hurdle in the path of resolutions moved by the Opposition is the inadequacy of time allotted for their discussion. The Government did not provide any alternative time. As a result, majority of the Opposition members' resolutions lapsed. If a resolution lapsed, it could not be revived. It might be worthwhile to consider whether the time set apart in the House on Fridays for the consideration of such resolutions could at least be increased by an hour or two, if not the whole Friday, except Question Hour and other urgent business.

Beside these, the study of the assessment of the role played by the Opposition in the Mizoram Legislative Assembly brings out certain distinctive features:-

Firstly, the co-operation that was displayed by the Opposition parties inside the House was apparent because the only thing common being their animosity towards the ruling party without giving up their ideological differences and

viewpoints. The Opposition could never present a united front to the Government in the real sense because of the ideological barriers and lack of common programme. Their target of attack was always directed towards the Government but this by itself was inadequate to bring about real unity.

Secondly, a conscious Opposition ought to make the best use of the recognised parliamentary devices to discredit the party in power in the eye of the public. All the available tools in the Opposition armoury were used to criticise, to expose and to defame the Government. The Opposition seized every available opportunity to criticise the Government for its failure on various fronts, disclose its weakness and certain lapses. The Opposition was found forcing divisions of the House when occasions so arose. They never hesitated to submit notes of dissents. In terms of performance, the Opposition appeared to have performed their role well, though their achievements may not be spectacular.

Thirdly, the Opposition has not succeeded in making its impact felt in a worthwhile manner inside the House in the eye of the public. Importance of the Opposition is yet to be realised by the people at large. The Opposition, on their part, has not contributed significantly to secure such realisation through political education of the people.

Fourthly, the level of discussion on various subjects improved as far as the quality of speeches and contents were concerned. The Opposition rarely used abusive language or derogatory or unparliamentary words. The Opposition also maintained proper level of parliamentary behaviour, decency and decorum. Obstruction and boycott of the proceedings of the House, slogan shouting, walkout from the House etc were a rare phenomenon. It appeared that the Opposition parties were fully conscious that the Legislative Assembly should be a forum of healthy parliamentary discussions and deliberations for the welfare of the people of the State.

Lastly, one interesting aspect that came to the surface quite often was that while the Opposition parties never lost sight of their common objective of opposing the Government, they could not, at the same time, resist criticizing

non-ruling party within the Opposition. They did not hesitate to criticise each other when occasion demanded.

To sum up, the Opposition in Mizoram appeared to have performed their role satisfactorily. The Opposition did not oppose the Government just for the sake of the Opposition. As occasions demanded, they knew the art of compromise and the virtues of co-operation. Reasonable and constructive suggestions offered by the Opposition were found in abundance in the pages of the Assembly proceedings. Some of them were accepted, many were rejected and many more received great appreciation from the Treasury Bench.

The Opposition in Mizoram is in the process of making. Mizoram has not been able to build an effective and strong Opposition in the Assembly although a number of Opposition parties got representations in the Assembly. The Opposition benches were graced by great orators and eminent personalities for their debating and parliamentary skills, but it is, indeed, the misfortune that there could be no growth of healthy and effective Opposition. The Opposition in Mizoram lacks the true characteristics of an Opposition. It is a conglomeration of heterogeneous groups which are fundamentally and ideologically different from each other. Their alliances inside the Assembly are merely to oppose the ruling party and are not based on any set principles.

The Opposition in Mizoram consisting of heterogeneous groups, though united in opposing the ruling party on some major issues, were not unanimous on many issues. Such divergent views of Opposition parties prevented them to make any united front. The Opposition in Mizoram could not impress the public because they cannot rise unitedly when occasion so demands. They showed lack of spirit and cohesion in times of need. The non-cooperative spirit of the Opposition was noticeable on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1996 at the time of the discussion of the Mizoram (Village Councils)(Amendment) Bill, 1996. When the MNF Opposition pointed out the drawbacks of the Bill, the Government showed reluctance in accepting even they were reasonable arguments. When the MNF walked out of the House as a mark of protest, the MJD Opposition remained in the House exhibiting non-cooperation with their fellow Opposition party. Such

behaviour of the Opposition lowers their position in popular esteem. Thus, owing to ideological differences, the Opposition parties were not in a position to pull together, which ultimately slowed down the functioning of the Opposition in the Assembly.

The problems and difficulties faced by the Opposition in Mizoram in providing alternative to the ruling party may be enumerated as under:-

First, a party largely depends on its electoral support on organisation, grassroots mass contact and its reputation as an effective organisation. Party-building had not been a strong point of the Opposition in Mizoram. The leaders of most Opposition parties had been in those top positions for so long that no new persons had been able to come up. They had come to project an image of aged parties. The Opposition needs to refurbish its image if it hoped to attract new people. Projecting young, dynamic and energetic leadership was indispensable. Recruitment and promotion of elites within the party organisation had been a neglected aspect. The major problem in organisation was mobilization and expansion of support. The Opposition failed to broaden its support base, to spread its mobilization efforts to wider areas. Organisation needs a team of dedicated workers. To carry party programme and ideology to the unexplored areas and to attract people to its fold, the importance of dedicated batch of workers with strong conviction cannot be overemphasised. Duverger analysed this fact and said that, “Lenin and his associates’ success in making Communist Party of Russia a well-knit and strong party was due to stress they given on its organisation”.<sup>1</sup> Besides, lack of frontal organisations like youth, women, students, labour, senior etc have also responsible for the poor success of the Opposition in Mizoram.

