CHAPTER-3
INDO-MYANMAR BORDER TRADE: SOCIO-CULTURAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR MIZORAM.

3.1 Introduction:

A large volume of goods have been supplied to Mizoram from across the border. This is one of the reasons why in spite of its remoteness from the national capital, there is no dearth of foreign goods in the State of Mizoram. Indeed, this is one of the advantages of the border States. This is not all, a good chunk of goods from India also find their way to Myanmar across the Indo-Myanmar border at Zokhawthar-Rih sector. These foreign goods that have entered the State of Mizoram from Myanmar through Zokhawthar-Rih sector find their way through Champhai to the State capital Aizawl and from there distributed to different parts of the State and other regions of India. These goods are being distributed to different market centers between Zokhawthar to Aizawl, the State capital and from there to different market centers in the State.

3.2 Evolution of Indo-Myanmar border trade through Mizoram. The British era:

Before the British era stable trade could not exist between Mizoram and Myanmar because the ethnic groups living in the Chin Hills and Mizoram were engulfed in tribal feud of the worst kind. The Hill tribals very often attacked the plain people of Assam. The tea-planters of
the plains who were the British subjects were not safe; the Lushais often attacked them and plundered them. The Lushais by uniting their forces committed a series of forays of the worst kind in the neighboring district of Cachar, thereby killing Europeans and in the process carried away Mary Winchester,\textsuperscript{120} the little daughter of a tea planter along with several native subjects into captivity. This was one of the causes which spurred the British to take punitive measure against the Lushai chiefs by invading them.

It is interesting to know that when the British Government annexed the Chin Hills,\textsuperscript{121} it had to inject cash into the existing barter economy in order to make the payment of taxes possible. It seems that the early British administrators had difficulty in coping with taxes paid in the local goods such as \textit{mithun}(a wild buffalo), pigs, chickens, as a result of that they introduced money by giving paid work to the people and then collected them again by way of taxes. Trade between the Mizos and Chins had already existed since the annexation by the British. The village of Tashion was a commercial center by the time when the the British were entering the Chin Hills, they found that the village of Tashion in Myanmar had reached its zenith. The geographical location of Tashion enabled the inhabitants to establish a strong hold on trade from east and west. Being good traders,\textsuperscript{122} the inhabitants of Tashion had dominated the entire east and west trades between the Lushais and the central Chin Hills and the plains. They also controlled all the salt trade, mat, blankets, wax,


\textsuperscript{121} H.N.C.Stevenson, \textit{‘Economics of the Central Chin Tribes’}, the Tribal Research Institute Publications, Mizoram, Aizawl, 1986, p.102

\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Ibid.}, p.103
and piece of iron and the baskets of grain that passed through the central hills.

3.3 Early Phase of Post Colonial Era Border Trade Between The Mizos and the Myanmarese:

The Burmese used to bring splints to Mizoram. The Mizos used to buy splints for the purpose of lighting fire. The Mizos used to barter them with cotton and shawl called *puvantah*. Near Falam in Myanmar there was a village called Lente in the Chin Hills. The villagers were specialized in making earthen pots. The Burmese used to come to Mizoram bringing these pots and exchange them with cotton in the State of Mizoram. Usually, a pot was exchanged with cotton full of that pot. The Burmese also used to buy bronze pots from Silchar through Mizoram. They used to carry the goods by horses. At the same time traders from Chin Hills used to fetch dogs from Mizoram. Trade in *thival* (big Burmese necklace) was carried mainly by the *Kawls* (the Burmese) people, and the Mizos used to buy from them.

The informal trade continued to be the life-line of the people of the Indo-Myanmar border areas and this will continue to be so due to geographical contiguity, affinity and cultural link of the people from both sides of the regions. The informal trade has been going on as usual, and goods used to arrive from Myanmar across the border to the State of Mizoram in broad day light, carried by vehicles and head loads in the

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123 Researcher’s interview with a Mizo historian, B Lalthangliana, the author of *History of Mizos in Myanmar.*
presence of concerned authorities, custom officials and the armed forces. On the other hand, some agricultural products, such as beans, apples, vegetables etc., also used to arrive at Zokhawthar at Indo-Myanmar border by horse back, tracking the jungle roads.

3.4 Border Trade and Its Impact on the Development of Indo-Myanmar Border Trade Township:

The proposal of Border Township has come up at Melbuk village which is 8 km from Zokhawtar. The foundation has already been laid for the purpose of Border Township in the year 2002. The Government of Mizoram has acquired 125.95 acres of lands at this place for the establishment of Indo-Myanmar border trade Township. This border trade township has been planned systematically for accommodating staff quarters, office buildings, postal, bank, telecom, security, etc., also for the construction of helipad, recreational facilities, godown, etc., A detailed project report prepared by the Trade and Commerce Department, Government of Mizoram for this township costing to Rs.3.5 crores has also been submitted to the Ministry of Commerce, Government of India. Apart from this, Community hall, play ground, health center, rest house etc., have already constructed in this border trade township from the border area development fund.
3.5 Smuggling From Across Myanmar and Their Impact On The State of Mizoram:

The proximity of Zokhawthar Land Customs Station with the Golden Triangle makes it vulnerable to smuggling and transport of narcotic drugs into India which is generally carried out through the Indo-Myanmar border running along the extreme east of the State of Mizoram. The drug barons of Myanmar, who are notorious for producing narcotic drugs, take advantage of difficult terrains of the region comprising hilly tracts and dense forests smuggle such contrabands through the Indo-Myanmar border. The route to Tiddim to Melbuk is very prone to smuggling of narcotic drugs from Myanmar. A large number of drugs have entered the State of Mizoram from different directions. On 25th 2007, the Supply reduction Service, under Central YMA has seized at Aizawl Heroin No.4 Hong (Packet) 13 at local market worth Rs.4, 55,000.00, the owner who was presumed to be from Myanmar has run away.125

Myanmarese Liquor known as Bee-Ee has been very popular in the State of Mizoram. A large volume of Bee-Ee, Myanmar liquor entered the State of Mizoram through Champhai-Zokhawthar. On 7 May 2007, the Aizawl SRS(Supply Reduction Service) East Zone of YMA(Young Mizo Association) has seized Bee-Ee 141 packets from a Tata vehicle coming from Champhai to Aizawl.126 The owner of the contraband confessed to the SRS stating that he used to purchase for Rs 100.00 per package of Bee-Ee at Champhai and used to sell at Aizawl for Rs 200.00

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125 Vanglaini, Aizawl, February, 25&26, 2007, p.1
126 Ibid.
per package. It is to be noted that 1 package of *Bee-Ee* is mixed up with 7 packages of liquid of the *Bee-Ee* package and then kept for 24 hours, and then the liquid turns into liquor ready to be sold in the local market. It is estimated that 52.27 per cent have come from Myanmar through the Zokhawthar-Rih Sector.\(^{127}\) It can be said that Mizoram being located in the international border has been greatly affected its socio-cultural, economics and political dimensions.

Apart from drug scenario, occasionally arms caches are also being seized during smuggling from across the Indo-Myanmar border. Just to mention one incident is that on March 21, 2009, Bawngkawn police and CID in their joint operation seized at Zemabawk forest check gate in Aizawl, 9 grenades and 3 rocket launchers from Zokhawthar bus coming from the Indo-Myanmar border.\(^{128}\)

### 3.6 The Security Scenario in the Indo-Myanmar Border:

Champhai is located near the international border between India and Myanmar which is the main entry route from Myanmar to India through Mizoram. It is only 30 km from Zokhawthar-Rih sector of Indo-Myanmar border trade route. Zokhawthar comes under the jurisdiction of Champhai police station. The area of jurisdiction of Champhai police is infested with foreigners from Myanmar who enter Mizoram via Zokhawthar-Rih sector. Many of them are also known to have been involved in drug trafficking, as a result, the police at Champhai have to cope with crime peculiar in nature of this area. Due to shortage of

\(^{127}\) *YMA record*, (central) 2008

\(^{128}\) *Evening Post*, Aizawl March 23, 2009, p.1
vehicles for quick easy and transport, there were certain instances when police were required to hire private vehicles from their pockets to respond to urgent situation arising out of commission of various crimes like murder, trafficking of drugs etc. Zokhawthar being located in the international border, the State Government and Centre Government have provided security in the area. The immigration office which is situated just to the adjacent to the customs office is manned by 4/5 armed guards and is providing adequate security to the officers of the Zokhawthar Land Customs Station, besides maintaining law and order situation of the customs area. Both Zokhawthar police out post and D.Company of Assam Rifles are situated at Zokhawthar.

