CHAPTER III

POLITICAL PARTIES AND ISSUES

Political Party is a group of persons who agree on some ideology and seek to capture power and form the government on the basis of collective leadership. Political parties have grown up to turn social thought into political action. Political parties are essential actors in a democratic political system. Political parties form the government after seeking mandate of the people.

In a democratic political system, the election plays a significant role. The political parties take an active part in the elections. Different political parties try to mobilize the public opinion in favour of their respective parties. They help to bring together different groups of people into a common platform, articulate their interests, generate awareness among the people by political activities and make them organised and politically active, formulate and shape common public interest, facilitate the formation of government in a democratic political system and also act as an intermediary/mediator and as a link between the people and the government.

Political parties are seen to be most active during elections. They are the ones who field their candidates, who when elected form the government or the opposition. They project various issues and
programmes for future action, thereby showing the direction of development that the state would take. The political parties through their mobilisation, campaigning, programmes, etc. determine to a great extent the manner in which the people actually vote. Through elections political parties can measure their strength and support. At the same time, election is a means to assess the response of the electorate to the issue raised by the political parties. Political parties try to organise public opinion and exploit the minds of the voters through their election manifestoes.

This chapter briefly surveys the previous elections to the Mizoram Legislative Assembly and the performance of political parties as they had a definite bearing on the 2003 assembly elections in Mizoram. It briefly looks into the salient features of the election manifestoes of the major political parties participating in the 2003 assembly elections, the role of voluntary organizations and some election issues in 2003 elections. The performance of political parties in the assembly elections, 2003 in the state with the past performance of political parties in the state assembly elections is briefly analysed. It studies the performance of political parties in the assembly elections, 2003 in rural areas (14 rural constituencies) with the past performance of parties in the state assembly elections. The present chapter studies and analyses mainly the performance of political parties in the state assembly elections, 2003 in
Tuipang, Buarpui, Suangpuilawn and Sateek Constituencies. The socio-political background and experience of the candidates put up by the political parties to contest the assembly elections from the four rural sample constituencies also come under the present study.

The present chapter is divided into two sections as follows:

The Lushai Hills was initially divided into two – the North Lushai Hills and the South Lushai Hills. The former was placed under the administrative control of the Chief Commissioner of Assam and the latter was under the administrative control of the Lt. Governor of Bengal. The administration of the North Lushai Hills was headed by a Political Officer, while the administration of the South Lushai Hills was under the charge of a Superintendent. The two districts – the North Lushai Hills District and the South Lushai Hills District were combined into one district known as the Lushai Hills district on 1st April, 1898. The new Lushai Hills District became a part of Assam Province and its administration was put under the Chief Commissioner of Assam. The District Officer of the Lushai Hills District was designated as Superintendent of the new Lushai Hills District. The existing system of rule by the chiefs was continued. The chiefs were held responsible for the behaviour of their people and the Superintendent and his assistants were to uphold the authority of the chiefs.
The Lushai Hills District was declared as a Backward Tracts on 3\textsuperscript{rd} January, 1921 under the Government of India Act, 1919. Again, the Lushai Hills District became Excluded Area under the Government of India Act, 1935.

Political activities of any kind were prohibited in the District by the British all through their rule. The people had neither political experience nor the opportunity to have such. As a result, political consciousness emerged quite late in the Lushai hills. The first political party in the Lushai Hills came into existence when the political future of the country was being decided.

The first political party called the Mizo Common People’s Union was formed on 9\textsuperscript{th} April, 1946 with the permission of the Superintendent. But the name of this party was later changed to Mizo Union (MU).

\textbf{SECTION I}

I. Introduction: Political Development – Emergence of Political Parties in Mizoram.

II. The Assembly Elections, 2003 in the State
   a. Election Manifestoes of major political parties in 2003 assembly elections.

III. Election Outcome and the performance of political parties in the assembly elections, 2003 in the state with the past performance of the parties in the assembly elections.
SECTION II
RURAL CONSTITUENCIES

I. The performance of political parties in the assembly elections, 2003 in the rural constituencies (14 rural constituencies).

II. Analysis of the performance of the political parties in the 4 rural sample constituencies – Tuipang, Buarpui, Suangpuilawn and Sateek constituencies.

III. Socio-political background and experience of the candidates in rural sample constituencies.

SECTION I

I. Introduction: Political Development – Emergence of Political Parties in Mizoram

After its annexation by the British in 1890, the present Mizoram was known as Lushai Hills. It was only from 1890 that formal political and administrative history of the state began. Though the British subdued the Mizo chiefs and occupied their land in 1890, the Lushai Hills was formally included in British India only on 6th September, 1894. In the beginning the Lushai Hills was divided into two parts – the North Lushai Hills under the administrative control of the Chief Commissioner of Assam, and the South Lushai Hills under the Lt. Governor of Bengal. The two districts – the North Lushai Hills District and the South Lushai Hills District were combined into one district known as the Lushai Hills District on 1st April, 1898. The new Lushai Hills District became a part of Assam Province and its administration
was put under the Chief Commissioner of Assam. The District Officer of the Lushai Hills District was designated as Superintendent of the new Lushai Hills District with his headquarters at Aizawl.

Under the Government of India Act, 1935, the Hill areas of Assam were divided into two categories – ‘excluded areas’ and ‘partially excluded areas’. The Lushai Hills was under the Excluded Areas, over which the provincial ministry had no jurisdiction. The Governor of Assam as an agent of the Governor-General in Council was vested with authority over the district. The expenditure incurred in the Lushai Hills was also not voted by the Provincial Legislature because the district had no representation in the Assam Legislature. The district was also not represented in the Central Legislative Council before Indian Independence. The British did not want to give local self-government to the Mizos and therefore declared Lushai Hills as Excluded Area under the Government of India Act, 1935. The Governor of Assam was the sole administrative and legislative authority for the Excluded Areas. This kept these hills out of jurisdiction of the elected Ministry. The Governor was authorized to make regulations for peace and good government of such an area. This had two effects. First, the Mizos were kept out of the mainstream of the national life. The political process which was developing in the rest of the country did not

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touch the Excluded Areas. Secondly, the funding for such areas being from the provincial budget there were very limited resources available for these areas. Hence, economic activities were almost absent in the excluded areas. Political activities of any kind were prohibited in the District by the British all through their rule. Thus, up to the end of the Second World War, there was no political activity of any kind in the district permitted. So the people had neither political experience nor the opportunity to have such.²

**District Conference:** When the transfer of power from British to India was imminent, the Superintendent Macdonald thought that something should be done and brought into existence the District Conference, although there was no demand for that. It was intended to advise the Superintendent on all matters connected with the administration of the district. On 14th January, 1946, Macdonald convened a District Conference to advise him on administration and future political set up of the hills. Before the formation of the District Conference, there was no other organized body except the Chiefs Conference. ‘This has a feeble semblance of a political body and can be said to be a precursor of unbridled political party of the people’³. The District Conference supported mostly by the Chiefs, wanted Lushai Hills to remain a British Crown Colony.

Following this development, the Mizo youths and commoners wanted to organize themselves into a political party. As a result, a political party called the Mizo Common People’s Union with the permission of the Superintendent was formed on 9th April, 1946 for the first political party in Mizo land to voice the people’s aspiration and various demands especially political rights and status. But the name of this party was later changed to Mizo Union.

**Mizo Union (MU):** The Mizo Union was the first Mizo political party founded on 9th April, 1946. In the beginning, the party was named as ‘Mizo Common People’s Union’ under the leadership of R. Vanlawma. Later, in order to consolidate the grassroot level base, the new name was given as ‘Mizo Union’. But even then, the Chiefs did not join the party. Though the chiefs did not join the party, it became popular with the commoners. It was indeed pathetic to observe that the attempt to create a good understanding between the chiefs and commoners had ended in failure. This had created a stultifying atmosphere of political rivalry causing a strained relation between the two groups.

The first conference of the Mizo Union (MU) was held on 25th May, 1946 at Aizawl. The party elected Pachhunga as its President.

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Lalhema as the Vice-President, R. Vanlawma as the General Secretary. The draft constitution prepared by R. Vanlawma and Dahrawka was approved in this conference. The principal objectives of the party were to achieve a rightful status for the Mizos; to develop better understanding between the chiefs and commoners; to unify the common people; to become the democratic representative and spokesman for the whole of Mizo people; and to popularize Mizo language. S.N. Singh wrote the aims and objectives of the political organization highlight the inherent potentialities of political values and their capability to participate in the political activities. Secondly, most of the party members were surcharged with regional sentiment in order to promote the sectional interest of the Mizos. This is evident from the socio-political objectives of the party mentioned above. From the objectives of the party it is clear that in the beginning the Mizo Union was not a radical organization because the party was dominated by the conservatives and the rich.