Second, multiple Opposition parties and their fragmented nature is a very crucial obstacle to the emergence of an effective and united Opposition. It meant a lack of credible alternative to the ruling party. The absence of general agreement among the Opposition parties enabled the ruling party to point out lack of unity within the Opposition ranks. The Opposition in Mizoram will be strong, effective and formidable if like minded political parties among the Opposition could merge into a single party and prepare the ground for the emergence of two-

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1. Maurice Duverger, *Op.Cit.*, p. 170.

party system. If the Opposition parties are mentally prepared for it, then “unity is not difficult in Opposition, when hostility to a common foe is the law of life”.<sup>2</sup> The Opposition parties should come together to demonstrate their firm belief in the Opposition unity evolving a common minimum programme. “Democracy on proper lines,” remarks Speaker Mavalankar, “will never grow unless there are the fewest number of parties, possibly not more than two major parties which can almost balance each other as the Government and the Opposition”.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, like minded Opposition parties should merge to give rise to fewer parties which ultimately will lead to a meaningful Opposition. Hence, for the survival and proper functioning of the Opposition in Mizoram, sooner they merge the better.

Lastly, it is an admitted fact that a pro-ruling body always receives the patronage from the Government. Very often, there were allegations based on facts that a non-ruling front becomes a target of the Government’s discriminative policies. Supporters of the Opposition were alleged to have suffered due to the partial treatment employed by the Government. It frightens many to make common cause with the Opposition. For the speedy fulfillment of their requirements, people prefer to support the ruling party.

The future of the Opposition in Mizoram also depends to a large extent upon the behaviour of the Government and the public. They can help in the growth of a healthy Opposition in many ways. Firstly, the existence and performance of ‘independent political thinking body’ can determine the future of the Opposition in Mizoram. To attract the electorate towards Opposition front, voluntary associations of scholars, public men and others interested in parliamentary democracy, should make continuous efforts to organise public discussion, bring out publications, arrange systematic research, seminar etc. This body should examine in depth the crucial question, the quality of the accountability of the administration, supervision and scrutiny of the Assembly for the improvement of parliamentary system. This body can act as a vehicle for popular dissemination of democratic values in the State and can exercise great influence over the people and rendered useful services in bringing about general improvement of the quality and performance of the Opposition. Systematic education in the art of parliamentary

2. Harold J. Laski, *A Grammar of Politics*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1951, p. 357.

3. M.N. Kaul and S.L. Shukdher, *Op.Cit.*, p. 313.

system will undoubtedly make the Opposition more efficient and will contribute to the growing success of a healthy and effective Opposition in Mizoram.

Secondly, the media, including print and electronic media, can also determine the future of the Opposition in Mizoram. An independent and impartial media is essential for the success of Opposition. The media has to climb stiff cliffs in moulding public opinion by putting forth the truth. Correct appraisal and exposure by the media made a lot of differences in politics. The performance and achievement of the Opposition in the Assembly will have little public impact unless it receives sufficient media coverage. An impartial coverage of the activities and news pertaining to the constructive and practical suggestions offered by the Opposition can help the Opposition in a big way. As an agency for moulding and expressing public opinion, the media can make a positive contribution for the growth of a strong Opposition in Mizoram.

Thirdly, the Speaker ought to behave as an independent authority in the legislature who can impartially settle the issues. Slight deviation from impartiality can have penalising effect on the Opposition. In the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, enormous discretionary powers have been given to the Speaker of the Assembly by the Assembly rules. The Speaker who generally conducts the proceedings of the House is expected to be above party politics. But when the Speaker belongs to the party in power, then there are reasons to doubt his impartiality. For his supposed party affiliation, on many occasions, the Opposition expressed doubt in his rulings and decisions. Thus, it can be said that a Speaker having leaning towards a party in power has demoralising effect on the Opposition. To avoid such a situation and to earn the confidence of all members of the House, it is suggested that the Speaker must renounce his party membership once he is elected to the august office. If that is not possible, it is further suggested that impartial character of the Speakership should be maintained at all costs and limitations should be imposed on his discretionary powers. The amount of discipline in the House and the respect of the House largely depends upon the impartiality and neutrality of the Speaker on his rulings and decisions.

The future of the Opposition in Mizoram largely depends upon the behaviour of the members of Opposition themselves. Its survival depends upon

its own will to cover the handicaps from which now it suffers. The problems and difficulties faced by the Opposition in Mizoram are not insurmountable. The presence of too many political parties with different ideologies stands in a way of a strong Opposition being built. The Opposition parties had to realise that they owe a responsibility and have an obligation to the people and that they would not be able to achieve anything until they were able to speak with one voice, present a single and united front with common programme of action which made sense to the people. If the Opposition do not address themselves to the vital issues and offer alternative solutions, programmes and plans, they would lose at the election and become a minority in the Legislature.

If the Opposition in Mizoram is to be developed in an objective manner, the only hope for building up a strong Opposition lies in the merger of like minded Opposition parties to form a single united party. Opposition homogeneity is possible only if the political parties have common basic ideals though their policies and programmes may differ in respect of details. They should work actively to bring about such a party and keep all their selfish interests aside. Mizoram needs an Opposition which could speak for the people and interpret their feelings, their needs, their aspirations and show a more realistic approach to the various problems. It is up to the Opposition to be ever vigilant and safeguard the institution which have been built up to strengthen the Legislature, heighten its prestige and make it model for other States to emulate.

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