3.7 Zokhawthar border trade town and the infrastructure of the Land Customs Station:

Zokhawthar border trade centre infrastructure and the Land Customs Station are constructed by the Border Road Organization. The building is designed to consist of two floors with a total plinth area of 1,562.82 Sq.m.\textsuperscript{129} The over all cost of the construction of the building is estimated at Rs 422.08 lakhs which includes provisions of power supply and water supply to be made by the State Government.\textsuperscript{130} A 9 meters

\textsuperscript{129} The Fifth Legislative Assembly first report, published by the Mizoram Legislative Assembly Secretariat, 2006, p.1

\textsuperscript{130} The construction of the Land Customs Composite Building began in June 2005 and was Taken up by 74 Company, Border Road Transport Force (BRTF). The Land Customs building is a one storied concrete\textsuperscript{130} The Fifth Legislative Assembly first report, published by the Mizoram Legislative Assembly Secretariat, 2006, p.1

\textsuperscript{130} The construction building with 4 toilets: 2 on the first floor and 2 on the ground floor: there are 2 stored rooms: 4 searched rooms: 6 office rooms and 2 small canteens,\textsuperscript{130} in the first floor there are 1 kitchen and 1 canteen. The main building will contain office rooms such as, post office, bank, tele-com. Customs, fumigation chamber, immigration office, police, trade and commerce etc. Trade and commerce department acts as the nodal office.
wide road will be constructed around the building which will accommodate vehicles from both sides of the border. Besides, 2.5 meters wide pedestrian broads will also be constructed around the building.\footnote{Interview with Naseer Hussain, JE, 74 BRTF, Zokhawthar on 2.9.2006.}

### 3.8 Government’s Initiative on the Development of Indo-Myanmar Border Trade Center at Zokhawthar:

The construction of Land Customs Building was completed and handed over to the Department of Trade and Commerce, the Government of Mizoram on September 16, 2007 at 2.00 P.M. The handing over ceremony was organized by District Level Standing Committee on Border Trade and chaired by Champhai Deputy Commissioner, Mr. T.V. Fambawl. In this ceremony the Border Road Transport Force O. C. Naveen Mishra handed over the Land Customs building Composite Structure to Ngurhuzaua Director, Trade and Commerce Department, Government of Mizoram. In this hand over ceremony,\footnote{Rihlipui (Daily), Champhai, September 15, 2007, p.1} Ngurhuzaua, director Trade and Commerce stated that application has been forwarded to the Centre Government along with the Government of Manipur for the expansion of tradable items of Indo-Myanmar border trade. He further stressed that in the Land Customs building there would be allocation for Land Customs, Banks, BSNL, Immigration, Agriculture Department, Legal Metrology and Post Office. 80 per cent of the expenditure of all

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the length of the building is 47.16 metres; it’s width is 16.46 meters; 120 metres away from the north of the main building, there is a custom ware house constructed at the cost of 13 lakhs. The length of custom ware house is 49 feet and it’s width is 29 feet. Nearby, in the north east of custom ware house, there is a police security guard barrack with L shaped building,\footnote{Length 45 feet and width 20 feet constructed at the cost of 13 lakhs.} length 45 feet and width 20 feet constructed at the cost of 13 lakhs. To the east of this security barrack, there is fumigation chamber constructed at the cost of 7.2 lakhs.
these offices will be met by the Centre Government. There is Customs Office at Zokhawthar in Mizoram, bordering Myanmar. There is also Customs Office at Haimual in Myanmar which is at a distance of 3 km from river Tiau. The Government of India is planning to construct and extend road from Tiau to Falam in Myanmar, for this purpose, Rs 422 has been already sanctioned by the Government of India. As per plan, road will be constructed up to Halkha, the capital of Chin State in Myanmar. Proposal is also being made to extend the road from Tiau to Tiddim in Myanmar. When the constructions of these roads are completed, they will be very beneficial to the State of Mizoram in particular and the North-East India in general. The distance from Zokhawthar to Guwahati and the distance to Mandalay are the same. From Mandalay, China is very near as such, if trade permits are available, goods from China could be obtained via Myanmar easily. Presently, Trade and Commerce Department, Government of Mizoram is acting as a nodal department at the Land Customs composite Building at Zokhawthar. This is due to the fact that Trade and Commerce Department is the confluence of different departments, which is why the Customs Building is in their hands. The Land Customs Composite structure has been completed and the Customs Department has already occupied the Building. The Customs Department is now ready to handle the formal trade which is finally to take place as per the Indo-Myanmar border trade agreement. But other departments have not yet been ready to cop with the formal trade.

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3.9 Border Trade and Its Impact On Transport System:

The freight charge for transportation goods between Zokhawthar and Champhai which is 30 km distance is exorbitantly high. The carriers charge Rs 8000/- per truck load of goods transported from Zokhawthar to Champhai. At the same time, a full truck load from Champhai to Aizawl a distance of 200 km is charged Rs 7000 -10000. It is further learned that truck owners of Champhai area formed an association among themselves which fixed and enforced the rate of transportation along this route, as a result, the prices of these goods imported from Myanmar through this route rise considerably. This undesirable state of affair is very much detrimental to the development and progress of Indo-Myanmar Border Trade via Champhai Zokhawthar sector and these hurdles are required to be done away with immediately. This overcharged transport has become a problem for the traders in the Indo-Myanmar border trade through the State of Mizoram. The Subject Committee of the Fifth Mizoram Legislative Assembly visited Zokhawthar during 20th-22nd September 2005, and recommended to look immediately into the matter and take the necessary steps to introduce a system for carriers of goods imported from Myanmar. If the need arises, the association formed by the truck owners of Champhai for the sole benefits of its members should be banned once and for all.

134 Ibid.
135 Ibid.
3.10 The Indo-Myanmar border trade and its impact on the Government of Mizoram:

The Government of Mizoram has attached commendable importance to the role played by the Indo-Myanmar border trade and the movement of people from across the border. Accordingly an Iron Bridge across the river Tiau was constructed in 2002,\textsuperscript{136} by the Government of Mizoram. This motorable bridge greatly facilitated the movements of vehicles and peoples across the international border via Zokhawthar-Rih sector.

This researcher in his field study has observed the movement of vehicles and other activities across the border. It has been observed that in one day 11 vehicles move back and forth across the border.