After the formation of the party, the first General Assembly of the Mizo Union (South and North) was held at Kulikawn, Aizawl on 24th September, 1946 with the permission of the Superintendent. About

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6 V. Venkata Rao et al., op. cit., p. 494.
8 S.N. Singh, op. cit., p. 166.
9 V. Venkata Rao, et al., op. cit., p. 137.
seven hundred delegates attended the assembly\(^{10}\). Here political activity began in the Lushai Hills. Before 1946, there was no political activity for all practical purposes because the Superintendent frowned upon it. The Mizo Union demanded that a chief should rule the village not through the *Upas* appointed at his discretion, but elected by the people.

The future of the Mizos according to the leaders of the Mizo Union lay with the Indian Union. They held a strong opinion that the welfare and modernization of Mizos would be achieved best within Indian Union. The Assembly was opposed to the retention of the Lushai Hills as an excluded area under Independent India, but wish to be included in the Provincial Legislature with adequate member of representatives.

At the same time, the General Assembly decided that no Legislation of the Provincial Legislative Assembly should apply to the Lushai Hills automatically. The Assembly reserved all rights and privileges of internal administration in the Lushai Hills District with a local legislative and executive body. ‘The internal affairs of the Lushai Hills should be managed by its own legislature’\(^{11}\).

When the Bordoloi Committee of the constituent Assembly visited Aizawl on 17\(^{th}\) April, 1947\(^{12}\) to study and recommend on the future administrative set up in the hill areas of Assam, the Mizo Union

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\(^{11}\)V. Venkata Rao, *op. cit.*, p. 496.

(Left Wing) submitted its memorandum with the following demands:

1. The Mizo inhabited areas of the neighbouring districts such as Manipur, Cachar and Tripura should be included in the Lushai Hills District,
2. Lushais should be called Mizos,
3. Internal administration should be left to the Mizos within the general framework of the province of Assam,
4. Special provision for liberal financial assistance should be given from the Central Government. Further, the party, in its memorandum, stated that the Lushai Hills would like to be a part of India for a period of ten years, after which she would decide its future. During this period, they would govern themselves through a district council. The other group of Mizo Union (Right Wing) demanded for Independence.

The Mizo Union was popular because it promised the abolition of chieftainship, representation of the Mizo people in the Provincial and Central Legislature, the improvement of the economic and social condition of the people. As independence was drawing nearer, there were sharp differences of popular opinion regarding the future of the Lushai Hills. The Mizo Union prepared to hold on to its demand for the autonomy within India, but a sessionist group came up in the party favouring the Lushai Hills to join Burma. Ultimately on 5th July, 1947, a

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group supported by the chiefs formed a new party called the *United Mizo Freedom Organisation (UMFO)*\(^\text{15}\)

The Bordoloi Sub-Committee carefully studied the then existed administrative set-up in these hill areas including the Lushai Hills with a view to building up an autonomous body in the administration of the hills, so that the tribal people may continue to follow their traditional way of life\(^\text{16}\). The Bordoloi Sub-Committee in its Report to the Constituent Assembly suggested a special set-up for the tribal areas. The Bordoloi Committee recommended a set-up for the administration of the hill areas, based on the concept of regional autonomy in all matters affecting their customs, laws of inheritance, administration of justice, land, forest, etc\(^\text{17}\).

**Abolition of Chieftainship:** The abolition of chieftainship was the main plank of the Mizo Union. The MU came to power in the District Council in the first election to the Mizo District Council. Because of the persistent demand of the Mizo Union, the Assam Government passed the Lushai Hills (Acquisition of Chief’s Rights) Act in 1954. Then, the rights and interests of chiefs in the District Council area and Pawi-Lakher region were taken over by the District Council and the Regional Council respectively. Chieftainship was abolished in 1954.


\(^{16}\)Report of the North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee (Bordoloi Sub-Committee), 1947, (Manager of Publications, Delhi, 1950).

\(^{17}\)Animesh Ray, *op. cit.*, p. 93.
On 10th August 1961, The Mizo District Congress was set up by A. Thanglura who shifted from the Mizo Union. The Mizo District Congress was loosely associated with the Assam Pradesh Congress Party and thus it was the first political party of the Mizo Hills affiliated to an all-India organization. A great famine (*mautam*) in 1960 brought in a famine voluntary organization named the Mizo National Famine Front (MNFF). When the famine came to an end, the Mizo National Famine Front was soon converted into a political party as *Mizo National Front* (*MNF*) on 22nd October, 1961. The MNF, under the charismatic leadership of Laldenga, declared achievement of an independent sovereign Mizoram as its goal.

In 1962, the third general election to the Legislative Assembly was held. In 1960, the MU became a constituent part of the APHLC which was agitating for the formation of a Hill State. The MU contested election as a constituent part of the APHLC.

After 1963, the MNF and the Mizo Union were the two major political parties in the Mizo Hills District. MNF maintained hostile relations with the Mizo Union. The Mizos were now conscious of their political status some advantage was sought to be grained through separatist demand. It was in this situation that the Mizo Union had to pass a resolution that a full-fledge state within India was the only political solution to the problem. The Mizo Union, thus, adopted a new
policy, statehood for Mizoram in 1963 in order to attract the attention of the people. Since then, the MU left the APHLC because the demand for statehood of its own was in conflict with the demand for a hill state. Situation turned worse when in 1966 insurgency broke out and as a result all political activities were paralysed for several years.

On 21st January 1972, the Mizo Hill District was elevated to the status of Union Territory and this brought about significant changes in the administrative set up. The Mizo Hills District Council was abolished and was replaced by the Mizoram Legislative Assembly which was accepted by the Mizo Union party. The name of the District was changed to Mizoram. Mizoram was given two seats in the Parliament – one to be elected for the Lok Sabha and the other to be nominated for the Rajya Sabha. The Pawi-Lakher Regional Council was also dissolved and the three autonomous District Councils came into existence for the Pawi, Lakher and Chakma people.

On 18th April 1972, the first general election to Mizoram Legislative Assembly was held. The Mizo Union (MU) made a landslide victory over the Congress. The MU captured 21 seats in the House of 30. The Congress secured 6. There were 3 Independents elected\(^\text{18}\). All the three Independents and three nominated MLAs joined the Mizo Union Parliamentary Party. The MU ministry was formed under the

\(^{18}\text{Brief Report on Election to Mizoram Legislative Assembly and Lok Sabha 1972-1999, Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Aizawl.}\)
Chief Minister of Ch. Chhunga in May, 1972. Thus, in the first Mizoram Assembly election, the MU got a clear verdict to steer Mizoram and its people to its goal of development, maintaining its own way of life and culture. On the other hand, factionalism was the main cause for serious setback in the Congress Party in 1972 elections. Beside, new small political parties and a large number of independent candidates appeared in the election. The MU made a victory even in the Lok Sabha election 1972. Two years later, the Mizo Union merged with the Congress to strengthen the peace process. The MNF, on its part was not willing to recognize the leadership of Mizo Union in any settlement.

In the midst of these conditions, the MNF underground movement which started from 1966 was still going on. The people were yearning for effective leadership in order to ameliorate their untold sufferings. Since the dominant regional party (MU) had become a national party and the MNF was still underground, there was a vacuum in the regionalist politics of Mizoram. Meanwhile, Brig. Thenphunga Sailo had retired from the Indian Army and formed a Human Rights Committee on 1st June 1974. The aims and objectives of the Committee were to protect and sustain the freedom guaranteed in the Constitution of India; to seek judicial protection in the case of transfer of the people from place to place; to bring about mutual understanding and cooperation between the security forces and the people; finally, to focus
the attention of the authorities to the physical and mental sufferings of
the people who were compelled to evacuate their ancestral homes and
occupy the newly formed villages. The Human Rights Committee was a
non-political body. Its formation was welcomed by the common men
who suffered most in the hands of the security forces. On 16th October
1974, the Committee submitted a memorandum to the Central
Government enumerating the atrocities committed by the Indian Army,
and illustrated it by concrete instances. Then the Committee filed cases
in the Gauhati High Court against the shifting of the villages and
demanded compensation for the loss of properties from the
Government.19 The committee soon became a political party called
People’s Conference (PC).

The aims and objectives of the PC party declared were that the
party would make every effort for the peaceful solution of the Mizo
political problem, unification of all Mizo inhabited contiguous areas
now forming parts of India under a single administrative unit, preserve
distinct identity ethnically, culturally and socially; it would undertake
speedy economic development particularly rural development and
secure human rights20. The structural organization of the party is similar
to the other regional parties. The party had to face the second general
elections to the Mizoram Legislative Assembly in 1978. The PC was

20 Ibid, p. 90.
supported by a faction of the MNF. The PC won 22 seats in the House of 30 while the other eight numbers were independents. Brig. T. Sailo became the Chief Minister in June 1978. But intra-party conflict arose soon in the PC party which brought about a split in the party into PC(A) and PC(B). This led to the resignation of eight PC MLAs including the Speaker on 13th October 1978. Brig. T. Sailo having the support of only fourteen members resigned on 30th October 1978. The Assembly was dissolved on 11th November 1978. On the advice of the Governor, the President of India issued on 11th November 1978, a proclamation of emergency for placing Mizoram under the President’s rule for a period of six months. The mid-term elections were held on 24th and 27th April 1979. Again, Brig. T. Sailo’s party, PC(A), gained the majority but with a reduced number of 18 seats out of 30 seats. The PC was in office for five years.

