# Chapter 2
## MIZORAM – A PROFILE

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Chapter 2
MIZORAM – A PROFILE

Having introduced the field of consumer behaviour, research problem, the study design, and methodology adopted in the previous chapter, this chapter presents an overview of the State of Mizoram, located in India’s North East in terms of geography, demography, history, culture, political and administrative, commerce and trade, economy and infrastructure. Such an analysis ultimately enables to set a stage to understand the Mizo household customer, the subject matter of this study.

2.1 GEOGRAPHY AND DEMOGRAPHY

Mizoram is located in the North East corner of India (Exhibit 2.1). Situated between Myanmar and Bangladesh, it has a strategic significance geographically and politically. It shares a common international boundary of 585 kilometres with these two countries. It is bordered on the northwest by the State of Tripura, on the north by the State of Assam and on the northeast by the State of Manipur. Mizoram has a total area of only 21,087 square kilometres, ranking 24th in size among the States of India.
Nearly two-thirds of Mizoram is hilly, leaving very little cultivable land. Over 60% of the total area is classified as forest and under the ambit of the Forest Department, Government of Mizoram. As many as 21 major hills ranges or peaks of different heights run through the length and breadth of the State with the highest peak *Phawngpui* (Blue Mountain) towering 2,065 metres above the sea level. The terrain has, perhaps, the most variegated topography among all hilly areas in this part of the country. The hills are extremely rugged and sleep and the ranges and leaving some plains scattered occasionally here and there.

Mizoram has a pleasant climate. It is generally cool in summer and not very cold in winter. During winter, the temperature varies from 11°C to 21°C and in the summer it varies from 20°C to 29°C. The entire area is under the direct
influence of the monsoon. It rains heavily from May to September and the average rainfall in Aizawl is 208 cms. Winters in Mizoram is wonderfully clear and blue, and in the enchanting view of wide stretches of a vast lake of cloud. The upper parts of the hills are, predictably cold, cool during the summer, while the lower reaches are relatively warm and humid. Storms break out during March-April, just before or around the summer. The three months from June to August are known as the rainy season. The climate has at its moderate best in the two autumnal months, September and October, when the temperature ranges from 19 to 24 degree C.

The State is located in the bio-geographic zone of 9B North East Hills and possesses extremely rich bio-diversity. The local flora and fauna bear a very close affinity and resemblance with floral and faunal components of Indo-Malayan and Indo Chinese sub-regions. As per the estimation done by Forest Survey of India (State Forest Report, 2001), the percentage of forest cover in Mizoram was ranked at third with 82.01%, just after Lakshadweep (89.91%) and Andaman & Nicobar Island (84.01%) among all the States and Union Territory of India.¹

The State has many rain-fed, non-perennial rivers and streams draining into Bangladesh. Although many rivers and streamlets drain the hill ranges the most important and useful rivers are the Tlawng (also known as Dhaleswari or Katakhal), Tut (Gutur), Tuirial (Sonai) and Tuivawl which flow through the northern territory and eventually join river Barak in Cachar. The Kolodoyne (also known as Chhimtuipui) which originates in Myanmar is an important river in the south Mizoram. It has four tributaries and the river is in patches. The Western part is drained by Karnaphuli (Khawthlang river) and its tributaries. A number of important towns including Chittagong in Bangladesh are situated at the mouth of the river. Before Independence, access to other parts of the country was possible
only through the river routes via Cachar (Assam) in the north, and via Chittagong in the south. Entry through the later was sealed when the Sub-continent was partitioned and ceded to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1947.

The total population in 2001 was 8,88,573 with population density of 42 persons per square kilometres which is the second lowest after Arunachal Pradesh (Census, 2001). Mizoram has a decent sex ratio of 935 and comprise of 50.35% of rural and 49.65% of urban population (Statistical Handbook, 2008). The State, dominated by tribal population (94.5%) with a young history, had emerged as second the most literate State in India (88.88%) only after Kerala according to the Census of India, 2001. The demographic profile of Mizoram in terms of number of districts, numbers of households, male vs. female population etc. are presented in Table 2.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Area (Sqkm)</th>
<th>Households</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Decadal variation % 1991-2001</th>
<th>Literacy rate (%)</th>
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The working population of Mizoram as reported in the Statistical Handbook (2008) was 40.8% and the break-up of Mizo workers was: cultivators (54.9%), agricultural labourers (5.7%), household industries (1.5%) and other workers (37.9%).
2.2 HISTORY

Historians believe that the Mizos were a part of the great wave of the Mongolian race spilling over into the eastern India centuries ago. It was believed that the Mizos had once lived in the North West China and there from, they moved to Burma (now Myanmar) via South East of Tibet (Thanhranga HC, 2007). It is not easy to present a vivid account of historical and cultural background as well as evolution of settlements in Mizoram. This was mainly due to the fact that there is no integrated historical account of the region as it was occupied by ignorant tribals who have lived for a long time in physical isolation, and have no script of their own. There was hardly any evidence of pre-historic settlement in this region (Rintluanga Pahuau, 2009).