\textbf{Table 3:1}

\textbf{Vehicle entry to Myanmar via Zokhawthar-Rih sector as on 07.06.2007}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL.No.</th>
<th>Vehicle.No.</th>
<th>Type of Vehicles</th>
<th>Loads</th>
<th>Entry Time</th>
<th>Return time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>MZ04-1616</td>
<td>709 Urea</td>
<td>6:40AM</td>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>MZ05-1050</td>
<td>Truck Urea</td>
<td>1:30PM</td>
<td>2:05PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>AS-24.1551</td>
<td>Truck Urea</td>
<td>1:50PM</td>
<td>3:00PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>MZ05-3276</td>
<td>Truck Urea</td>
<td>2:00PM</td>
<td>3:00PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>MZO-C3600</td>
<td>Truck Urea</td>
<td>2:00PM</td>
<td>4:00PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>MZO4-1641</td>
<td>909 Urea</td>
<td>2:00PM</td>
<td>3:30PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>MZO4-1436</td>
<td>909 Urea</td>
<td>2:00PM</td>
<td>4:45PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>MZO4-1704</td>
<td>909 Urea</td>
<td>2:00PM</td>
<td>4:45PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>MZO4-1909</td>
<td>909 Urea</td>
<td>2:00PM</td>
<td>4:45PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>MZO4-1967</td>
<td>Sumo</td>
<td>7:00AM</td>
<td>1:00PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{136} The author’s field work at Zokhawthar-Rih sector on November 14, 2007.
Table 3:2
Vehicles Entry to Myanmar Via Zokhawthar as on 17.06.2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL.No.</th>
<th>Vehicle No.</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Loads</th>
<th>Entry Time</th>
<th>Return Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>MZO4-1671</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>Urea</td>
<td>7:00AM</td>
<td>11:00AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>MZO4-1346</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>Urea</td>
<td>7:00AM</td>
<td>10:30AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>AS11-5171</td>
<td>TMB</td>
<td>Urea</td>
<td>7:00AM</td>
<td>2:00PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>MZOC-5042</td>
<td>TMB</td>
<td>Urea</td>
<td>8:45AM</td>
<td>2:00PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>MZO4-0308</td>
<td>TMB</td>
<td>Goods</td>
<td>9:10AM</td>
<td>1:00PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>MZO-0523</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>Goods</td>
<td>9:10AM</td>
<td>1:50PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>MZO-0435</td>
<td>Mitsubishi</td>
<td>Goods</td>
<td>1:30PM</td>
<td>3:00PM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3:3
Vehicles Entry to Myanmar Via Zokhawthar as on 27.06.2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL No.</th>
<th>Vehicle No.</th>
<th>Type of vehicle</th>
<th>Loads</th>
<th>Entry Time</th>
<th>Return Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>MZO1-B4345</td>
<td>1109</td>
<td>Goods</td>
<td>8:15AM</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>MZO4-0373</td>
<td>DCM</td>
<td>Goods</td>
<td>7:45AM</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>MZO4-0435</td>
<td>DCM</td>
<td>Goods</td>
<td>11:00AM</td>
<td>3:00PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>MZO4-778</td>
<td>DCM</td>
<td>Goods</td>
<td>9:00AM</td>
<td>1:40PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>MZO4-0435</td>
<td>DCM</td>
<td>Goods</td>
<td>11:00AM</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>MZO4-0373</td>
<td>DCM</td>
<td>Goods</td>
<td>12:00AM</td>
<td>1:35PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>MZO4-0435</td>
<td>DCM</td>
<td>Goods</td>
<td>1:10PM</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SL.No.</td>
<td>Vehicle. No</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Loads</td>
<td>Entry Time</td>
<td>Return Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>MZO1-A9460</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>Machines</td>
<td>6:50AM</td>
<td>8:00AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>MZO4-0373</td>
<td>DCM</td>
<td>Goods</td>
<td>7:20AM</td>
<td>11:00AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>MZO4-0435</td>
<td>DCM</td>
<td>Goods</td>
<td>8:20AM</td>
<td>10:10AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>MZO4-083</td>
<td>One tone</td>
<td>Goods</td>
<td>11:00 AM</td>
<td>10:00AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>MZO4-0308</td>
<td>Truck</td>
<td>Goods</td>
<td>10:20AM</td>
<td>1:20AM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Police check post, beside the Iron Bridge, at Zero Point-Zokhawthar-Tiau.

In the table 3:1 it is calculated that on June 07, 2007 an average each vehicle carries 70 bags of urea. Therefore, the total bags are 630. It is said that across the border in Myanmar, urea is sold at Rs 450 per bag. Therefore, if the value of one bag of urea costs Rs 450, then the total value of export of urea on the said day is Rs 285500.00

Goods items other than urea were also exported across the border through this route. Goods such as cycles, medicine, lungi, Zarda, sugar,
gas cylinder, medicines, etc are also used to include in the items of goods which are used to smuggle out to Myanmar.

Urea has been smuggled out from Mizoram to Myanmar in large quantities. But sometimes the Mizoram police and taxation department jointly seize them before these manures reach Myanmar border. These manures are taken from Silchar. In an average 1 truck carries 210 bags urea. On February 1, 2010, Mizoram Police and taxation department together seized 6 trucks full load of urea coming from Silchar and destined to Myanmar via Champhai Zokhawthar-Rih sector. These trucks entered Mizoram bypassing Vairengte Check Gate via Serkhan-Bagha road. Supply of urea is strictly controlled and regulated in Mizoram. The suppliers have to get licence from agricultural department, only then taxation department will issue ‘way bill’. The seized trucks were carrying urea without ‘way bill’. The villagers via Serkhan-Bagha stated that urea has been carried by motor trips through this route very often. These ureas are carried by motor trips to Champhai, and then from there to Myanmar to sell them in a higher price. These ureas come from Assam, manufactured by Brahmaputra valley fertilizer Corporation Ltd. Kamrup. The weight of urea bag is 50.13 kgs and as per Maximum Retailed Price (MRP) is 251.20 per bag, however, at the black market in Myanmar it costs Rs 450/- per bag.

137 Vanglaini, Aizawl, (MizoDaily) February 1, 2010, p.1
138 Ibid.
139 Researcher’s field survey at Champhai during September 20-22, 2007.
In table 3:2 there were 7 vehicles plying across the border. 4 vehicles carried urea and the rests 3 vehicles carried other goods. These vehicles went to Tiau in Myanmar and kept goods from Mizoram and when they return back they carried back foreign goods to Mizoram. If we analysis the above four tables of vehicles entry and returning, we come to know that in an average 8.5 vehicles are plying every day except Sunday. It is to be noted that on Sunday vehicles are rarely plying in the Indo-Myanmar border through Zokhawthar-Rih sector. According to the customs preventive force Zokhawthar, urea (Manure) is the most seized item from export through Zokhawthar Rih sector.\textsuperscript{140}

3.11 Border Trade and Its Impact on Zokhawthar Town:

The main occupation of the people of Zokhawthar has been wage labor. Even before the building of Iron Bridge in 2002, the people of Tiau engaged as laborers by escorting the traders across the international border. By doing this, they used to earn their living. The villagers used to carry the goods of the traders across the river Tiau to Mizoram. Before the construction of the bridge across the river Tiau, there were only a few houses dwelled in bamboo houses. The villagers used to escort the traders who arrived from Myanmar, carried their goods on head loads. At that time the village was called Tiau. After the building of bridge in 2002 and the opening of border trade point in 2004, Zokhawthar which is 1 km

\textsuperscript{140} In the month of April 2007, the Following items have been seized from Zokhawthar Check Gate by customs department. From export: 80 bags of urea :440 school bags :16000 Kyats. From import: 30 bottles of drum. (Wine): 28,000 Kyats. Sources: Customs department, Zokhawthar.
from Tiau, the village of Zokhawthar has grown and developed very rapidly. In fact, the hamlet is developing from village to semi-town. The border trade makes the village into busy market place. Many Myanmarese and Indians walk to and fro across the Iron Bridge at Zero Point-Zokhawthar.

There are around 8 to 10 regular sumo service every day from Champhai to Zokhawthar. There are also goods carrier vehicle which are plying from Zokhawthar to Champhai and vice versa. Vegetable such as cauliflowers, apples, tomatoes, beans, fruits like hardcora, orange etc., arrive from the Chin Hills by horses and head loads. These vegetables are sold at Champhai vegetable markets.

Porter continues to occupy an important place in the economy of Zokhawthar. At present there are two types of porters which are Zokhawthar porters and Tiau porters. Foreign goods that have arrived at Tiau border town in Myanmar are unloaded from Myanmarese motor and then load again into the Indian vehicles by the Tiau porters. The Mizoram vehicles then carry the goods to the Importers-Exporters Syndicate stored room at Zokhawthar.

When the researcher visited the place on 08.10.2007, there are 28 porters at Zokhawthar. A porter gets Rs 50 for unloading and loading the goods. It is to be noted that when a truck carrying goods arrives at the godown/ stored room, the laborers used to unload for weighing, after weighing, the porters used to load again into the vehicles, those laborers engaged in loading and unloading get Rs50 per head. Likewise, when the
next goods arrive the process continues. In an average a porter earns Rs 350 per day,\textsuperscript{141} which indicates that 6 to 7 mini trucks arrive at the Importers-Exporters Syndicate every day during good condition of roads.

\textbf{3.12 Fishermen on the Indo-Myanmar Border River:}

River Tiau flows along the international boundary between India and Myanmar. The villagers of both India and Myanmar used to catch fish in the river Tiau and earn their living. Fish are being sold in the Champhai markets and at other places. Hence, river Tiau also provide a kind of border trade through the State of Mizoram.

\textbf{3.13 Money Exchange:}

Since Zokhawthar is located at the international border gate, informal exchange of money has become very lucrative business. A good number of people are engaged in money exchange. The exchange rate in the black market as on 08.10.2007 is Rs 1=30 Kyat at Zokhawthar and Champhai international border.\textsuperscript{142}

\textbf{3.14 Socio-Cultural Implications:}

The town Zokhawthar is inhabited by diverse cultures and Christianity denominations of religion. This is due to the fact that it is located in the border area, wherein people of different faiths and sub-tribes enter into the town. This is perhaps the nature of international

\textsuperscript{141} The researcher’s interview with the porters and traders of Zokhawthar, on 01.10.2007.
\textsuperscript{142} Researcher’s interview with money exchanger at Champhai and Zokhawthar.
border towns. Zokhawthar also exhibits this cultural divergence. The town of Zokhawthar has 385 houses and 7 different denominations of Christianity. The different denominations include United Penticostal Church Mizoram, United Pentecostal Church North-east, Presbyterian Church, Revival Church, Seven day Adventist, Salvation Army, and Wesleyan Methodist Church. The reason for different denominations disproportionate to their population is that different cultures and people migrated to Zokhawthar from different parts of Mizoram and Myanmar. These migrants bring along with them various cultures and faith with them. Today we see diverse cultures at Zokhawthar in terms of languages, names, and way of life, habits and faiths. This is due to the emergence of the Indo-Myanmar border trade in Mizoram.