The PC ministry directed its main effort to infrastructural development in order to develop Mizoram economy. People in general appreciated its policy for economic development. But Brig. T. Sailo was accused of formenting anti-Laldenga policy and of attempting to suppress insurgency by using force. According to V.V. Rao, the aim of the PC was to win election, come to power and bring home the entire

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22 See Appendix A (Election Results to Mizoram Legislative Assembly from 1972 – 2003).
MNF and thereby slight Laldenga\textsuperscript{23}. The MNF reacted with fierce violence by killing some of the staunch supporters of the PC leader.

The third general election was held in 1984. As Brig. T.Sailo’s party (PC) lost the people’s mandate in the election, the Congress Party won the election. The PC secured only 8 seats out of 30 seats while the Congress won an absolute majority with 20 seats polling 40 per cent of votes. There were two Independents\textsuperscript{24}. The Congress ministry was sworn in on 3\textsuperscript{rd} May 1984 with Lalthanhawla as the Chief Minister. The victory of the Congress was not necessarily because of people’s deliberate support to it as a national party, but because the leaders promised that they would step down from power when peace had been concluded between the Government of India and the MNF.

The Congress ministry in Mizoram could not complete its term due to Mizoram Peace Accord between the Government of India and the MNF. The signing of political settlement on 25\textsuperscript{th} June 1986 was followed by the signing of the Mizoram Peace Accord on 30\textsuperscript{th} June 1986. The Accord provided, among other things, full statehood for Mizoram with 40 members Legislative Assembly. Mizoram state was inaugurated on 20\textsuperscript{th} February 1987.

After Mizoram attained statehood, the first general elections to the Legislative Assembly was held on 16\textsuperscript{th} February 1987. The MNF party

\textsuperscript{23} V. Venkata Rao \textit{et al.}, p. 152.
\textsuperscript{24} See Appendix A.
won a majority with 24 seats and thus captured power and form the ministry. Meanwhile, Mizoram was also raised to a full-fledged state and the new state was inaugurated by the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi on 20\textsuperscript{th} February 1987 in Aizawl. This development was the direct outcome of the Peace Accord which was signed earlier. In the elections, the PC party won only 3 seats and the Congress secured 13 seats out of 40 assembly seats\textsuperscript{25}.

After 18 months of rule, the MNF ministry under the leadership of Laldenga was reduced to a minority due to a split within the party which led to the emergence of two groups, one group known as MNF (Laldenga) and the splinter group known as MNF (Democratic). Eight MLA elected on MNF tickets announced their withdrawal of support to the MNF Ministry on 29\textsuperscript{th} August 1988. Then, the Mizoram Legislative Assembly was dissolved and President’s rule was enforced in the state on 7\textsuperscript{th} September 1988.

The mid-term election to the State Assembly was held on 21\textsuperscript{st} January 1989. The Congress and MNF(D) formed a pre-poll alliance. As per the Congress–MNF(D) seat sharing agreement, the Congress would contest from 34 seats while the MNF(D) was to contest from 6 seats. This was the first ever pre-poll alliance for an Assembly election in Mizoram. Though the MNF(D) secured only 2 seats, the alliance did

\textsuperscript{25} Chief Election Officer, Mizoram, Report on the General Election to the Legislative Assembly 1987, CEO, Aizawl, Govt. Press, 1987.
help the Congress. Congress secured 23 seats while the MNF won only 14 seats and PC 1 seat, faring worse than the previous election where they secured two despite their heavy and intense campaign. The Congress party had emerged as the ruling party gaining an absolute majority of 23 seats. The MNF President and also Chief Minister, Laldenga, lost from the Aizawl North-II Constituency while winning from the Aizawl South II Constituency. Congress-MNF(D) coalition ministry was formed and it lasted till end of its term.

It can be noted that after 1989 Assembly election, the two regional parties, the People’s Conference (PC) led by Brig. T. Sailo and the Mizo National Union (MNU) merged into one group and formed a new party called Democratic Party on 12th July 1989 by abolishing their separate existence. The party was led by Brig. T. Sailo as its first President. Lalduhawma was Vice President. After one year, the Democratic Party had an Assembly on 25th & 26th September 1990 and decided to merge into the Janata Dal Party. On 27th September 1990, Dulal Chandra Barua, Janata Dal Zonal Convener inaugurated the new Janata Dal Office at Aizawl and the old Democratic Party (DP) Office (originally PC office) became Janata Dal Office.

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The next general election to the State Assembly was held on 30th
November 1993. A pre-poll alliance was made between the Congress
and the MJD (Mizoram Janata Dal), which was the offshoot of the PC
party. MNF under the leadership of Zoramthanga was defeated. MNF
secured 14 seats while Congress won 16 seats. 8 seats went to MJD.
Then, a Congress - led ministry was formed under the leadership of
Lalthanhawla. The coalition ministry of Congress and MJD did not go
well.

On 25th November 1998 the fourth Mizoram Legislative
Assembly elections were held. After the Congress had ruled the state for
a decade, a pre-poll alliance was made between the MNF and the MPC
(Mizoram People’s Conference) which was earlier known as MJD. It
can be noted that, as already stated before, the PC party finally merged
into MJD (Mizoram Janata Dal). But after some time, the PC, which
merged into MJD, again returned to its original name PC but adding the
word ‘Mizoram’ to PC. Thus, the PC earlier known as MJD in 1993
Assembly Elections had become MPC from 1998 Assembly Elections
and Lok Sabha Elections. The elections of 1988 resulted in the
successful return of 21 MNF candidates including Zoramthanga – MNF
President and 12 MPC candidates including Brig. T. Sailo.28 A coalition
government of regional parties, MNF and MPC parties was formed with

28Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Mizoram, Brief Report on Elections to Mizoram
Zoramthanga MNF as Chief Minister. The MNF – MPC combined captured 33 seats out of 40 seats. The Congress party secured only 6 seats. All the former Ministers of the Congress party including the Chief Minister Lalthanhawla lost their seats.

The MNF-MPC coalition Ministry which was inaugurated on 3rd December 1998 did not farewell and it came to an end on 9th December 1999 after a year and six days. The five MPC Ministers submitted their resignation from their posts as advised by the Chief Minister. This was the direct result of the secret alignment of the MPC with the Congress in connection with the Village Council elections in the month of December 1999. With the exit of the MPC MLAs from the Ministry, the strength of the MNF members became 22 with one independent supporter and still in a firm position to form pure MNF Ministry. Thus, on 13th January 2000, the new MNF Ministry was formed by inducting new Ministers of State to fill vacancies left by the MPC Ministers.

The fifth general elections to the Mizoram Legislative Assembly were held on 20th November 2003, resulting in the return of 21 MNF candidates, 12 Congress, 5 MPC and ZNP combined, and 2 Independents supported by the registered unrecognized party, Maraland Democratic Front (MDF) and Hmar People’s Conference (HPC) respectively.

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II. The 2003 Assembly Elections in the State of Mizoram

Due to the expiry of the tenure of the fourth Legislative Assembly of Mizoram on 7th December 2003, the general elections to the fifth Mizoram State Legislative Assembly was held on 20th November, 2003. (The basic data about the Assembly Election, 2003 is given in Appendix-A)

The three national parties – Indian National Congress (INC), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Communist Party of India (CPI), three regional parties, the ruling Mizo National Front (MNF), Mizoram People’s Conference (MPC) and Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP), four unrecognized parties and twelve Independents were in the fray contesting in 40 constituencies in 2003 elections. The Congress and the ruling MNF were the two main contestants for power. The MNF party made an electoral adjustment with the MPC in the previous elections, 1998, and formed a coalition ministry. The Mizoram People’s Conference (MPC) made a pre-poll alliance and formed electoral adjustments with the Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP), a newly formed unrecognized regional party. But there was no pragmatic understanding between these two parties before the elections or even after elections. It was an arrangement among the leaders for sharing powers only. The political parties in Mizoram thus entered into the election fray with wide and complex spectra of choice or alternatives to the voters.
The total number of electorate was 5,32,462 for 40 assembly seats in 2003 elections. Out of the total number of 192 contestants, there were 185 male contestants and 7 female contestants. The number of valid votes polled was 4,18,113 and the percentage of valid votes polled was 78.52\(^{30}\).

Comparative analysis of the basic data is given in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.1</th>
<th>Comparative Statement – Seats, Electorate, Contestants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Seats</td>
<td>1998</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of Electorate</td>
<td>445356</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of Contestants</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Male Contestants</td>
<td>214</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of Female Contestants</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of valid votes polled</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of valid votes polled</td>
<td>75.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) **Manifestoes of Major Political Parties and Issues in 2003 Elections**

Manifestoes of political parties in an election provide both the basic policies and programmes and the issues involved in a particular election. The major political parties which were in the contests, issued their election manifestoes declaring important issues and approaches to manifold issues.