Anthropological evidences showed that the Mizos are Mongoloid stock in origin, which migrate sometime to the present habitat somewhere from China (Rintluanga Pachau, 2009). This perception was also augmented by legendary tales and folk songs. Traditionally, the Mizos claim themselves the descendants from Chhinlung, a mythical cave, somewhere east of Shan State in China. Zawla (1964) opined that the Mizo migration began in 1463 from the State of Shan. The Mizos entered Mizoram in four successive batches (Songate, 1977). It was obvious that the first batch entered Mizoram in the period between 1600 and 1700 AD. The first batch included the sub-clans of Hmar such as Hrangkhawl, Pang, Mualthuam and Chhunthang under their chief, Chawnmang who eventually migrated to Tripura. They were followed by Hrangchal, Ngurte, Darngawn, Lungtau, Leiri and Changsen. Since each clan followed a particular route and built their own villages, the villages were known by their clan’s name. To this day, many of these villages are in existence under such names like Biate,
Khawzawl, Ngur, Thiak, Vankal and so forth. The 18th and 19th century witnessed many tribal conflicts while the hills were ruled by the tribal chieftains. Particularly while the Mizos settled east of Tiau river, numerous chiefs who ruled over the own dominion, side by side, started to find the area congested with little or no scope for expansion. The desire for supremacy and territorial possession culminated in raid by a larger village to a smaller village. These war expeditions gradually spilled over the realms of the hills, taunting out attention of the British occupants in India. The Blackwood’s expedition (1844), Lister’s expedition (1850), the Lushai expedition (1871) and the Chin Lushai expedition (1889-90) launched by the British were punitive in nature to teach a lesson to the marauding Mizos (or Lushais, as they were known). The British annexed Mizoram in 1871-72 after military expedition (Kabra KC, 2008). It was made part of the then Assam vide Government of India Notification No. 591-E.B. Dated 1st April, 1898 with Aizawl as its capital (Exhibit 2.2).

**Exhibit 2.2**
**Aizawl in 1890**
2.3 CULTURE

Before the British moved into the hills, for all practical purposes the village and the clan formed units of Mizo society. The Mizo code of ethics moved around Tlawmngaihna, an untranslatable term meaning on the part of everyone to be hospitable, kind, unselfish and helpful to others. Tlawmngaihna to Mizo stands for the compelling moral force which finds expression in self-sacrifice for the service of the others. Mizos often gather together to help in disaster management like landslides or famine. The Mizos have been enchanted to their new-found faith of Christianity brought about by the advent of British missionaries with so much dedication and submission that their entire social life and thought-process been transformed and guided by the Christian church organisation and their sense of values has also undergone drastic change. Even then, the Mizos are a close-knit society with no class distinction and no discrimination on the ground of gender. In a typical Mizo village, most of the people are cultivators and the village exists like a big family. Birth of a child, marriage in the village and death of a person in the village or a community feast arranged by a member of the village are important occasions in which the whole village is involved.

In the olden days, the chief’s house and the zawlbuk (community house for young, single men) were the focus of village life. A model Mizo village can be seen in Exhibit 2.3 and a painting of the traditional zawlbuk is shown in Exhibit 2.4.
Though mostly Christians, the Mizos have kept alive their rich cultural heritage, colourful customs and lively traditions. Festivals (Kut) and dances of the Mizos had a unique tribal flavour. Other than Christmas and New Year’s Day, which are the most popular festivals, *Chapchar Kut*, after clearing of jungles for cultivation of the *jhum* crop in February-March; *Pawl Kut*, after the harvests when the granary is full in December, and *Mim Kut*, dedicated to departed souls after
the maize harvest in September were the festivals celebrated with much gusto. The most popular dances of Mizoram are Cheraw, also called Bamboo dance (Exhibit 2.5); Khuallam, a dance for visitors or guests (Exhibit 2.6); Chheih Lam, a social dance at the end of a day's work (Exhibit 2.7) and Solakai or Sarlamkai, a dance of the Mara and Pawl tribes (Exhibit 2.8).