3.15 Pig Trade and Its Impact:

Border trade in pigs has been a regular phenomenon between the Chin Hills in Myanmar and Mizoram. Since 1989, about 196 families are engaged in pig trade across the Indo-Myanmar border through Tiau-Zokhawthar. Champhai Piggery Cell and Transportation Co-operative Society was set up in 2000 AD at Zotlang which is 3 KM from Champhai. In an average 1500 pigs used to arrive per week across the river Tiau which is an international boundary. Out of 1500 pigs, 300 are grown up pigs, salable for meat in the market. The rest are piglings to be tamed and reared in the piggery.

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143 On the spot research and interview done by the researcher on 05.08.2007.
144 Interview with Lalhmuaka, president, Champhai Piggery Cell and Transportation Co-operative Society, on 11.10.2007.
This pig trade has become very profitable for both the people of Mizoram and to the Government of Mizoram. Champhai Piggery Cell and Transportation Society gave to the Veterinary Department of Mizoram Rs 24 Lakhs as examination fees during the period of 2002-2006. The pig trading business is very voluminous. As it is stated earlier that every week 1500 pigs arrive at Champhai Piggery Cell and Transportation Society based at Zotlang which means that every month 6000 pigs arrive and 72000 pigs arrive every year. However, an insignificant number of pigs also arrive from other places other than Zokhawthar-Rih sector from Myanmar but they constitute only 1 to 2 Per cent of the trade.

The pig business has run into trouble in the year 2006. From March 26, 2006 the Mizoram Government issued a ban order for importing of all domestic animals from neighboring Myanmar in view of the confirmed Avian Influenza case in Mandalay city. The Government of Mizoram issued notification to all the Deputy Commissioners of the districts adjoining Myanmar that Pigs, Chickens, Cow, Sheep and other domesticated animals should not cross the border from Myanmar, until further order. The Principal Secretary also asked DIG range of Assam Rifles to alert and instruct all his officers and jawans deployed along the Indo-Myanmar border of Mizoram, and the Deputy Commissioners were to mobilize police, Para military personnel and Non-Governmental Organizations within their respective districts to disseminate awareness of the danger of Bird Flue. However, the system of border trade in pigs has resumed immediately after the situation in Myanmar improved.

145 The Mizoram Post, Aizawl, March 27,2007, p.1
In spite of all the steps and precautionary measures taken by the Government and the Non-Governmental Organizations, the smuggling of pigs and other domestic animals into Mizoram continues though in a lesser degree. This is a very serious matter. This has come due to the selfishness of the traders who want only their profit and their business, other than the safety of the people. There is also lack of the awareness of the danger of the disease on the part of the people and the sluggishness of the government servants who are engaged in checking them. Whenever, the Government of Mizoram forbids the entry of pigs into Mizoram from Myanmar, pork becomes a scarce meat in Mizoram. It is to be noted that the majority of the Mizos prefer pork to other meats. In reality, pork is a Sunday morning delicious food item in Mizos, and without it the morning remains almost incomplete to the Mizos.

3.16 Trade in Bovine Cow and Its Impact in the State:

Regarding trade in cow, a good number of cows arrive from Myanmar to Mizoram via Vaphai, Khawbung, Lungdar, Mualcheng, Chekkawn, Khawlailung then through river Tuichang, then Keitum to Aizawl. These are the routes in Mizoram where cows are being brought from Myanmar and from Keitum village bovine cow are used to transport to Aizawl and to different parts of Mizoram. The government of Myanmar does not allow the export of cow, so these cows arrive to Mizoram by means of smuggling, along with this, rice also used to arrive to Mizoram by this method. Beyond the Chin Hills, Myanmar is made up of plain areas wherein rice is cultivated in large quantity, as such, for cultivation, bovine cattle are needed. For this reason, a large number of
cattle are reared in *Kawl Plain* that is in the plain of Myanmar. These cows are used to smuggle to Mizoram. A lot of cattle are also imported to the State of Mizoram from Assam via Silchar Roads. The number of cows imported through Silchar road NH-54, seems slightly higher than cows that were imported from Myanmar. A lot of meat is being consumed in the State but the State is not self-sufficient in the animal production. The missing gap has to be filled by importing from the neighboring State and Myanmar.

**3.17 Melbuk Taxation Check Gate:**

While the government of Mizoram is collecting taxes worth Rs5200 lakhs annually by way of Value Added Tax (VAT), it has found out that goods coming from Myanmar were exempted from VAT. For many years foreign goods from Myanmar have passed through this route. The Central Customs Department posted at Zokhawthar- Rih sector used to collect taxes from the goods coming from Myanmar via this route. When the Government of Mizoram started introducing VAT system in order to collect more taxes, it has decided to establish tax collection center at Melbuk. This Melbuk check gate was inaugurated by the then taxation minister of Mizoram on 31st May 2006. Since then, goods coming from Myanmar via Zokhawthar-Melbuk have to obtain ‘Way Bill’, permission to pass through Melbuk. This office was manned by the Superintendent of taxation, Government of Mizoram.\(^{146}\)

It seems that the going was smooth with the creation of Melbuk Taxation Gate. But before even one ‘way bill’ was collected at Melbuk by the Government of Mizoram trouble began to develop at the spot of Melbuk. Now, the Central Customs Department which is posted at the border just beside the Iron Bridge at Zokhawthar objected the collection of taxes by the Mizoram Government at Melbuk. The Customs Department threatened to seize all the goods coming from Myanmar which arrive via Zokhawthar. The main reason for this crisis was that the border trade between India and Myanmar is not formalized. The goods that have arrived at Zokhawthar-Rih Sector are considered as smuggling goods. As per rule, it is expected that the Customs Department is to seize all these goods.

However, due to the needs of the people of Mizoram, a large volume of goods are not seized by the Customs Department. The Customs Department used to release them after extracting taxes what they feel appropriate to them. What the customs people fear is that if the Mizoram records all the goods that have arrived through Champhai-Zokhawthar sector by way of ‘way Bill’ at Melbuk, inconsistency and irregularity can crop up between the Government of Mizoram and the Central Custom Department. This could be harmful for the customs staff posted at Champhai-Zokhawthar. The volume of trade kept and maintained by both the departments will also be different. For this reason that the customs officials posted at Champhai-Zokhawthar sector vehemently opposed the existence of taxation check gate manned by Government of Mizoram at Melbuk. When the customs officials threatened to seize all the goods that have arrived at Zokhawthar from
Myanmar, no trader from Myanmar dared to venture to Mizoram. Due to this crisis, the border trade at Zokhawthar-Rih sector came to a grinding halt for a while, during the period from May to June 2006.\footnote{Ibid, p.15.} This brief period of crisis is the indicative of the importance of dependence of people on border trade with Myanmar.