\(^{30}\)Directorate of Elections, Government of Mizoram, Reports on the fifth General Election to the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, 2003, Aizawl, Mizoram.
The Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC): The election manifesto of the Congress Party consisted of twenty four-point programme\textsuperscript{31}. The programme started with the aim to integrate all the Mizos living in the contiguous areas under a single administrative unit and preserve the distinct identity of the people of the state ethnically, culturally and socially; to safeguard the present inhabited areas of Mizos; to preserve peaceful atmosphere in the state; to have greater financial autonomy for the state; and to ensure Secularism, stable Government and territorial integrity of the Mizoram State.

The party pledged to make development in hydel power and in the means of communication especially airways, railways and waterways; to give telephone connection to every village; to extract mineral resources from within the state; to introduce a better New Land Use Policy (NLUP) to help the families for permanent occupation discouraging the highly destructive system of shifting cultivation; to promote youths welfare by forming Youth Welfare Commission; to enlarge Nursing and Para Medical Centres and take a step for the establishment of Sainik School.

The party also promised to promote sports and games for the development of the youths; to promote information technology; to examine education department from Primary school up to University to

\textsuperscript{31}Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee Manifesto – MLA General Elections 2003, Aizawl (The Manifesto was written in Mizo Language.)
have higher standard of education; to provide hostel facilities to Higher Secondary Schools; to strive for opening Medical and Engineering Colleges in the state; to fill up all the vacant posts for teachers in all the Higher Secondary Schools; to provide more scholarships to students; to open Hostels for students who come from villages and to revise the existing school calendar.

The Congress party promised to develop better ways of people’s participation in the administration of the state by setting up District Development Council, Municipal Council/Corporation and Town Committee. It promised to give more powers, functions and responsibilities to Village Councils; eradicate all forms of corruption; to set up Vigilance Commission and to enact the Right to Information Act; to have a clean, effective and impartial administration based on transparency; to look into the service condition of government servants; to give better treatment of the members of the District Councils; to give more importance to consumer, manual workers and pensioners; and to provide banking facilities for manual workers. The Congress Party further promised that, if voted to power, it will make improvement in the administration of justice by establishing Law Commission. The manifesto covered urban development, such as better communication; housing project for the benefits of houseless people; good vehicle
parking centres; regulated market centres for selling vegetables; building regulation.

Further, the party pledged to adopt measures to expand police department; encourage cultivation of cash crops; create employment opportunities; develop industries with maximum utilization of indigenous resources; privatize the economy if and when it is better; make code of ethics and work ethics for elected representatives; decrease very high salaries and allowances of MLAs/Ministers; make development in the field of afforestation and deforestation of land and soil, and water conservation, tourism, cooperative movement; create better condition for animal husbandry, fisheries, horticulture and agriculture; develop Social Welfare department, public health and sanitation. The party also pledged to give gas connection to every village for the successful development in the field of afforestation.

Mizo National Front (MNF): The manifesto of the MNF was released on 24th October 2003. Staring with its motto ‘For God and Our Country’, the MNF party had important points of election manifesto concerning political, economic, administrative and social development problems of the state. The party proclaimed to make all efforts, in political sphere, to integrate the Mizos living in the contiguous areas under one single administrative unit, safeguard and preserve the identity

of the Mizos in respect of Mizo culture, traditions/customs, preserve the Christian faith of the Mizo people; to make special efforts to solve the boundary problems with neighbouring states; to implement such terms, conditions and other stipulations contained in the memorandum of settlement (Mizoram Peace Accord 1986) which have not yet been implemented, and develop the welfare of the MNF returnees; to be more strict in border check posts and in Inner Line Permit to safeguard the Mizos from assimilations by outsiders; to safeguard the minorities in the state according to the laws, and work for their progress; to make a peaceful state and keep up law and order in the state.

The party also pledged to make economic development for the state by creating important infrastructures. It sought to explore and make use of natural resources for development; give special attention for the upliftment of rural and urban poor people; encourage cultivation of cash crops and create suitable marketing facilities; improve Trade and Commerce and MIP Marketing Board (Mizoram Intodelh Project) which stood for ‘Mizoram Self-sufficiency Programme’; develop Border Trade, road and water transport; emphasize ‘privatization’ if and when necessary for the betterment of the people.

The MNF party, in its manifesto, promised to form a clean, efficient and impartial administration to promote and meet the needs of the people and the state as a whole; make administrative reforms for
good governance and settle problems of government servants, codify, if so necessary, the existing system of village and town administration. It also vowed to stop the illegal entry of non-Mizos in Mizoram, develop judicial system, eradicate corruption and shift the Assam Rifles from the Centre of Aizawl town.

The MNF manifesto pledged to work together with Church and various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for the state; to give attention to handicapped and old-ages; to fight against drugs and other intoxicants and take a step for better conditions of de-addiction centres. The manifesto emphasized on the immediate enforcement of Right to Information Act, which has already been passed by the Central Government in order to have transparent government in the state. It also promised to establish Youth Commission for the welfare and development of youths and future generations; to promote sports and games for youth’s welfare; to develop transport and communication – roads, airways, waterways and railways; to develop and expand tele-communication and Information Technology; to develop Agriculture and Horticulture; to make an effort to augment power and electricity and to accelerate the steps taken in this regard, such as Bairabi Hydel Project, Chhimtuipui Hydel Project, Bairabi Thermal Power Project and Serlui ‘B’ Hydel Project.
The party stressed the need to develop industries as priority with maximum utilization of indigenous resources and create employment opportunities for the younger generations; to promote Handloom and Handicraft industries; to develop Agro-Forest Based Industries, such as Bamboo Industry; to develop agriculture and construct water canal and flat land for agricultural purpose; to supply high yielding variety of seeds to the cultivators and extension of all possible helps to the cultivators for better marketing facilities within the state or elsewhere in the country; encouragement of scientific method for cultivation and better communications. Further, the party, in its manifesto, called for various measures for Public and General Health, development of Tourism and Education, empowerment of women and development of Child Welfare, development of cultivators, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry, Press & Journalism, Central Government Departments and Agencies in the state.

Mizoram People’s Conference (MPC): The Mizoram People’s Conference (MPC) party, in its manifesto, issued on 19 February, 2003 appealed to the people to return its candidates to the Assembly in 2003 election to safeguard and preserve Mizoram state, to safeguard and preserve the distinct identity of Mizo people culturally, ethnically and socially, and to safeguard and preserve Mizo religion, that is,

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Christianity. The party gave priority to the development of the state. The manifesto focussed attention on the development and progress of poor marginal farmers, agricultural workers and manual workers. The programme included creation of employment opportunities for the poor working people through the government’s developmental works, make a special scheme for the urban poor and make an effort to provide houses for houseless people, increase land value in the rural areas to bring about rural regeneration, give a loan to a working family to improve the working condition, give attention for the development of cultivation, take a step to produce more cash crops and facilitate the sale of produced cash crops at reasonable price.

The party assured development in youth’s Welfare by taking a step towards the realisation and creation of employment opportunities inside and outside the state; development in games and sports, education system, song and music. It also assured that better attention will be given to those people who are addicted to drugs or drinks and take preventive measures for other young people.

The party also pointed out that it will work for the development of government servants for the good of the state and the people, empowerment of women and women’s right. The party put forward and elaborate action programme for various aspects of development in the state; review and complete all the good works being done by the
previous government; have a clean, efficient and impartial administration; pressurise the central government to give higher authority and power to the state; take a step to put the whole state under scheduled area; give more power and authority to the District Councils as per the Indian Constitution; make an effort to clearly demarcate the boundaries of Mizoram with neighbouring states; check non-tribals/outsiders to carry on business in the state and their entry into the territory by amending the Act for trading by non-tribals and implementing the Inner Line Regulations strictly.

It also pledged to provide abundant drinking water to all rural and urban people; improve the educational system and programmes to have higher standard of education and Public Health Services; accelerate urban and rural electrification; give priority to the cultivation of cash-crops and create suitable market facilities; establish cane/bamboo Processing Units and Paper Mill/Bamboo Chipping Plant. The party also promised to make use of forest products for various goods and Herbal medicines; utilisation of indigenous products and take a step for better marketing facilities even outside the state; establishment of State Election Commission for a good system of election at the level of District Council and Village Council elections; and improvement of cooperative department.
Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP): The manifestoes of the Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) put forward an elaborate action programmes covering various aspects of life. The party promised the voters to integrate all Mizo inhabited contiguous areas under a single administrative unit, put the whole state under Tribal area, check the entry of non-tribals/outsiders into the state and carry on business, providing maximum relief and compensation to the MNF disturbance affected people and rehabilitation of the MNF returnees who have not received anything from the State Government.

The ZNP Party included in its manifestoes its programme in the administrative sphere. It proclaimed to make all efforts: to constitute Municipal Council in the big towns; to have proper planning for every town; to make transparent government by enforcing the Right to Information Act and Transparency in Public Procurement Act, to constitute Commission to review the service condition of Government servants; to establish more Mizoram House outside the state and enlarge the already existing Houses: to fight corruptions and to introduce administrative reforms for the reduction of governmental expenditure.