**Exhibit 2.5**
*Cheraw dance*

**Exhibit 2.6**
*Khuallam dance*
In modern Mizoram, there are a few community establishments in urban centres that frequently arrange social events such as Supermodel Competition, musical concerts, comedy shows and reality TV shows such as Mizo Idol, discussion groups, and scientific or technological conferences. Yet, much of the social life often revolves around church activities. An active church life is perhaps one of the reasons why Mizos are such a tight-knit community.
Although Christianity brought about a near total transformation in the Mizo lifestyle and outlook, some customary laws have stayed on. The efforts of the missionaries were not directed at changing the basic customs of the Mizo society. The customs and traditions which they found meaningless and harmful were abolished by persistent preachings and teachings. Tea replaced zu (local rice beer) as a popular drink. Zawlbuk was replaced by modern education. Animal sacrifices on ceremonial occasions, which were once an integral part of Mizo religious system, were now considered anathema. Yet, traditions such as the payment of bride price are still continued along with some other customs and community traditions.

A Mizo marriage is preceded by courtship and engagement. The boy and girl are allowed to mix freely during the engagement period. But an engagement may be broken off midway if the couple fails who get on with each other. As all the Mizos are now Christians, marriages are solemnised in Church. When a Mizo boy approaches his bride-to-be parents for permission to get married, the first thing he has to do is to settle the bride price. This was paid through the interventions of mediators or palai. The settlement of the bride price i.e. ₹ 450/- to be paid by the bridegroom is an essential pre-requisite to a Mizo marriage. The principal bride price is known as Manpui. Besides, there are subsidiary bride prices like sumhmahruai and sumfang. These prices are to be paid to the bride's father or brother. Pusum is payable to the nearest relation on the side of the bride's mother who, most often than not, turns out to be the maternal uncle of the bride. An equivalent amount, known as Ni-ar, is paid to the bride's paternal aunt as well. The elder sister or sisters of the bride are entitled to Naupuakpuan. In the event of the bride being the eldest daughter or an only child, this price is received by other
female relations. A portion also goes to the Palal, who acts as the bride's foster father and takes on the responsibility of safeguarding her interests throughout her married life. The bridesmaid also gets a price known as thianman. For all those who get a share of the bride price comes under a special obligation to look after the welfare and interest of the bride.

The Mizos, being patriarchal, property is inherited by men rather than women. The family property usually goes to the youngest son although the father may leave shares to other sons, if he desires. If a man has no sons, his property is inherited by the next kin on the male side. If a man dies leaving a widow and minor children, a male relation (who usually happens to be a brother of the deceased) takes charge of the family and looks after the property until one of the sons comes of age. If no such male relative is around, then the widow acts as a trustee of her husband's property until such times as his son or sons are old enough to inherit it. However, although the youngest son of the family is the natural or formal heir to his father under the Mizo customary laws, in actuality the paternal property is generally divided among all sons. The youngest of them gets a preferential treatment and he would get the first choice of the property, and he would get two shares of the cash in case of one each for the other brothers. A daughter or a wife can inherit property only if the deceased has no heir on the male side. Women, however, are entitled to their own property. However, a written 'will' formally executed may now confer woman the right to inherit the family property, which is a positive amendment to the traditional customary laws.
2.4 POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE

When India attained Independence in 1947, the region continued to remain as one of the districts of Assam, known as Lushai Hills District, and was changed into Mizo District in 1954 by the Act of Parliament. During the 1960s, a fairly larger percentage of people of Mizoram were not satisfied with the political administration of the Indian government on the region. The Mizo National Front (MNF), founded by Laldenga, found support from various sections of the Mizos, especially the youth. They not only felt that the political administration in the region was not aiming at developmental activities, merely using as an institution for a arbitrary and selfish non-Mizo administrator, but also felt that the region was provided by nature for them with full freedom upon which the administration was to be in the hands of the Mizos with regional identity and harmony of the settlers. Upon the aim of MNF to find political segregation from the Indian Union, the MNF turned rebellious in 1966 and thus the area was declared “Disturbed Area.” The political turmoil badly upset the developmental activities of the region. Finally, the Mizoram Peace Accord was signed on the 30th June, 1986. The Constitution (53rd) Amendment Bill and the State of Mizoram Bill was passed on 7th August, 1986 and the declaration of “Disturbed Area” was withdrawn. Consequent upon these Bills, Mizoram was conferred Statehood on 20th February, 1987 and Mizoram became the 23rd State of the Indian Union (Rintluanga Pachuau, 2009).

Like all other States of India, Mizoram is governed by a Chief Minister and a council of ministers responsible to an elected unicameral legislature and by a Governor, appointed by the President of India. The Governor is the head of the State but his role is largely ceremonial. The Mizoram legislative assembly has 40
members who are elected by means of a popular vote conducted by the Election Commission of India.