When the goods are stranded at border in Myanmar, and stopped arriving to Mizoram via Zokhawthar, porters, Lorry Owners’ Association who carry goods from the border, traders and middlemen began to suffer. They tried their level best to find a way out of the impasse. Traders and middlemen began to meet the officials of the Taxation Department. For a long time middlemen and Taxation Department were discussing the matter concerning the implementation of ‘way bill’,\footnote{Ibid, p.15} and finally it was decided to allow goods to pass through Zokhawthar-Melbuk without ‘way bill’. Therefore, since September 2006 foreign goods started arriving again via Zokhawthar-Melbuk. The goods which were kept in their godowns were taken back by the traders and used to distribute to different shops by the owners of the foreign goods. Middlemen get commissions from the owners of the goods for clearance from the customs and for stocking the goods and looking after them. It is a known fact that middlemen and the custom officials are in good term. The middlemen used to speak to the customs officials on behalf of the owners of goods. This is the system through which the middlemen used to earn their income. It is very lucrative business in the sense that all the middlemen are well to do families at Champhai.\footnote{A middleman sometimes earns more than Rs 10,000 per day, but sometimes earn}
The Mizoram Government issued an order on January 17, 2007 to close Melbuk Check Gate for two months. Its staff posted at Melbuk were shifted to Champhai and Aizawl. It is stated that the Melbuk check gate should be in charge of Superintendent of taxes Champhai. Then after the lapse of two months, that is on March 17, 2007, the Government of Mizoram did not renew the Melbuk check gate. On April 10, 2007 the Government of Mizoram issued an order to close Melbuk Check Gate for another two months, for quit long times and continues to extend the closure of Melbuk Check Gate. It is strongly believed that the Melbuk taxation check gate may be closed indefinitely. The consequence upon the closure of Melbuk check gate by the Taxation Department is that foreign goods that have arrived via Champhai-Zokhawtahr sector into Mizoram will continue to be exempted from VAT (Value Added Tax)

3.18 Champhai New Market (CHANEM):

At the centre of Champhai, a new market building was constructed at the cost of Rs 12 crores, and after the construction was completed, for a long time the building was kept unoccupied. Consequent upon this, the chief minister, Zoramthanga who was the man behind the construction of the new market was vehemently criticized by the opposition parties. Spending lot of money and not utilizing was the main

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Rs 1000 to 2000 per day.

150 Ibid, p.16.
151 Vanglaini, Aizawl, February, 16, 2007, p.1
issue before the people. In order to make use of this building, Champhai New Market Management Committee under the chairmanship of Champhai Deputy Commissioner was formed immediately. The committee had several schemes for the utilization of the New Market. Among other things, the New Market Committee decided that the building be utilized as godown for the goods arriving from Myanmar across the border via Zokhawthar sector. For this, they made an agreement with middlemen of the Indo-Myanmar border trade. According to the agreement, the middlemen are not supposed to keep their goods coming across the border at their respective godowns but at the New Market Building. The talks between the New Market Building Committee and the middlemen were going on smoothly. As a matter of fact, the middlemen had bargaining power over the New Market Building Committee. Hence, to keep their goods the middlemen made conditions which, among other things, were to close the Melbuk Taxation Check Gate. This matter has been intertwined with party politics. Middlemen are generally supporters of the power that be, and also they are well to do in the society as such they are very useful to the parties they used to support. As on November 12, 2006, 30 shops were utilized for godowns for storing foreign goods coming across the border via Zokhawthar-Melbuk route. Except for this purpose the building has not been utilized, but during the fag end of 2007 when the researcher visited again, the middlemen have left the building.

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153 Ibid.
154 The researcher visited the ‘CHANEM’ building on the morning of November, 12, 2007 and examined the building.
To control Melbuk Taxation Check Gate power was given to the Superintendent of taxation Champhai, government of Mizoram. But his duty to collect taxes became difficult because Champhai New Market Management Committee asked taxation department not to collect taxes on the goods coming from the Myanmar through Zokhawthar route. This has resulted in a situation whereby no tax is collected on the foreign goods coming from Myanmar.

3.19 Institutionalization of Informal Trade:

It is relevant here to discuss in detail the process of institution of smuggling at the border post. This will provide us an insight into the nature of informal trade and its impact on overall activities of the traders across the border. For example, Mrs Nutei (name changed) is a trader from Falam in Myanmar with base at Aizawl. She deals in cosmetic goods such as body lotions of various types, shampoo, hair dressers, steam cream, one minute conditioner etc., She used to take foreign goods mainly from Mandalay at a whole sale price. She used to give Rs 6.5 per cent to the customs check gate at Zokhawthar of the total goods she possesses. This trader used to bring goods worth Rs3 lakhs which is equal to 30 lakh of Kyat. She used to distribute to different shops and to individuals in Aizawl, then she used to go back to Myanmar. After collection of money only she can return to Myanmar. In an average, she goes to and fro between Mizoram and Myanmar only three times in a year. Different traders used to bring goods from Myanmar via Champhai-Zokhawthar sector by Myanmar jeep. These Myanmar jeeps are modified

155 Interview with Nutei, age 40 foreign trader, Falam in Myanmar, on 12.06.2007 at 11:30 A M at her residence at Aizawl.
vehicles. They are much bigger than the Indian jeeps. Two full loads of a Myanmarese jeep are equal to a truck full load. The trader said that a truck full load of goods is charge Rs7000. Besides, Zarda and Elaichi are also exported from Zokhawthar in large quantities, as the researcher was informed by the interviewee.

Miss Mawii a foreign trade dealer in house utensil used to bring house utensil such as plate, cups, electric cookers etc. worth 30,00000 Kyat, which is worth Rs 100,000 in the black market. She used to give around Rs7 per cent at the customs station at Zokhawthar and 5 per cent to the Aizawl customs check post. She used to come three times in a year. Only when she finishes selling her goods she returns to Myanmar. Many Myanmarese traders used to borrow money from their rich business peoples, buy goods and take them to Mizoram. The Myanmarese traders before they enter Mizoram, they keep their identity cards with the Myanmar border check post across the river Tiau in Myanmar and get in return a slip, a kind of receipt. When they return to Myanmar they used to collect those identity cards. Usually goods are obtained from Thailand and China. Goods which are obtained from China are usually cheaper\textsuperscript{156} and the goods which are obtained from Thailand are usually costlier and the qualities are also generally better compared to the goods from China. It is to be noted that foreign goods that have arrived in Mizoram across the Indo-Myanmar border through Champhai-Zokhawthar sector are mainly made from out side Myanmar. These goods have found their way to India through Myanmar.

\textsuperscript{156}Interview with M/S Mawii foreing dealer in house utensil, on 12.06.2007 at 1:30 pm at Aizawl.
3.20 Tiau Town in Indo-Myanmar Border as Distribution Centre:

Small individual traders used to go to Tiau across the border to obtain goods and then sell them to different places in and around Champhai. There is an informal trade or smuggling system going on, as there are no rules and regulation of specific nature. There are at least 30-40 traders in cigarette, 157 who used to go and get cigarettes from Tiau and distribute to different shops at Champhai. There are 20-25 traders who used to get goods from Suihilih in China bordering Myanmar, and then bring to Mizoram. There are 25-35 electronic goods suppliers across the border. There are all together about 100 traders from small to big, 158 across the Indo-Myanmar border through Tiau-Rih-Zokhawthar-Champhai. As a matter of fact, all the industrial goods that have come from Indo-Myanmar border via Tiau-Zokhawthar sector which are outside the ambit of Indo-Myanmar border trade agreement are all considered to be smuggling goods, as such, they are liable for seizure. But due to the needs of the people of Mizoram and consideration by Customs officials, foreign goods are allowed to enter Mizoram via Tiau-Champhai-Zokhawthar sector, 159 the Customs Department levy a small per cent of taxes on the goods that pass through this sector. But the rates of taxes levied on these goods are not the same. There are lot of variations and irregularities in the process.

157 Interview with m/s Hruaii age 35 on 03.2007 who used to get cigarette from Tiau and distribute in Champhai to different shops.
158 Ibid.
159 Interview with H.B Manhleia, President Champhai Chamber of Commerce, dated 14.02.2008.
3.21 Border Trade and Its Affects on Traders:

Indo-Myanmar border trade through Zokhawthar-Rih Sector can be termed as ‘flying business’ as well. The fact of the matter is that the business is not stable. They flourish and perish depending upon the circumstances. For example, those traders dealing in pigs, the business is not consistent due to the fact that occasionally the Government of Mizoram curbs the entry of pigs from Myanmar due to the out break of bird flu in Myanmar. At this point of time, the pig business across the border suffers a set back\textsuperscript{160}

The order issued by the Superintendent of Police Champhai on 17\textsuperscript{th} August 2007,\textsuperscript{161} restricted the flow of foreign goods from Myanmar into Mizoram via Zokhawthar-Rih sector for that part of August. The reason for the banning of foreign goods from across Myanmar in the latter part of August was that there was an intelligence report that some smugglers were planning to smuggle weapons and drugs into Mizoram. Hence, the Champhai S.P issued an order stating that all foreign goods from Myanmar across the border were not allowed to pass through Zokhawtahr until further notice. The order was cancelled again shortly. This order does not cover the 22 items of agricultural products listed in the Indo-Myanmay border trade agreement.