The party stressed the need to make agriculture reforms and its development through scientific method; to make budget for buying cash crops produced in the state and suitable marketing facilities inside and

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outside the state; to supply good quality of seeds to cultivators and have self-sufficiency in food and agricultural products; to create employment opportunities for the unemployed; and to promote border trades. The party also declared that its aim was to achieve economic independence, and its programmes are to: create good marketing facilities for cash crops and goods produced from native industries; make budget covering the poor farmers and agriculture labourers in the villages; review and decrease the salaries and facilities of MLAs and Ministers in the state; take a step to eradicate corruption; open more avenues for employment opportunities. The party promised to make development in communication – road, waterway, ropeway and airport; power and electricity; water supply by providing drinking water abundantly to every family.

The party stood for development of small scale industries, such as agro-based industry, forest-based industry, handloom and handicraft industry, sericulture industry etc. It emphasized development of tourism centre and amusement Park; electronic industry, constitution of Information Technology department separately. It also pledged to: reform educational policy and develop education system, separate judiciary from Executive, and amend Mizo customary law in written which will promote the status of Mizo women. The party promised to provide a house site for a houseless family; construct houses to be
rented by houseless families at a low rate; introduce Land Reform Commission and Revenue Commission; promote Health and Sanitation Department. It also proclaimed to make efforts to review the Act of Total Prohibition of alcoholic liquor which is being enforced in the state by taking the opinion of the people into consideration. The party also promised to make efforts to encourage empowerment of women by putting more woman candidates in the election; development of sports and games, Arts & Culture, music and fine arts. It also expressed its will to take various steps to develop children, women, youths and old-aged people.

Analysis of Election Manifestoes and Issues: The manifestoes of parties in an election provide both the basic policies and programmes and the issues involved in a particular election. While studying the manifestoes of the major political parties in Mizoram Assembly election in 2003, it was observed that the manifestoes of all the parties are more or less the same, and the issues involved were state or local issues. There was practically not much difference between the parties. This must be a result of the absence of any tangible ideological divergence among the political parties in the state. Their election manifestoes merely reflected this. Primarily the local issues dominated the election scene and these were largely focused in the manifestoes. The party ideologies and principles were attuned and diluted to meet the local
requirements. International issues and other issues of national importance were not highlighted. The electorates also equally ignored or bypassed them. The voters could not be swayed on these issues. Their orientation was more towards the local issues and problems. Hence all the parties focused the vital needs and issues agitating the minds of the voters in their manifestoes.

On the whole, the manifestoes of the parties contained basically similar policies and programmes on political, economic, administrative, agricultural, industrial, educational, social and other issues. The common concern of the political parties were, for example, the integration of the Mizos living in the contiguous areas under a single administrative unit, safeguarding a separate ethnic and cultural identity of Mizos, improvement of transport and communication, preservation of peaceful atmosphere in the state, creation of employment opportunities, promotion of youth welfare, promotion of sports and games, abundant supply of drinking water, check illegal entry of non-Mizos into Mizoram, development of power and electricity, establishment of industries with maximum use of indigenous resources, desirability of a stable and transparent government, cultivation of cash crops and suitable marketing facilities, development of urban and rural poor people, etc.

For obvious reasons, the common appeals were made to the voters by the parties. For instance, the single most common aspect of the
manifestoes was that each of the parties pledged to integrate all the Mizos living in the contiguous areas under a single administrative unit. But this promise of the contesting parties was just an emotional appeal. Because the areas inhabited by the Mizos are found in most states of the North-Eastern India, also in foreign countries like Burma and Bangladesh. This promise was also a part of the Congress manifestoes. Hence, all the parties made an emotional approach to the voters. The parties were trying to win the support of the voters by making such appeals.

The problem of economic backwardness and the growing unemployment question in the state were also important issues in the election. All the parties suggested some remedial measures to cope with them. Industrialization as an important solution was recognized by all the parties. The parties laid stress on the development of industries with maximum utilization of indigenous resources. The MNF party pointed out that agro-based industry like Bamboo Industry could be started.

In Mizoram majority of the working people depended on agriculture as their main occupation, so agricultural development was an important issue for all the parties in the election. All the manifestoes pinpointed the vital need for agricultural reforms and agricultural development. Development of agriculture through scientific method was emphasized by all the parties. Further, the parties wanted to encourage
cash crops and give importance for creation of suitable market centres for selling produces. ZNP manifestoes call for supply of good quality of seeds to the cultivators.

Congress promised to implement a better and revised policy of NLUP (New Land Use Policy) which it already launched during its rule in the previous years. The main objective of NLUP was to ensure rapid socio-economic development in harmony with ecological balance. Self-sufficiency in food grains was one of objectives of NLUP, but as flat land for Wet Rice Cultivation (WRC) is very limited in the state, the NLUP was implemented in agriculture and allied sectors, animal husbandry sector and industry sector. However, the largest number of beneficiaries under the NLUP was from Agriculture and allied sectors. Assistance to the beneficiaries was given in phases (two or three years) with a ceiling of Rs. 30,000/- per family. But this ambitious NLUP could achieve only limited success. The practice of primitive jhumming cultivation remained unabated resulting in degradation of land and large scale deforestation. The causes of failures of this NLUP could be attributed to lack of clear guidelines for the programme, too much political interference in the selection of the beneficiaries, inadequacy in awareness building among the beneficiaries, lack of community mobilization, etc. In 2003 election, the Congress party promised to implement a Better NLUP which will cover the entire state.
The MNF party also pledged to continue MIP (Mizoram Intodelh Programme or Self-sufficiency Programme) which it already launched during its rule in the previous years, 1998-2003. The main purpose of the programme was upliftment of the rural poor especially the shifting cultivators. Its main concern was attainment of self-sufficiency, food security and better livelihood for the cultivators. This programme, when implemented was designed to minimize the undesirable consequences of shifting cultivation such as destruction of forest, removal of top soils, landslides and degradation of land. The farmers were to be assisted in adopting a more profitable, sustainable permanent system of farming through agro-horticulture, soil conservation, animal husbandry sectors, etc.

The Congress manifesto covered the development of urban and rural poor, especially the rural poor, development of farmers (cultivators). Likewise, the MNF and other also focused on the upliftment of urban-rural poor, development of farmers/cultivators in the rural areas. Both Congress and MNF put an emphasis on the preservation of peaceful atmosphere in the state, to keep up law and order in the state. The Congress wanted to form Law Commission. The Congress proclaimed their intention to develop industries with maximum utilization of indigenous resources, while the MNF expressed their will to explore and make use of natural resources available in the
state for development of industries, especially small scale industries. All the parties pledged to have transparent government and fight against corruption. The Congress, MNF and MPC made commitment to the application of the Right to Information Act in the state.

While the manifestoes of the major parties in 2003 elections were more or less the same, there are some differences, at least, in the degree of ideologies. Points of dissimilarities between the national party, Congress, and the regional parties were there. For instance, only in the Congress manifesto we could find the intention to enlarge Nursing and Para-medical Centres, to open Medical and Engineering Colleges, to have Central School as many as possible, to revise the existing School Calendar, to provide Hostel facilities for the students who come from villages. The regional parties, MNF and MPC laid stress on the safeguarding of Christian faith, while the Congress pledged to uphold the ideals of Secularism.

While every party talked about transparent government, the Congress went further saying that it would form Vigilance Commission free from the control of the government for the purpose of having clean government and administration. Unlike the other parties, the Congress manifesto began with an apology to the people of Mizoram for its past misdeeds and asked for forgiveness. The Congress manifesto contained 21 pages, and was very much detailed, while the manifestoes of other
parties contained just 5 pages. When all the parties gave importance to the development and improvement of education, the Congress party talked about the School teachers in the rural areas. It expressed its intention to appoint a village school teacher from the same village or from the neighbouring village if possible. The party, in its manifestoes mentioned that all the vacant posts in the schools will be filled up.

On the other hand, the MNF promised to implement such terms and conditions contained in the memorandum of settlement (Mizoram Peace Accord 1986) which have not yet been implemented. It also intended to develop the welfare of the MNF returnees. The Congress kept silent on this issue. When the MNF wanted to form Youth Commission for the development of Youth’s Welfare, the other parties did not talk about Youth Commission, though they all concerned for the Youth’s Welfare. The MNF and ZNP manifestoes covered empowerment of women but Congress did not say about this. The MNF party in its manifestoes intended to shift Assam Rifles from the central point of the town.

ZNP in its manifesto expressed its will to give relief and compensation to MNF disturbance affected people and to rehabilitate the MNF returnees who have not received anything from the Government. It wanted to establish more Mizoram Houses outside the state and enlarge the already existing ones.
The Congress laid stress on the enhancement of the powers of Village Councils and better treatment of the District Council. The other parties did not talk on this issue. The Congress criticized the salaries of MLAs, Ministers saying that their intention was to reduce the salaries of MLAs/Ministers which were fixed by the MNF Government. Only the MNF party talked about Border Trade with the neighbouring countries. It stated that the party would give priority to economic prosperity by finding profitable markets for the disposal of local agricultural and horticultural products at economic prices by promoting Border Trade with neighbouring countries as envisaged in the Peace Accord.