Administratively, Mizoram is divided into eight districts, namely, Aizawl, Champhai, Kolasib, Lawngtlai, Lunglei, Mamit, Saiha and Serchhip as shown in Exhibit 2.9.

**Exhibit 2.9**

*Map of Mizoram showing the administrative districts*
2.4.1 Aizawl

Aizawl district is located in the middle north of the State, between 24°25’16.04” and 23°18’17.78”N latitudes and 92°37’03.27” and 93°11’45.69”E longitudes. It is bordered by Champhai district in the east, Serchhip district by the south, Mamit and Kolasib district by the west and the State of Assam by the north. The total area accounts for 16.97% of the total geographical area of the State. The district area is reported to be 3576.31 square km with an urban population of 73.23%. There are 155 villages in Aizawl district. The literacy rate of the district was 96.64%.

2.4.2 Champhai

Champhai district is located in the north eastern side of Mizoram, between 24°05’03.99” and 23°00’03.25”N latitudes and 93°00’31.29” and 93°26’17.66”E longitudes and is bounded by Aizawl and Serchhip District by the West, Manipur State by North and Myanmar by the East. The geographical area of the district accounts for 15.11% of the total geographical area of the State. 28.03% of the population resides in urban areas. There are 89 villages within the district. The literacy rate of the district was 91.88%.

2.4.3 Kolasib

Kolasib district is located in the extreme north of the State, between 24°31’14.43” and 23°51’15.13”N latitudes and 92°31’46.92” and 92°54’11.40”E longitudes. It is bounded by Aizawl district in the east and in the south, Mamit district in the west and the State of Assam in the north. The geographical area accounts for 6.56% of the total geographical area of the State and is the smallest district in Mizoram. 59.32% of the population in the district may be classified as urban. At present, oil exploration work is being undertaken by the Oil & Natural
Gas Corporation of India (ONGC) in few places like Hortoki in the district. The district has the urban population of 17.34% and it has 66 villages. The literacy rate of the district was 80.09%.

2.4.4 Lawngtlai

Lawngtlai district is located in the Southern corner of the State, between $21^\circ58'50''$ and $22^\circ45'75''$ N latitudes and $92^\circ30'50''$ and $92^\circ58'10''$ E longitudes. It is bounded by Saiha district in the east, by Lunglei district in the north, by Myanmar in the west and south. The district area accounts for 12.13% of the total geographical area of the State. Only 12.71% of the population in the district was residing in urban areas. The district has 130 villages. Only 56.46% of the people in the district were literates.

2.4.5 Lunglei

Lunglei district is located between $22^\circ32'$ and $23^\circ25'$ N latitudes and $92^\circ21'$ and $93^\circ10'$ E longitudes. It is bounded by Aizawl, Mamit and Serchhip districts in the north, by Lawngtlai and Saiha districts in the south, by Myanmar in the east and Bangladesh in the west. The district area has 21.52% of the total geographical area of the State. Urban population account for 42.40% of the total population of the district and it has 126 villages. Literacy rate was 84.20%.

2.4.6 Mamit

Mamit district is located in the north-western side of the State, between $23^\circ15'21.25''$ and $24^\circ15'16.80''$ N latitudes and $92^\circ15'44.54''$ and $92^\circ40'45.63''$ E longitudes. It is bordered by Kolasib and Aizawl districts in the east, by Lunglei district in the south, by Bangladesh in the west and by the State of Assam in the north. The geographical area of the district accounts for 14.35% of the total.
geographical area of the State. Urban population account for 17.34% of the district and it has 66 villages. The literacy rate of the district was 80.09%.

2.4.7 Saiha

Saiha district is located in the extreme south-east of the State, between 21°12′30″E and 22°48′30″N latitudes and 92°49′50″ and 93°12′30″E longitudes. It is bounded by Lawngtlai district in the west, by Lunglei district in the north and by Myanmar in the east and south. The district covers 6.63% of the total geographical area of the State. Urban population account for 32.44% of the district’s population and it has 76 villages. The literacy rate of the district was 82.43%.

2.4.8 Serchhip

Serchhip district is located in the heart of the State, between 23°35′58″82″ and 23°00′20′84″ N latitudes and 92°41′06″00″ and 92°40′39″63″ E longitudes. Lunglei lies to the south of the district boundary, Aizawl to the north and Champhai district to the east. The district covers 6.74 % of the total geographical area of the State. 52.59% of the people in the district reside in urban areas. The district has 34 villages. The district has high rate of literacy rate of 96.16%.