\textsuperscript{160} A discussion with Chhuanawma, Apex Bank Manager, Champhai on 22.06.2007
\textsuperscript{161} Rihlipu, Champhai (Daily) August 18, 2007, p. 1
3.22 *Nguihluai* System of the Indo-Myanmar border trade:

The informal trade of the Indo-Myanmar border trade across the border operates through *Nguihluai* System. In this system, the traders do not bring with them money. These traders in Mizoram used to deposit their money in Aizawl, and then get a slip of paper marking their identities and number. Then the traders go to Myanmar such as Yangon, Mandalay and Tahan as the case may be, and get the goods by showing their slips of papers. Every thing is done very precisely. Some traders used to deposit their money at Aizawl and then order the goods to be sent to them directly. This is usually the system of handling money. Some traders also operate without *Nguihluai* System by handling their money directly. But in Nguihluai system, the money is safe from under ground and other looters across the border. This is the kind of money transfer system analogous to the Hawala System.

3.23 Mizoram Legislative Assembly Resolutions on Indo-Myanmar Border Fencing: Political dimensions:

The need of fencing the Indo-Myanmar border has been felt in the minds of many Mizo people. This is due to the fact that Mizoram and Myanmar are located in a geographically contiguous and as such, migrants from across the border continually enter Mizoram by crossing the border. Smugglings are common occurrence and in the process, various negative elements penetrated the State of Mizoram. However, there are also certain opposition groups among the Mizos who

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162 Interview with M/S Maliani, Trader at Zokhawthar. & and the researcher’s discussion with his trader friends at Champhai border town.
vehemently oppose Indo-Myanmar border fencing on the ground that the Mizo ethnic groups living in Myanmar and Mizoram will be separated by border fence. Nevertheless, on March 16, 2007, the Mizoram Legislative Assembly passed a resolution on private member bill tabled by Lalchhandama Ralte. The motion stated that the Centre be asked to make Indo-Myanmar border fencing like the Indo-Bangladesh border fencing. The main reason for the resolution, the mover stated that the border fencing with regard to Indo-Myanmar border would curb the illegal entry of foreigners and drug trafficking across the border. As the motion was tabled by the ruling party MLA, the resolution was passed without any difficulty.

Lalchhandama Ralte, who tabled the motion, comments that this is the matter to be viewed seriously by the Central Government, and as such, the border between Mizoram and Myanmar covering a distance of 404 km be fenced. This will prevent the foreigners to illegally enter Mizoram. On this point, AB Chakma spoke in favor of the motion. The Congress MLA Hiato said that the resolution was not needed to pass as it is Central Government’s policy and further stated that border fencing is done about 450 metres away from the boundary, as such, vast strips of land have been lost in the process. The Congress MLA, Lalrinliana Sailo stated that the loss of land due to border fencing is a matter of concern and this is mainly due to the contractors who construct according to their convenience to make profits.

\[163\] The Mizoram Assembly Budget Session, held on March 16, 2007.

\[164\] Vanglaini, Aizawl March 17, 2007, p.1
Zodintluanga and H.Rohluna both Congress MLAs spoke against Indo-Myanmar border fencing. Both the MLAs were afraid that this border fencing will hinder the re-unification of the ethnic Mizos who have settled in both Myanmar and Mizoram in large number. An independent member, H.Lalsangzuala, stated that to fence our brothers and sisters who stayed in Myanmar not out of volition but due to circumstances will not be the right thing to do. ZNP leader Lalduhawma said that the resolution betrayed the people of Mizoram, and said that the British ruled over us through divide and rule Policy and to pass this resolution tantamount to accepting that policy. Andrew Lalherliana also said that Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) could not accept boundary between Mizoram and Myanmar.

ZORO (Zo-Reunification Organization) did not like border fencing between Mizoram and Myanmar. The Budget Session of Mizoram Legislative Assembly March 2007 which passed a resolution concerning the fencing of border between Mizoram and Myanmar was vehemently condemned by the ZORO, and said that it was unfortunate that while the process of Mizo ethnics’ re-unification was going on, the Mizoram Assembly passed a resolution in favor of border fencing between Mizoram and Myanmar.

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166 *Vanglaini, Aizawl* March 23, 2007, p.1
3.24 Impact of Myanmarese entry into Mizoram- Socio-cultural and Political Dimensions:

According to the Central Young Mizo Association (CYMA) there are 60000-70000 Myanmarese in Mizoram at the moment,\textsuperscript{167} among them 40000-50000 Myanmarese live at Aizawl. The CYMA does not want to have separate congregation for the Myanmarese Mizos and they want them to join the mainstream of the Mizoram churches. In the case of social life also many expected the Myanmarese to follow the system of Mizo society and to integrate into the Mizo culture.

The Myanmarese migrants feel that they have no hope from Myanmarese military junta as such they are constrained to seek refuge in Mizoram and other parts of the globe. They request the people of Mizoram to show leniency towards Myanmarese settlers in the State. With regard to separate congregation, it is only due to the language differences that necessitate some Myanmarese settlers to have a separate congregation. Concerning smuggling of drugs to the State of Mizoram, they argue, it is the work of Myanmarese military regime. As the regime wanted money, they smuggled drugs into Mizoram. These smugglers were not the owners of the drugs but only the carriers. It is felt that all these problems could be solved when democracy is established in Myanmar. Zo Human Rights Global Network a civil society group, urged the Central YMA and the political parties to accept their congregation.\textsuperscript{168} The three political arties, MNF, Congress and MPC are

\textsuperscript{167} Vanglainti,Aizawl, February 18, 2008, p.1.
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid.
silent about the request and could not give their decision, and with regard to central YMA the case is kept for further discussion.

3.25 Political unrest in Myanmar and the Chin Migrants:

In their desperate attempt to escape their country, unaccounted number of the people of Chin in Myanmar’s Western province are fleeing to India since the military crack down on Buddhist monks in September, 2007, and the sanctions imposed by the United States and European countries also hit hard the Myanmar economy. Due to this, many Myanmarese try to find an escape route from their country. There has been illegal movement of the Myanmarese migrants. Although the Government of Mizoram and the people in general are aware of this, there is no sufficient action to prevent them. On the other hand, though there is sympathy for these illegal migrants, many of them feel insecure as the governments often apprehend them. For example, Zing and her friends were afraid to come out openly as they are not recognized as refugees. ‘The Indian authorities will deport us since we cannot produce any paper’ said Zing, staying with a Chin family at Aizawl who agreed to provide accommodation and her friends for two weeks. Without any refugee status or identity proof 60,000 ethnic Chin Myanmarese are estimated to be settling in Mizoram. The inflow of Myanmarese began many years back but since September 2007 there have been a spurt in the

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169 The Mizoram Post, Aizawl, February 18, 2008, p.1
171 Thonhlei Zing, 23 years old agricultural laborers and four of her colleagues from Hnian Lawn village in Myanmar’s Chin state arrived in India on January 1, 2008. They walked three days in the jungle bare footed, crossed the river Tiau to cross the border, in Mizoram. They exchanged the Myanmar’s kyat for rupees at the black market in the border town of Champhai and they came to Aizawl by bus.
in flow of Myanmarese nationals in Mizoram. In the absence of humanitarian agencies and constant refusal from Indian authority, testimonies of Myanmarese refugees pouring into Mizoram comes from local sources.

3.26 Socio-Political Issues at Rangvamual and Phunchawng In Connection with Indo-Myanmar Border Trade:

Rangvamual is located between Sairang and Aizawl, only 3 km from Aizawl. Many Myanmarese migrants have settled in this place. On March 3, 2001, 16 families of foreigners from Myanmar left the place due to tension prevailing between the Myanmarese settlers and the local people. The then VCP of Rangvamual said that bad wine sellers and liquor sellers were increasing, the people indulged in these works were mostly believed to be Myanmarese migrants, the then Village Defence Party secretary also stated that the multiplication of bad wine was also due to these foreigners. He further said that the art of making sub-standard wine was also learned by the Mizos from Myanmarese settlers.

During that time, the then Revenue Minister Lalrinchhana and government officials held a serious discussion at his office chambar, concerning the place of Phunchawng and how the people would continue to settle in the area. The meeting stated that Phunchawng area was created with the consent of the Government of Mizoram, so it would not

be possible to evict all the inhabitants,\textsuperscript{173} and the meeting passed the following resolutions for conditions to settle in Phunchawng.

1. Only those people who have Land Settlement Certificate and promise not to sell wine are allowed to settle in the area.
2. For those who have settled with their own accord, the Deputy Commissioner would find a way out to evict them.
3. The meeting also resolved to find out foreigners and to deal with them in accordance with the law of the land.