A study of election manifestoes of the parties indicates that the Congress party projected itself as a national party with a regional outlook. While the MNF, MPC and ZNP are undoubtedly regional parties with avowedly national outlook. The manifestoes of all the parties laid stress on the same issues like socio-economic development, development of urban-rural poor especially the rural poor, etc. All the parties, national and regional, expressed their intention to safeguard their ethnic identity and vaguely talked a great deal about the integration of the Mizo people living in the contiguous areas under a single administrative unit. Since the Congress party also refused to enter the election arena on the strength of its national election manifesto, it is quite clear that election manifesto was designed according to local taste
and interest. Both the national and regional parties had more or less the same manifestoes and programmes only stressing on the regional problems and grievances.

The parties talked about clean and transparent government, and the manifestoes underlined the application of the Right to Information Act in the state as well as to fight against corruption. But none made a clear commitment to the issue of separation of judiciary from the executive. None of the parties underlined the necessity of structural transformation in the economic system as the basis for electoral appeal. Thus, it is clearly necessary that the political parties retrieve their programmes from abstract idealism to concrete items of socio-economic changes. This is a pointer to the emergence of political elite who were more interested in their alignment and the preservation of their political interests.

In Mizoram electoral politics, the much laboured and carefully prepared election manifestoes played only the insignificant role. Neither it was widely publicized to reach the common voter, nor did the candidates care to make it clear to the masses. The ideology and philosophy of the party was understood only at the higher level of the party organization, but it did not percolate down to the base level. Elections were not contested on the basis of party ideology and programme but on the personality of the leadership of the candidate,
availability of ‘vote banks’, some attractive slogans and such other factors. Many voters judged the contestants from their personal merits and image. Personality factor is of dominant consideration. The voters were not well aware of the ideologies and programmes of the political parties and were not much ideologically-oriented.

Nature of Election Campaign and Election Issues: The election campaign for the 2003 Assembly Elections started with hoisting of flags, pasting of election symbols, campaign through loudspeakers, street corner meetings, ephemeral journals, etc. which characterized the campaign of the independent candidates and candidates belonging to different political parties. Sometimes cut out photographs of the candidates were also seen on the main roads of Mizoram. Direct contact with the voters was mainly through the candidates, party workers and workers of the candidates.

The opposition parties always started campaign with the accusations of the ruling party MNF and then turned to other parties. So far as issues were concerned, a manifesto had a very limited role to play. The real issues were focussed at election meetings and other forms of campaigning. Opposition parties attacked MNF party on the ground that the party allied with an anti-Christian Hindu chauvinist party, BJP, which always undermined the interest of the minorities with its hidden
agenda to transform India into a Hindu state where Christians would have no freedom.

A press conference was organised by journalists in a State Guest House at Aizawl with the visit of the Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DONER) Dr. C.P. Thakur. He explained to the people that the BJP would contest the elections by itself and therefore the BJP did not make alliance with the MNF. He told the pressmen/journalist that he came to campaign for BJP and also reminded that the BJP stood for secularism.\(^{35}\) The National BJP President N. Venkaiah Naidu also gave a speech to the pressmen in Lengpui Airport, appealing to the people to vote for a party which would be able to work together with the BJP government in the centre but not the Congress Party. He also exhorted voters not to boycott the elections due to the Bru issue.\(^{36}\) Besides, Union Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram, Union Minister of State for Finance Srifad Nayak addressed Press Conference in Aizawl.

The General Secretary of All India Congress Committee (AICC) Margaret Alva appealed to people to vote for Congress in the meetings of Pressmen. The All India Congress Committee President and the Parliament opposition leader Sonia Gandhi also addressed a public meeting at Aizawl and also at Champhai. Sonia made a campaign by

reminding the people of the Congress role in its grand achievement in the attainment of peace and good will in Mizoram. The MNF party was rather in a defensive position and the opposition parties wanted to destroy the image of the MNF party. All opposition parties attacked the MNF for its past misdeeds, corruption, nepotism etc. The MPC and ZNP made an alliance and made a common leaflet. The manifestoes and leaflets of the parties covered more or less the same common socio-economic objectives. The strategy of the Congress was ‘Congress for the poor’. Ideology did not play an active mobilising force. Rather local issues and local problems were more important. Though the issue of corruption was raised, it was not focussed much by the candidates. Most probably, it was due to the fact that the political parties – Congress, MPC and MNF were not free from corruption.

Another issue that may be mentioned in the 2003 Assembly Elections was that of electoral issue. Since the voluntary organisations and political parties have been working in tandem with each other, the foreigners issue was not of much concern except that of Bru affairs. The main issue that was raised by the opposition parties and the voluntary social organisations and groups, particularly Save Mizoram Committee (SMC), Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) and the Mizo Students Union (MSU),
was electoral issue. They opposed strongly the voting rights given to Bru refugees who were in Tripura camp.\textsuperscript{37}

The way extra preferential treatment was sought to be given to the sheltered Bru voters in Tripura Refugee Camps in the Assembly Elections was viewed with disdain by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and political parties alike. On the one hand, the constitutional body, the Election Commission was so firm in its decision to grant voting rights and to make necessary arrangement for Bru voters to participate in the electoral process while on the other hand the population of Mizoram opposed such a move vehemently. These Bru voters in the 2003 Assembly Elections had to be escorted by Security Force from Tripura to cast their votes in Mizoram. All the political parties in Mizoram vehemently objected this.\textsuperscript{38}

Various social organisations, such as Young Mizo Association (YMA), the largest and most influential social organisation in Mizoram, the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) (the Mizo Students Association) and the Churches in Mizoram were active in the period preceding the elections. These voluntary organisations made appeals to the voters as well as to the political parties to follow the model code of conduct that they


enforced for the maintenance of peace, clean and healthy
electioneering. Though having a minimum impact, the pamphlets
issued by these social organisations certainly helped to check the higher
inflation of electoral offences.

The main issues that were raised by the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP)
related to education, youth development, economy, society and culture.
The MZP called a meeting on 24 October 2003 at Central Hall,
Venghlui Aizawl. Each of four major political parties, MNF, Congress,
MPC and ZNP, was invited by the MZP to speak out their programmes
and policies on the issue as mentioned above. The meeting was also
witnessed by the members of other voluntary social organisations, such
as CYMA, MHIP, MUP and MSU. Besides, the MZP raised four
common questions for the parties, such as the issue of the illegal
migration and settlement of Chakma and Bru, implementation of Right
to Information Act, construction of a good sport stadium for the youth,
and the enforcement of Total Prohibition Act in Mizoram.

The Central Young Mizo Association (CYMA) in its ‘Thuchah’
(Pamphlet) wanted the people and political parties not to field any
candidate on the basis of a particular tribal ethnic or religious group

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alone. But ethnic and tribe based political parties/loyalties had become operative in the 2003 elections.

For the first time in the electoral history of Mizoram, Mizoram had experienced intimidation/threatening of voters in a Hmar dominated Suangpuilawn which was one of the sample constituencies.  

A joint petition of the four political parties, MNF, Congress, MPC and ZNP submitted to the Chief Election Commissioner, Election of India, New Delhi on 27th November, 2003 said that

1) The Election which was held in the 20 AC Suangpuilawn (ST) under the active intervention of the armed underground militant HPC(D) under duress and armed intimidation was not free and fair, and the political voting in each polling booth in this constituency was not at all acceptable.

2) The joint committee requests the Election Commission of India to immediately prepare fresh Poll for the entire 20 Suangpuilawn (ST) Assembly Constituency.

Besides, in a joint petition, six candidates from Suangpuilawn Constituency wrote:

The just conducted elections held for the 20 Suangpuilawn (ST) Assembly Constituency was by no means free and fair. It was conducted under threat by one particular unlawful outfit and the voters’ intimidation was visibly witnessed at large by one and all but who dare not come forward fearing dire consequence….. In the interest of the entire community of the constituents and in upholding a true democratic practice for the present and future

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42 A petition of the four political parties dated 27 Nov. 2003 – from the office of CYMA, Aizawl.
elections, it is my desire that a fresh re-poll be conducted for the 20 Suangpui Lawn (ST) Assembly Constituency.  

Not only the political parties but also the largest voluntary social organisation, the Central YMA and the All Mizoram Women’s Federation (Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihhawm Pawl) (MHIP) requested for re-poll in Suangpui Lawn Constituency. The Central YMA wrote in its letter “The villagers were threatened and coerced to cast their votes for the Independent candidate supported by HPC (D) only, which violated the Constitution and hurt the sentiments of Mizos”. Other voluntary social organisations, Mizoram Senior Citizens Association (Mizoram Upa Pawl) and Mizo Students Association (Mizo Zirlai Pawl) expressed their demands for re-poll in the Suangpui Lawn Constituency in their Press Release, condemning the intimidation/threatening of the voters.