The Government operations at district level are handled by the Deputy Commissioners and the Sub-Divisional Officers with their staff. The village level administration is slightly different from the rest of the country. The State has 813 Village Councils (VCs) and three Autonomous District Councils (ADC) in Chakma, Lai and Mara belts at Lawngtlai and Saiha districts.³

For the purpose of administration, the State is strategically segmented into 26 rural development blocks. More than 37 directorates and commissionerates look after the bureaucratic functioning of the State’s administration.
2.5 COMMERCE AND TRADE

During Pre-British time, the inhabitants of the State had limited trade relations with outside world through their market centres. In the Mizo economy, elephant tusks were the medium of exchange and its bones and skins were valuable articles of commerce. These items had a very good market in the neighbouring plains (Lalrinmawia, 1995). The Mizos, for the first time came into contact with the Bengali petty traders dealing in consumer goods like rice, salt, rubber, sulphur, flint glass etc. around 1838 on the border of British district of Sylhet (Suhash Chatterjee, 1990). The Mizos also used to collect and sell bees-wax, seeds of tea plants, raw rubber, bamboo, cane reeds and other hill products. There was a small trade in metal bells, silver beads, and other ornaments of Indian manufacture, which found their way through the Mizo hills from Chittagong to Akyab (Carey BS and Tuck HN, 1976). It was estimated that from December 1874 to 1878, there had been annual trade of salt, iron, brass and copper utensils, tobacco etc. of the value of र 4,84,025 in the bazaars of Cachar border (Hunter WW, 1879).

The first regular bazaar was started at Dawrpui, Aizawl, in 1919 by HWG Cole, the then Superintendent of Mizoram (Kabra KC, 2008). This bazaar was meant for selling vegetables and other local products and was held every Saturday (Exhibit 2.10).
The people of the surrounding villages were ordered by the Superintendent to come and sell whatever commodity they could find. As an encouragement, the Superintendent himself would buy whatever was left over in the evening. Very soon, Dawrpui became the biggest business centre in Mizoram. During the 1902-03, there were 17 shops in Aizawl and 16 at Lunglei and Demagiri (now known as Tlabung), which sold goods to the tune of ₹ 53,375 (about ₹ 300 per shop per month).\(^4\) Within a few years, there had been a marked improvement in trade owing to extensive use of imported and manufactured articles by the Lushai. Weekly bazaars had been started both at Aizawl and Lunglei, which were well attended by Lushai even from distant villages. The weekly Saturday bazars are still an important commercial premise distinct to the Mizos even today (Exhibit 2.11).
A noticeable feature of 1921-22 was increase in the number of Mizo shops. As a result, the volume and variety of trade increased and included cotton and woollen yarns, brass, enamel, aluminium utensils, iron pans, tobacco, cigarettes, matches, soaps, clothes, umbrellas, piece goods, shoes, fancy goods and foodstuffs (Lalrinmawia, 1995). The government gave protection to locals to ensure that the people from other regions do not monopolise the trade in Mizoram. After Independence, the control of trade passed on to the District Council set up in 1952, which under the Lushai Hills (Trading by non-Tribals) Regulations, 1953 regulated it and issued trade licenses to the traders. There were two kinds of licenses – one permanent and the other, temporary. A large number of Bengali traders like MK Guha and Sons, Marwari business houses like Khandelwals, Bhuras and Sardas were the pioneer traders in Aizawl with large investments. Mizo business men like Pachhunga and Lahlmingthanga established themselves as leading retail houses and flourished within a short span of time and now, the
Mizos in Aizawl experiencing the joy of shopping in a mall in three-storyed new shopping complex, the Millennium centre (Exhibit 2.12).