The Chaltlang Village Council urged the LAD (Local Administration Department) Minister H. Vanlalaua to abolish Phunchawng area. In this application, it mentioned that at Phunchawng a large number of wine sellers were there,\textsuperscript{174} and at the same time bad wine used to come out; due to this the place should be dismantled. Phunchawng is located within the ambit of Chaltlang Village Council. In these areas, the government allotted house sites to the people and declared sub-town. The house sites are allowed to be converted to Land Settlement Certificate. Due to this fact, the government also feels difficult to dismantle the area.

\textbf{3.27 Government Position on Myanmarese Settlement in Mizoram:}

The position of the Mizoram Government with regard to the Myanmarese migrants in Mizoram is very clear. According to the statement made by the then Chief Minister Zoramthanga, who made a

\textsuperscript{173} \textit{Vanglaini}, Aizawl March 1, 2001, p.1
\textsuperscript{174} \textit{Vanglaini}, February 27, 2001, p.1.
statement on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, the Myanmarese migrants are to be treated as foreigners. The Chief Minister further stated that the Indian Migration Act is the responsibility of the Centre Government and as such, the State Government has nothing to do with it. The Chief Minister informed that although so far there is no census of the migrants from Myanmar, in the year 200-2001, the State Government apprehended 565 Myanmarese migrants in Mizoram.

On the floor of the Legislative Assembly, LN Tluanga, Congress MLA enquired the Government Policy with regard to the Mizos who belong to Myanmar. Zoramthanga the then Chief Minister stated that those foreigners who were planning to enter Mizoram like any others needed visa, and those foreigners who were entering Mizoram without visa could be punished under Foreigner Act and Passport Act.

According to some unofficial estimates around 60,000 Myanmarese migrants are staying in Mizoram without officially being recognized as refugees. This has been so much felt in all spheres, thereby, causing social problems in the State of Mizoram. However, many of migrants have been absorbed into the society and many of them managed to get themselves enrolled in the electoral roll in the State. Some of these people are being accused as perpetrators of unlawful activities being perpetrated in Mizoram, such as bootlegging, smuggling and robbery. The high crime rate in the State of Mizoram has also been attributed to Myanmarese settlement in Mizoram. When the

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175 *Mizoram Legislative Assembly Session*, March 26, 2001.
178 Ibid.
newly formed Congress Ministry came to power, after January election 2009 in the State of Mizoram, the State Home Minister R.Lalzirliana stated in no uncertain term about the anti-social activities committed by the Myanmarese settlers in the State and the Home Minister stated that Myanmarese nationals who were found guilty of breaking the law of land would henceforth be handed over to the military authority in Myanmar instead of being sent to jail in Mizoram.

3.28 Myanmarese Contribution to Mizo Culture And Economy:

Many Myanmarese migrants have crossed the border and settled in the State of Mizoram and engaged in different works. Some are engaged in weaving who work hard to make their living. Weavers from Myanmar work in the handloom units in Aizawl. The handloom products like the traditional *sarong* are being sold mostly in Mizoram,\(^{179}\) while other handloom products are sent to other Northeastern States.

Some Myanmarese weavers used to return to Myanmar when they are financially sound. As a matter of fact, Mizoram provides good opportunities for weavers than Myanmar. According to some Myanmarese laborers, Myanmar does not provide any financial support to the weavers. However, all is not well for the Myanmarese weavers in Mizoram. The local authorities often apprehend illegal migrants,\(^{180}\) and drive them out from Mizoram. In the meantime, many weavers joined the Myanmar Welfare Society (MWS) to help each other. Some weavers also

\(^{179}\) *The Mizoram Post*, Aizawl March 27, 2006, p.1
\(^{180}\) *Ibid.*, p.1
enroll in the local churches as these churches take responsibilities for their welfare to some extent. The political situation and the economic condition deteriorating in Myanmar lead to the migration of some of the weavers to Mizoram.

Many Myanmarese migrants are employed by handloom owners in different parts of Mizoram. Before 1998, the employees in the handloom industries were mainly from Myanmar, though there were some from other States but they were very insignificant compared to the Myanmarese employees. But after 1998, when the MNF Government began to train B.P.L (Below poverty line) members and others in the handloom industries, the Mizos also began to engage in the handloom industries in the productions of varieties of shawls. These shawls reach to different parts of India and event to foreign countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, England, USA etc.

3.29 Myanmarese settlement and implications:

The movement of the illegal migrant workers from across the border of Myanmar has been a matter of concern for the YMA. The YMA has taken up the issue from time to time in sensitizing the government and the people about the problem. On 23\textsuperscript{rd} February 2009, the YMA Central Executive passed a resolution stating that in the interest of the State, census of foreigners particularly those who have come from Myanmar be conducted in the month of March, the YMA also decided to meet different organizations from Myanmar. The reason behind the

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\textsuperscript{181} Interview with Thangi, (age 54) handloom owner, Tuikual C, on 12\textsuperscript{th} April, 2008.
decision of having census is that in the Human Right Watch Website some of the Myanmarese settlers have tarnished the image of the YMA in particular and the Mizo people in general. The Myanmarese settlers in Mizoram have lodged a complaint in their web site and stated that the Myanmarese settlers in Mizoram were not safe. In the website ‘life for Chins’ stated that the military regime in Myanmar had persecuted the Chins like slaves, and for this reason they had crossed the Indo-Myanmar border through the State of Mizoram and made a settlement in the State. In Mizoram too, they are not safe, they have encountered all sorts of social boycott and torture, even though, Mizoram is a Christian State, yet, the people contrary to their faith have acted diversely by persecuting the Chins who have come from Myanmar. They further complained in the Website that the Chins in Mizoram have no liberty to worship according to their belief and are not allowed to establish their own churches.\textsuperscript{182} It further said ‘we are like forgotten people, unsafe in Burma and unsafe in India’.\textsuperscript{183} According to the resolution of the YMA Executive Meeting, it has been said that the census of the foreigners be conducted by the branches of YMA in their own respective areas. The meeting also stressed that these Myanmarese migrants are refugees in the State; as such, the Government should make refugee camp for them and treat them accordingly. According to this Website, up to March 2008,\textsuperscript{184} there are 60,000 to 80,000 Chins from Chin State of Myanmar in Mizoram. Soon after this the Central Y.M.A had a meeting with leaders of different Chin organizations and their church leaders at the Y.M.A office at Aizawl.


\textsuperscript{183} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{184} \textit{Ibid.}
The migrants stated that when they die in Mizoram, the Mizos do not co-operate in the funeral disposal of the dead bodies. In Mizoram they are not allowed to have proper settlement and children are used as forced labors and the Chins work in Mizoram with lower pay than the rest of the people. However, the YMA in Mizoram counters the information and says that they are enjoying the benefits of the bonafide citizens. Some of them become church leaders and leaders of youths and Y.M.A. In this context, the representatives of Chins say that they feel sorry for the wrong information that have been spread out in the website, tarnishing the image of the State of Mizoram. The Chin leaders also admitted that amidst those who come from Myanmar to Mizoram there are many anti-social elements, such as robberies etc. According to them these anti-social elements have partners from the local residents. The Chin leaders also say that they are extremely against these anti-social elements, and in this matter the representatives of Chins praised the YMA for their patience. The Chin representatives say that Myanmar Military Junta is jealous of their status in Mizoram and as such, they used to push to Mizoram anti-social elements and their associates like drugs etc.

The leaders of the Chin refugees who fled the military atrocities and economic hardship in Myanmar to take refuge in Mizoram expressed gratitude for the hospitalities shown to them by the Mizos. This has come on the ground that the Young Mizo Association, in the State voiced its concern over the report in the US based Human Rights Watch (HRW) which posted a report in its website regarding the plight of the Chin refugees in Mizoram in which the report portrayed the Mizos and its

organization, YMA in particular as rude and abusive to the Chin refugees. It is strongly felt that the Human Rights Watch has been fed baseless information by the some unscrupulous Chin communities here in the State so as to get world sympathy. Consequent upon that, the YMA leaders met the representatives of the Chin communities to take measures so that in the future such issues may not emanate again. Myanmarese Chins in Mizoram, however, appreciate the hospitality available in Mizoram. They strongly condemned such baseless information provided to the global Human Rights Group that tarnished the image of the Mizos. With the Indian Government refusing to give refugee status to the thousands of Chin refugees staying in Mizoram, the Chins will have no place to go if Mizos are hostile to them.