Inspite of all the requests made by political parties and NGOs, re-poll for the entire Suangpui Lawn Constituency was not allowed by the Election Commission of India. As a result, some of the polled ballot boxes/polled electronic voting machines were snatched and destroyed partly, without destroying the memory chips, in the presence of election

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43 A joint petition signed by every one of the six candidates from Suangpui Lawn Constituency dated 21 November, 2003 – from the office of CYMA, Aizawl.
45 Central YMA Letter, op. cit.
commission observers and officials by counting agents of some political parties in the counting hall on 3 December 2003.

A total bandh was imposed by opposition parties on the day of the swearing in of the new MNF ministry in protest against the Election Commission decision to resume counting of votes of one particular Assembly Constituency as a result of which government properties and vehicles were damaged including the Chief Minister’s official car. The swearing in of the new MNF Ministry was held on the night of the 4th December, 2003 at 6:30 P.M. at Raj Bhavan with Zoramthanga MNF as the Chief Minister again. For the first time, the electronic voting machines were sent to the Chief Election Commission office and counting of votes was done on 8 December, 2003 in Delhi which resulted in the success of an independent candidate supported by Hmar People’s Conference (HPC) party.

There were other notable features in the 2003 elections. Though accusations relating to the use of money power have been made in the previous elections, the last Assembly Elections surpassed all earlier elections in this regard. Distribution of materials like clothes, rice bags, silpouline, etc. was common. The average expenditure of candidates was much higher than those permissible by the Election Commission.

Bugging of telephones of rival candidates which was never heard of before unfortunately occurred. Personal character assassination reached its peak during the campaign period. The hiring of local professional singers and bandsmen was resorted to by the candidates to bring a lighter atmosphere in the campaign period. Promises and commitments to voters by candidates or party workers were as common as before. The other undesirable practice which raised its ugly head to taint the Mizoram election scene was the practice of making false allegations against certain candidates using fictitious names, which were circulated in some constituencies and defamation suit were filed in court in connection with this. This was a new development in the Mizoram elections.

Role of Voluntary Organizations: The Churches and various voluntary social organizations such as MZP (*Mizo Zirlai Pawl*, meaning Mizo Students Association), YMA (Young Mizo Association) played important role during elections to have good atmosphere and avoid violence and other unfair means at the time of election.

All the Mizos are Christians and almost all of them were Church members. Many were members or supporters of a particular political party. It is difficult to distinguish religion and political activities among

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49 F. Malsawma, *op.cit.*
the Mizo Christians. Christianity is one of the most influential factors governing and influencing the electoral process in the state. It had played an important role for making the political atmosphere better during every election in the past. In 2003 election too the Church played a similar role. Churches asked the public to keep off violent activities and pave the way for holding election without vitiating the atmosphere.

On 4th September 2003, Mizoram Presbyterian Church (the biggest Church in Mizoram) published and issued the pamphlet called ‘Inthlan Thuchah’ meaning ‘The Message of Mizoram Presbyterian Church for the Assembly Elections 2003’. It was an appeal to the people of Mizoram asking them to be ever opposed to hateful practices during elections. The appeal exhorted the public to adopt conciliatory attitude and also appealed to the people to support justice even if it seemed harmful for them.50

Baptist Church of Mizoram also published its pamphlet for the preparation of 2003 assembly elections on 4th September, 2003.51 The United Pentecostal Church similarly published and circulated election message to the people.52 All the three Churches tried their level best for the normalisation of political tension in the state. Their main aim was to have a free and fair election. As almost all the politicians were

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51 ‘Inthlan Thuchah’ from Baptist Church of Mizoram Headquarters: Serkawn; Dt. 17.9.2003.
52 United Pentecostal Church, Aizawl.
Christians, they had to pay heed to the appeals made by the Church authorities. The messages in the pamphlets could be categorized into the followings:

Role of Churches: All Churches prayed to God to give them peace in the coming election 2003. The Presbyterian Church Synod appealed to every Presbyterian Church, every family and every individual to read out and study as much as possible what was written in the pamphlet and pay heed to it. The Baptist Church of Mizoram made an appeal to every Baptist Church to read out the messages in the pamphlet every Sunday morning in the Church. It also appealed to every family and individual to study the pamphlet and pay heed to it. The UPC too had the same view and added that they would like to have a successful candidate who gave importance to the advice of the Mizoram Church Leaders. The main objectives of the Churches were to have free and fair elections and to maintain peace in the state and this became the major issue for them.

Selection of candidates: The three Churches appealed to all party leaders to remember the following criteria while selecting their respective candidates for the election: honest man with good name, a person who really wanted to serve the people, honest and hard working man who did not want to accept any kind of bribe, a person who not only refrained from wine and drug addiction, but also from sexual abuses, a trustworthy person in his private and public, not a corrupt man,
a person of self-control in dieting, a good citizen but not a gambler, an honest man with good name in his concerned Church.

The three Church denominations drew up and expressed their desired qualification for the election candidates in different pamphlets. The main theme in all these pamphlets were however very similar. All Church denominations wished to have good leaders to run the administrative machinery in the state. As the social evils, such as indulgence in sex, wine, drugs and corruption had been increasing considerably in the society; Church Leaders were very worried and wanted to save the people from that kind of social evil practices. They tried to provide guidance through their appeals in the pamphlets for the welfare of the community.

Election campaign: The Churches appealed to all the people of the state to give due regard to a model code of conduct for the guidance of parties and candidates in the election campaign. They appealed to the candidates and the campaigners to give due regard to the following points: avoid making criticism of private life and false allegation, threatening violence or adopting any activity which might motivate antagonistic idea or promote any kind of unfair means such as selling and purchasing votes and distribution of any material for purchasing vote, or even arranging community feasts to attract voters and spend a huge amount of money for campaign. The Churches appealed to the
voters to elect their representatives in the assembly elections keeping in view the desire of the Churches.

The MZP (*Mizo Zirlai Pawl* – Mizo Students Union) published a press release and circulated to the people through the local newspapers. The following points were written in the message/press release: no candidate should promise anything to the people what he would not be able to do or fulfill while campaigning; any successful party candidate in the election should not defect to other party and should try to fulfill his duty as a legislator; a candidate should express only his will, if voted to be an MLA, to the people without speaking ill of others; a candidate should not have any intention to purchase votes with money or materials; electorate/voters also should not sell votes. The MZP message concluded with the expectation ‘It is God who chooses the rulers’. Therefore, ‘if any party would come into power, it is the duty of the people to obey and cope with them’\(^53\).

The YMA (Young Mizo Association) also published and circulated its pamphlet to the Mizo people voters and candidates with an appeal to be followed in the assembly election. The following points were highlighted in the pamphlet: Let all the voters cast their votes in the coming assembly election in order to make a good democratic form of government; let any political party not make a candidate to contest

\(^{53}\textit{Mizo Zirlai Pawl (Mizo Students’ Association), General Headquarters, Mizoram, Aizawl, Dt. 22}\textsuperscript{nd} \text{October, 2003.}
the election on the basis of ethnicity/tribe or religion, let any political party or candidate not prepare a community feast to attract voters; preparing tea at one place for the people/voters should not be done in order to avoid a large expense of money; let a political party not select a drunkard or a corrupt person as a candidate in the election. The YMA wanted the political parties to make only realistic and concrete promises in their election manifestoes. Lastly, the Central YMA requested all the voters and people to give their efforts for the holding of free and fair election.

Women Organization: Women were involved in the entire electoral process in a big way. They belonged either to the political parties like the women’s wing of the Congress, the MNF, the MPC or ZNP or they functioned from the MHIP (Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhwam Pawl or Mizo Women’s Association). The women were actually seen working during the campaigning, distributing leaflets, door-to-door campaign and organizing get together to canvass for the candidates.

(b) Nature of Rural Election Campaign and Issues

As regards the election campaign in the rural areas in 2003 assembly elections, the participating parties including the independent candidates used the various means of election campaigning. The means of campaigning in rural Mizoram by all political parties were motor
vehicles and various media of communication, such as TV, radio, newspapers and others like pamphlets, posters and banners.

The fifth general elections to Mizoram Legislative Assembly in Rural Mizoram started with full fury from the early November 2003. The MNF party maintained a defensive position while the other parties like Indian National Congress (INC), the alliance parties, MPC and ZNP, BJP and other unrecognized parties wanted to destroy the MNF’s image. The MNF and other parties started with the issues of manifestoes and leaflets which covered more or less the same socio-economic objectives. All the other parties attacked the MNF for its past misdeeds, nepotism, bribery and corruption. The MNF defended its position by giving an account of its performances during its rule for five years. Ideology did not play an active mobilizing force. Rather regionalism was an active mobilizing force. But inspite of these, the people in Mizoram, even in the rural areas, had shown political maturity. In the past, the electioneering campaign was full of personal attack and unimaginable scandals which were almost totally absent during the electioneering campaign in the 2003 assembly elections.