**Exhibit 2.12**
**Millennium centre at Aizawl**

In respect of trade and commerce, measures were taken to create the basic infrastructure for its development. Though the State Bank of India (SBI) had set up its first branch in Aizawl on 29th December, 1971, it soon started expanding its activities in other parts of Mizoram. Mizoram Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) now known as Zoram Industrial Development Corporation Ltd. (ZIDCO) was set up in 1978. In the cooperative sector, Mizoram Cooperative Apex Bank (MCAB) was set up on 5th December, 1978 but became functional on 31st July, 1982 and Mizoram State Cooperative Marketing and Consumers Federation Ltd. (MIZOFED) was set up on 9th December, 1981. This provided a great fillip and support to trade and commerce in general and to the cooperative sector in particular. The Mizoram Rural Bank (MRB) was established on 23rd September, 1983, which paved way for rural credit.
The Government of Mizoram has played an important role in the promotion and regulation of business in Mizoram. Various measures undertaken by the government can be seen in the enactment of Directorate of Trade and Commerce on the 20th February, 1987 to deal with promotion and regulation of trade, agricultural marketing, regulation of markets, establishments of market yards and trade centres, border trade, trade by nontribals and interstate trade. Administration and management of agricultural marketing was handed over by the central government to the State government from 1st April 1992. The Government of Mizoram incorporated the Mizoram Agricultural Marketing Corporation Ltd. (MAMCO) in 1993 to take up marketing of marketable surplus of agricultural products outside the State. The Directorate of Supply and Transport was formed on 17th May, 1972, for procurement and distribution of food grains and other essential commodities, building materials, cement, GI sheets and so on. Later, the directorate was bifurcated into two separate directorates, one for public transport and the other for food and civil supplies. The Directorate of Food and Civil Supplies is responsible for procurement of essential commodities and their distribution through a distribution network which comprises MIZOFED, gas agencies and petrol pumps for LPG, petrol and diesel and fair price shops for food and other consumable items. It is distressing to note that the movement of merchandise to Mizoram has been one-way. The trucks move back empty from Mizoram down to Silchar (Assam) and other places after unloading the items they had carried. The only exception has been some loads of raw ginger being supplied from Mizoram to Silchar, for which full credit may be accorded to diligent cultivators in the fields (Kabra KC, 2008). In addition, some forest products like
broom, bamboo and cane are exported from Mizoram in small quantity (Exhibit 2.13).

Exhibit 2.13
Raw brooms being dried in the Sun

The organisation of business in Mizoram is still largely single proprietorship concerns. Women have an important role in business and about 20% of the enterprises are owned and managed by the females. Only 22% of the enterprises have been in existence for 20 years or more and about three-fourth of the enterprises are owned and managed by the first generation entrepreneurs (Kabra KC, 2008). Most people engaged in business in Mizoram have some background of education. Retail trade was the order of the day. The overwhelming majority of traders were retailers and only a handful of dealers functioned as wholesale distributors. The chain stores and multiplex department stores are yet to come up, even though a handful of them mushroomed in Aizawl. In rural areas, hawkers carrying their wares on the back are still playing a dominant role in the trading activity. The Village Councils (VCs) have set up small market centres
under single roof where the vendors of fruits and vegetables and small retailers sell their produce. The State government has also set up some such rural *haats* (Exhibit 2.14).

**Exhibit 2.14**

*A rural haat in Mamit constructed by the Government*

Silchar was the main centre for procuring most of the items for traders in Mizoram. Guwahati and Kolkata are the other important markets. Some items were also procured from Delhi, Mumbai, Shillong, Siliguri, Moreh and Champhai (Zokhawthar). Except for the big business firms in Aizawl, all other business persons in Mizoram cater to the local demand. Mostly the goods are sold for cash. Nearly 25% enterprises including wholesalers sell goods on credit. About 5% traders offer free home deliver facility in case of bulk purchase. Around Christmas, about 11% shopkeepers offer discount of the items purchased. Generally after sales service and replacement facility is not given. However, 15% traders claimed that they provide after sales service and 22% claim that they extend replacement facility (Kabra KC, 2008).
2.6 ECONOMY

Mizoram is one of the least developed States in the country. The reason is often attributed to its extreme and isolated location and various geographical constraints such as topography and soil texture.

The Economic Survey of Mizoram for 2009-10 showed that as per the advance estimates of 2009-10, the economy is expected to grow at 7.2 per cent and the data on quick estimates of the economy for 2008-09 indicated a growth of 7 percent. The growth rate of the economy is reassuring in the light of the nation’s estimated growth of 7.2 per cent in 2009-10. The quick estimates of 2009-10 indicated that the services sector continued to be the dominating sector with its share of 66 per cent, followed by industrial sector at 19.5 per cent and agricultural sector at 15.5 per cent. It was imperative that the Government invest more on industrial and agricultural sectors for more balanced growth.

The advance estimate of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of Mizoram for 2009-10 is ₹ 4266.73 crore at current prices with nominal growth of 11.65 per cent. The GSDP at constant prices is estimated at ₹ 2808.91 crore with real growth of 7.2 per cent. Agricultural sector is estimated to grow at 3 per cent, industrial sector at 7.48 per cent and 8.07 per cent for tertiary sector. Sector-wise contributions to the economy are: agricultural and allied sector 14.32 per cent, industrial sector 19.39 per cent and tertiary sector 66.29 per cent.