3.30 An Estimated of Indo-Myanmar Informal Border Trade In Champhai District:

The researcher has conducted a sample survey at Champhai Shopping mall and selected 20 shops as the universe. Therefore, by looking at the table 3:5 below, one can estimate that at one shopping mall at Champhai, out of 31 items of goods, 22.16 per cent of goods are foreign goods that come from Myanmar. However, there is no official statistics with regard to the volume of trade as formal trade across the border has not yet taken place.
### Champhai Shopping Mall: Volume of informal trade.

**Table 3:5**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Quantities</th>
<th>Values in Rs.</th>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Quantities</th>
<th>Values in Rs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Air bags</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13000.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Suitcase</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>1,38,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Under pants</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1200.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>socks</td>
<td>1250</td>
<td>37500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Blankets</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1,20,000.00</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>towels</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>45,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>umbrella</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>21,000.00</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Gamcha</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>15,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Shawls</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>32,300.00</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Trunk, box</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>28,800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>track pants</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>13000.00</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>shawls</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>36,650.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>calculators</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>5425.00</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Electric randa</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21200.00</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Istiris</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4950.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Folding wardrobe</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>20200.00</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>tube lights</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>18,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ironing boards</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5000.00</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>radios</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Drowers(plastic)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11,000.00</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>fans</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>58900.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Torchlight</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>433.00</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Camera</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>455000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Hanger stands.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5200.00</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Car tapes</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>46,500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Camera</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>22,000.00</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Iron istiri</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>19250.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Knifes</td>
<td>75 sets</td>
<td>11220.00</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Electric wires</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-150000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Inverters</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>90000.00</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Shawls</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>27,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Vanda(bawls, spoons, pla</td>
<td>450 sets</td>
<td>180000.00</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Smart shoes</td>
<td>295 pares</td>
<td>147500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Quantity</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Quantity</td>
<td>Price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>CD,DVD players.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>21,000.00</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Ladies shoes</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>1,17,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Bed sheets sets.</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>112500.00</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>School shoes.</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>90000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Slippers.</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>33,000.00</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>rice</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>89250.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Cigarettes.</td>
<td>55 cases</td>
<td>46750.00</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Everyday milks.</td>
<td>720 kgs</td>
<td>45,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Sops.</td>
<td>895</td>
<td>5320.00</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Sugar.</td>
<td>25 qntls</td>
<td>6,250.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Fishing nets</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>11200.00</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>dal</td>
<td>35 qntls</td>
<td>297000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>CD cassettes.</td>
<td>1125</td>
<td>42131.00</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Cerelac</td>
<td>175 packs</td>
<td>6150.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Biscutes.</td>
<td>850 packs</td>
<td>6220.00</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Nutrika</td>
<td>1000 packages</td>
<td>25000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Jackets.</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>322000.00</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Battery</td>
<td>445 cases</td>
<td>65520.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Watches.</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>341200.00</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Medicines</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25,90,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Water filters</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5120.00</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Cold drinks</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>3750.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Umbrella.</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>12000.00</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Clothes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>900000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Cosmetics.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>320000.00</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Tea leaves</td>
<td>6500</td>
<td>39,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Gas lighter, Small battery, nail cutters, scissors.</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>5000.00</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Gas stoves</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>85,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1634050.00</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>56,88220.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey by the researcher through questionnaires.
By analyzing the above table 3:5, we come to the conclusion that out of 20 shops under study, a sizeable number of foreign goods that have passed through Zokhawthar-Rih sector from Myanmar find their place at Champhai market centers.

However, apart from the items of goods that listed in the above table, there are miscellaneous goods that are coming continuously from across the Indo-Myanmar border to the State of Mizoram. These goods also constitute a sizeable volume. (Such as hair dye, Lapheto (edible items), pen, small scissors. etc.)

The industrial goods and animal husbandry such as pigs and cows when entered the State of Mizoram a good number of them are sold in the district of Champai and the rest are exported out side Champhai district to different parts of Mizoram and even out side to the State of Mizoram. But agricultural goods are mainly sold in the district of Champhai which is located in the Indo-Myanmar border. These agricultural products like cauliflower have mainly arrived from the Chin State which is located in the Indo-Myanmar border, touching the State of Mizoram. Apart from this, fruits such as apple also find their way through the border and enter the State of Mizoram via Zokhawthar-Rih sector. The flow of foreign goods from Myanmar to the State of Mizoram remains consistent throughout the year except on certain occasions where there used to ensue occasional misunderstanding between the local people, sometimes, between the Customs Department and the Taxation Department, Government of Mizoram, and between the Zokhawthar local people and
the Champhai Transport Union. But these incidents are only temporary hiccups that evolve in the in the socio-cultural and political setting. This situation makes the Champhai Zokhawthar–Rih Sector very volatile in its own way. But this type of unhealthy environment is undesirable to every section in the society.

Almost every family is affected by the flow of Indo-Myanmar border trade at the town of Zokhawthar. Whenever, the Indo-Myanmar border trade comes to a halt in this sector, the development of the whole village comes to a grinding halt. This is due to the fact that many people earn their living through the international border trade. It is a fact that due to the coming of foreign goods from Myanmar, foreign goods are plenty in the State of Mizoram. It has to be noted also that all the foreign goods that are found in the State are not from Myanmar. Many traders from Mizoram also go to Bangkok, and other places in the south eastern countries to fetch goods to be sold in the State of Mizoram. They import items in the informal trade that have been evolved. Some of the traders also go to Katmandu via Assam to fetch foreign goods for selling in Mizoram. But a large volume of foreign goods have arrived via Zokhawthar with diverse implications in the State.

The fact about the informal trade through the State of Mizoram is that foreign goods that have made their entry via Zokhawthar–Rih sector are goods that have come from Myanmar are controlled by the Customs Department and the local middlemen. The middle men who intercede to the customs department on behalf of the traders, and share profit in the process of negotiations. If the Indo-Myanmar Border Trade Agreement is
implemented through the State of Mizoram, then these middlemen will have to give up their jobs. This probably may create problem at least in the initial.

On the other hand, from the State of Mizoram traders smuggle out from the State to Myanmar, items such Medicines, Lungi, Fertilizers, test makers (*aginomoto*), tobacco (*Zarda*) etc., to Myanmar. However, the items of import from Myanmar far out weight the export to Myanmar from the State of Mizoram. Orchids from Mizoram have been exported to Myanmar in large quantities. This orchid has it name in Mizo as *Nauban*. These orchids are further exported to China through Sino-Myanmar border. Orchids from Mizoram are greatly valued in China.

It has to be noted that apart from the above mentioned goods, a large number of goods for consumption are imported from Myanmar. Other items like, medicines, particularly multi-vitamins have found their ways to the State of Mizoram through the Indo-Myanmar border.\footnote{Some of the medicines which come from Myanmar are such as, Orogin-G, the medicine which gives strength to elderly people, Appeto for teen growth, cog-vitamin, Pyatho-3, for elderly people, Pluvimin of multi-vitamins, cod liver oil Emulson, etc.}

**3.31 Seizure Achievements of Land Customs Station-Zokhawthar-Rih Sector, Mizoram:**

The Customs Department may at time be little lax in checking goods coming across the border. But there are also some attempts where
it is vigilant in checking goods. The Land Customs Station at Zokhawthar
seizes the contrabands that are forbidden for trade in this sector.

The following table 3:5 reveals the seizure achievement of the
Zokhawthar Land Customs Station for the years 2004-2005 from Imports
and Exports. The number of cases registered from the import of goods is
8 and from that of export are 15. Seizure value from April 2004-March
2005 from import is Rs 763530.00. The seizure value from the export of
the same year is Rs 539944.00 and the auction sale proceed is
Rs280900.00 whereas, from the import there was no auction sale proceed.
The total value from import and export for the same period, table 3:5 is
Rs1303474.00 and the auction sale proceed for the year is Rs280900.00

Table 3:6 indicates that the period between 2005-2006 shows a
sharp increase in the number of cases from import. The total number of
cases from import is 29 and that of from export being 23. The total
seizure value from import is Rs 6722835.00 and the total seizure value
from export is Rs 838632.00. Hence, the total seizure value from both
export and import is Rs 7561467.00. The total auction sale proceed from
import is Rs 38100.00 and from that of export is Rs 465700.

When we compare table 3:5 and table 3:6, we come to know that
the number of cases in 2005-06 is much higher than 2004-05. The total
value of goods was also increased. In the table 3:6 the total value of
goods is Rs 7561467.00 and that of table 5:7 is Rs 10100791.00. The
difference is Rs 2539324.00. But the total number of cases in 2006-07 has
come down