The advance estimates of 2009-10 placed the GSDP at factor cost at current prices of ₹ 4266.73 crore. GSDP at constant prices was also estimated at ₹ 2808.91 crore. The nominal and real growth rates respectively stood at 12.01 per cent and 7.2 per cent. The per capita at current prices is estimated at ₹ 32634 and ₹ 22501 at constant prices.
The contribution of the agricultural sector in the GSDP in 2008-09 was 14.91 per cent and is estimated at 14.32 per cent in 2009-10. The share of industrial sector in the GSDP remains more or less constant at 19.34 per cent in 2008-09 and 19.39 per cent in 2009-10. The services sector continued to be the major shareholder of the GSDP at 66.75 per cent in 2008-09 and is estimated to contribute a share of 66.29 per cent in 2009-10. The share of the services sector, following the national trend, has been increasing over the last few years.

In an economy predominant by services sector, the extent of public expenditure, the nature of expenditure and priorities determine the economic activities of the State to a large extent.

2.7 INFRASTRUCTURE

2.7.1 Power and Electricity

The maiden step in electricity power development was taken in 1962 with the commission of 75 kilowatt diesel power station in Aizawl. Power is imported mainly from North Eastern Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO), National Hydro Power Corporation (NHPC), Assam State Electricity Board (ASEB), Tripura and Meghalaya, totaling 391.53 mw during 2005-06. The installed capacity of power together from hydel, diesel and thermal during 2004-05 was 46.59 mw which remained the same in 2005-06. Domestic generation of power in the State during 2005-06 was 11.46 mw which has increased from 6.58 mw during 2004-05. With total power consumption 204.07 mkw, it can be seen that only 5.4% is being generated with the State, where 94.52% is purchased from the neighbouring States. The per capita power consumption of the State is estimated at 151.64 kw. However, as per the governmental records, a total of 570 villages
are electrified (Statistical Handbook, 2008). The ongoing projects during 2008-09 were as follows:

- **Construction of Lamsial Small Hydel Project (0.50 mw):** Completed and commissioned in the month of August 2008, the project will give power supply to the far flung area of Farkawn and surrounding villages in the Indo-Myanmar border, especially during rainy season.

- **Renovation & Modernization of Serlui ‘A’ Small Hydel Project:** This project with an installed capacity of 1.0 mw is in a position to generate power.

- **Maicham-II Small Hydel Project:** The 3.0 mw capacity Small Hydel Project on the river Maicham near N. Vanlaiphei is also at the completion stage. By the end of the year, electrical power of 3.0 mw is expected to be available for the people from this Project.

- **Serlui ‘B’ (12 mw) Hydel Project:** Now the Project works reached its completion stage and it is expected for commissioning within the year. On commissioning this project, 12.0 mw will be available for the people of Mizoram.

### 2.7.2 Road network

In the absence of adequate internal rail linkages, roads are the major means of transportation in the State. The total length of road in the State by the end of 2000-01 was 4046.37 kms out of which 2220.30 kms were surfaced road. The unsurfaced roads with 1844.07 kms of road length constituted about 45.4 per cent of the total road length. Out of the total 732 inhabited villages in the State, 360 villages were connected by all-weather-roads while 342 villages were connected by fair-weather-roads (Census of India, 2001). Rural connectivity has been
identified as one of the basic minimum services for development of agriculture and the rural economy and the State Government have accorded high priority to this sector. Further, realising the importance of rural connectivity, the Government of India launched the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) in the year 2000. The primary objective of the PMGSY is to provide connectivity to all habitations with a population of 1000 persons and above in three years (2000-03) and to all unconnected habitations with a population of 500 persons and above by end of the plan period, which would help Mizoram achieve satisfactory and competent levels of connectivity.

2.7.3 Railway network

The nearest railway station for Mizos is at Silchar in Assam for railway passengers. There is presently one railway station in Mizoram at Bairabi, Kolasib district but it is serving the State in terms of transportation of goods only.

2.7.4 Air transport

Mizoram, due to its extreme geographical location coupled with its difficult terrain, had been one of the most inaccessible States in the country. Initially, the region possessed only one mini airfield which lies in the Valley of Tuirial River, 25 kms east of Aizawl city. Lengpui airport was constructed with a total expenditure of ₹ 118.97 crore, with contribution of ₹ 57 crore by 10th Finance Commission, ₹ 40.92 crore by the Planning Commission and ₹ 21.05 crore by the State government. The airport has a runway of 8200 feet in length, which can comfortably cater aircrafts like Boeing 737/A-320 with provision for future extension upto 10,000 feet. The airport was inaugurated on 12th December, 1998. The State is now having air links with Kolkata, Guwahati and Imphal. The
services are operated by Indian Airlines, Kingfisher and recently by North East Shuttles.

2.7.5 Industry

Mizoram is one of the most industrially backward States of the country and is defined as “Non Industries District” under Category A.\(^5\) Till 2005-06, there were 1742 registered small scale and cottage industries in Mizoram. The business units relating to repair services, metal products, hosiery and garments, wood products, food, paper products, and printing were dominant firms accounting for 74\% of the total industrial units. It is to be noted that in 2006, as many as 714 small scale and cottage industrial units were found operating in Aizawl district, which was 41\% of the total industrial units. In Lunglei district, there were 395 units accounting for 23\% of the State’s industrial units; and Saiha district has only 248 units which constituted 14\%. The percentage distribution in rest of the districts was – Lawngtlai (7\%), Serchhip (5\%), Champhai (4\%), Kolasib (4\%) and Mamit (3\%). Considering the region’s potential of raw materials, agro-based industries, handloom and handicraft industries, village and cottage industries and selected consumer industries should be given priorities in bringing up Mizoram’s industrial economy. There is a prospect to establish plywood or paper and pulp industries based on the indigenous supply of bamboos and timbers (Rintluanga Pachuau, 2009).

2.7.6 Postal and Telecommunications

The total number of post offices at the end of the year 2007-08 was 405, comprising 45 sub post offices and 359 branch post offices. Out of 405 post offices 356 (88.15\%) were in rural areas and the rest 48 (11.85 \%) were in urban areas. The postal revenue realised during 2006-07 was Rs 230.97 lakhs which
increased to Rs 258 lakhs in 2007-2008 registering an increase of 11.7 per cent over the previous years. During 2008-09, revenue earned upto January 2009 was Rs 183 lakhs.

Up to the end of 2008, there were 64 numbers of telephone exchanges in the State; five of them were located in towns. The number of telephone connections up to 2008 was 56,816, as against to 34,615 at the end of 1999-2000 (Economic Survey, 2008). Latest technology 3G (third generation) mobile network is planned for four cities viz. Aizawl, Lunglei, Kolasib and Champhai. The installation works at Aizawl have been started commissioned from 2010. With the commission of 3G, broadband Internet access will be available through Mobile Service. Village Public Telephone (VPT) rental free telephone connections are provided through WLL under USO funding. In this project, one telephone connection (rent free) has to be provided to all the villages. Where the signals of WLL are not available VPT are provided with Direct Satellite Phone Terminal (DSPT). VPT has to be utilised by the villagers with a minimum call charges. It is the responsibility of the custodian to safeguard the telephone instruments and pay for the telephone bills. Under this, 538 villages are provided VPT with WLL and 40 villages are provided VPT with DSPT. Broadband services are now available in all the district headquarters and other towns/villages such as Khawzawl, Vairengte, Bilkhawthlir, Kawnpui, Thingsulthliah, Baktawng, Chhingchhip, Chhiahtlang, Lengpui, Thingdawl and Siphir. The installation work is under progress in Lungdai, Bualpui, Kawlkulh, Pangzawl, Hnahthial and Zobawk. Broadband services through WIMAX services are also taken up for which equipments are expected very shortly. Customers will able to access broadband Internet through wireless within 15 km radius (line of sight) from the
WIMAX stations. Initially WIMAX will be installed at the following places: Chawngte, Hnahthial, Khawzawl, Lawngtlai, Serchhip, Thingsulthliah, Ngopa and Thingdawl.

2.7.7 Banking

Upto February 2009, there were 108 branches of various financial institutions in the State consisting of 36 commercial bank branches, 60 branches of Mizoram Rural Bank (MRB) and 11 branches of Mizoram Cooperative Apex Bank (MCAB). The cooperative credit structure in the State is 2-tier structure. In addition to the banks, developmental financial institutions like National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) and North Eastern Development Finance Corporation (NEDFi) also have their presence in the State. It was observed that the population served per branch comes to around 8,304 in Mizoram which is quite high when compared to the national average of 15,000. However, the location of branches in the State has been skewed in favour of cities and urban centres (Economic Survey, 2008).

Notes

1 According to the records in the Economic Survey 2008 furnished by the Planning & Programme Implementation Department.

2 Chhinlung is commonly believed to be the name of a cave from which the ancestors of Mizos descend. This legend is quite common to the other tribes of North East India such as Gangte, Tangkhul, Ao, and Vaiphei. On the other hand, some opined it to be the present Silung in China border of Shan state in the eastern China. Still, some writers contends that Chhinlung stands for the Chinese ruler Chien Lung, during whose reign the Mizos moved out to the present habitat.

3 The number of village councils as given by the Rural Development Department, Government of Mizoram from the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act/Scheme.


**REFERENCES**


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