Party Flags and Posters: The election campaign started when suddenly the people found the party flags fluttered in different house tops. One started gauging the popularity of the party or its candidate on the basis of competitive flag-flying contest. It had a visual impact. The
house owner, who went ahead to raise a bamboo pole with flag at the top, was usually identified as the supporter of the party (flag) concerned. But in some houses, different flags belonging to different parties were fluttering because some members favoured one party while other members favoured another party. Even the vehicles flying round the rural constituencies flew party flags, e.g. A Congress flag on one side and the MNF flag on another side or a ZNP flag on one side and the MPC flag on another side.

Poster campaign was also quite popular in the villages. The posters depicting the picture of the candidate and the symbol of the party were widely used to attract the voters. The two big parties, Congress and MNF had more posters than the other parties in some constituencies. This might have had some marginal effect. But in some rural constituencies, very few posters were seen.

Door to door campaign: Since personal contact was quite effective, in most cases the candidates themselves moved from door to door, trying to visit homes as many as possible. They tried to visit even temporary ‘jhum’ or hamlets called ‘thlam’ in Mizo in some cases. Informal face to face contacts were often more effective than mass media communication. Not only the candidate, but also the party workers and candidates’ supporters played a large part in moving from house to house. They carried manifestoes and leaflets and personally
distributed them directly to the voters with an appeal to vote. Evidently the voters either did not make up their mind or did not like to reveal their mind. The floating voters might have been influenced.

Election Meeting: Election meetings were organized by various political parties. Voters in certain constituencies forced all the candidates belonging to different parties to address from the common platform. Public speeches either alone or jointly with rival candidates were made during campaigning.

Leaflet was another important medium of an election campaign. All parties conducted leaflet campaign which ranged from a single piece of paper to well-documented document. Leaflets, which were widely circulated at election meetings, door to door campaign and by hand in the constituency listed the academic records of the candidate. It gave a detailed account of his social background, his profession as well as his activities as a social worker.

Radio, newspaper and TV: All recognized political parties were allowed to broadcast their election campaign from the ‘All India Radio’ Aizawl, all the parties were allotted programmes to campaign for their own parties. Most of the local papers favoured a particular party’s programme and policies or the other. These papers highlighted the favourable points of a party and criticized other party. The leaders of various political parties also had a talk from the local TV. They
explained their party’s aims and objectives, their important policies from the TV, billboards and banners were also seen here and there in the constituencies. Even though these means of election campaign did not create a great impact, yet, some voters came under their influence. Feast was another means of campaign. The supporters/campaigners of the contesting candidates were offered a heavy meal before and after the election campaign day.

Money also had a great impact in the election campaign. Charges of corruption are common throughout India. Bribing the voters is an open secret. Candidates, either independent or party affiliated, were alleged to have offered money to the voters. Some voters were given in kind, not in cash. Since the election time was harvesting time for farmers, a candidate helping a farmer by taking his food grains from the jhum-land to his home with a vehicle was very popular during campaign in the rural areas.

Besides the candidates of the concerned rural constituencies, campaigning groups were sent by different political parties, Congress, MNF, MPC and ZNP, from their headquarters or sub-headquarters to the rural constituencies. The common main issues raised by the parties were the problem of economic backwardness especially in the villages and the growing poverty of the poor peasants and the manual workers. The parties talked much about their concern for the upliftment of the rural
poor, development in agriculture through scientific method, introduction of agro-based industry and development of small scale industries. The parties also campaigned on common issues like the maintenance and protection of the territorial integrity of the state, maintenance of law and order in the whole state, efficient and clean government free from corruption. The Congress party campaigned on the issue of making a transparent government by constituting a Vigilance Committee. It pleaded that the need of the hour was a ‘SMART government (simple, moral, accountable, responsive, and transparent)’\textsuperscript{54} in addition to Secularism.

The other common issues focused by all the parties were improvement of communication system, power and electricity, residential accommodation, growing unemployment question in the state, health and sanitation, good drinking facilities, etc. The Congress was popular in its campaign on the issue of better implementation of the new and revised NLUP and provision of galvanized iron sheet for the poor people. As a whole, the socio-economic issues in general and concerns for development of rural poor people in particular dominated the 2003 assembly election in the rural constituencies. The ethnic issue became the electoral issue in some rural constituencies, though not in all the rural constituencies.

\textsuperscript{54}L.H. Chhuanawma, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 124.
III. Election Outcome and the Performance of the Political Parties in the State Assembly Elections, 2003 with the Past Performance of the Parties in the Assembly Elections

The main participants in the Assembly election in Mizoram, after the attainment of statehood, have been the Indian National Congress (INC), Mizo National Front (MNF) and People’s Conference (PC).

Table 3.2

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Indian National Congress (INC)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mizo National Front (MNF)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. People’s Conference (PC)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Communist Party of India (CPI)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Independentrs &amp; Others</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table, it is seen that during 1987-2003 Assembly elections, the real contest was between Congress and MNF parties. The new state of Mizoram had forty elected seats. The above table shows the electoral performance of political parties in the assembly elections of the state of Mizoram from 1987-2003.

With the signing of the Mizoram Peace Accord between the MNF and the Government of Mizoram and then the attainment of statehood, the first general elections to the 40 members Legislative Assembly was held on 16th February, 1987. The MNF that had become an overground political party and made settlement of peace with the Indian Government was rewarded by the people of the newly formed state of
Mizoram by electing as many as 24 MLAs from the party. Thus, despite the Congress party being in power at this time in the centre, the MNF party emerged as the first ruling party in the new state of Mizoram. The other parties in the election fray were the Congress and the People’s Conference (PC). Congress won 13 assembly seats and PC could win only 3 seats.

In 1989 mid-term elections, the Congress made a pre-poll alliance with the MNF (D), a splinter group of MNF. The Congress won 23 seats out of 34 seats it contested and the MNF (D) got just 2 seats out of 6 seats it contested. Since the MNF (D) was not a recognized party, it put up its candidates as Independents and MNF (D) coalition ministry headed by Congress was formed.

In 1993, the Congress again made a pre-poll alliance with the Mizoram Janata Dal (MJD) which was earlier known as PC. The Congress secured 16 seats and the MJD returned with 8 seats. The MJD party put up its candidates as Independents since the party was not a recognized party with its name MJD. Thus, the Congress party with the MJD backed eight Independents formed a Congress-led ministry. The Congress party ruled the state for a decade since 1989 to 1998 election.

In 1998 elections, the Congress party lost heavily. This time, the Congress fought the battle on its own without forming an alliance with

other party. It could win only 6 seats. The two regional parties, the MNF and PC, which was known as MJD in 1993 elections, rather made a pre-poll electoral adjustment in the 1998 election. The MNF got 21 seats and PC 12 seats the MNF-led coalition ministry was formed.

In 2003 elections, the MNF and the Congress fought the election battle on their own without forming any alliance respectively. The MNF got the victory. It won 21 seats. The Congress lost the battle as it could win only 12 seats. The two regional parties, PC and the Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) formed an alliance this time. But PC won only 3 seats and the ZNP won 2 seats. There were also two elected Independent candidates. One Independent candidate was supported by the unrecognized political party, Maraland Democratic Party (MDF). The other candidate was supported by Hmar People’s Convention (HPC). The following table shows the party-wise votes polled in 2003 assembly elections at the state level.\(^5^6\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>No. of Candidates</th>
<th>Seats Contested</th>
<th>Seats Secured</th>
<th>Votes Polled</th>
<th>% of Votes Polled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indian National Congress (INC)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>125,690</td>
<td>30.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizo National Front (MNF)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>132,507</td>
<td>31.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizoram People’s Conference</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>67,576</td>
<td>16.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7,823</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist Party of India (CPI)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>61,466</td>
<td>14.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents &amp; Others</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22,927</td>
<td>5.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4,18,113</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An analysis of the results shows that there was one main national party, the Congress party which secured 30.06 per cent of total votes polled with 12 seats. The other national parties, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Communist Party of India (CPI), lost badly. BJP secured 1.87 per cent of total votes polled and CPI secured .03 per cent only. Among the regional parties, MNF is the main party. It secured 31.69 per cent of total votes polled with 21 seats. Constituting a single majority party, MNF formed the ministry on 4.11.2003.

Regarding the votes polled by the MNF and Congress, the difference between the two parties is only 1.63 per cent. The other regional parties, such as the Mizoram People’s Conference (MPC) and Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) lost heavily. MPC got 16.16 per cent of total votes polled and ZNP had 14.7 per cent of total votes polled.

SECTION II

RURAL CONSTITUENCIES

I. The Performance of Political Parties in the Assembly Elections, 2003 in the Rural Constituencies (14 Rural Assembly Constituencies) with the Past Performance of the Political Parties

Among the 40 Assembly Constituencies in Mizoram, 14 constituencies are rural constituencies as they are in the rural areas. The 14 rural constituencies are (1) Tuipang, (2) Sangau, (3) Lawngtlai, (4) Chawngte, (5) Buarpui, (6) Vanva, (7) Ngopa, (8) Suangpuilawn, (9)

Since Mizoram was elevated to the status of a full-fledged state, 5 assembly elections had been held in the state during 1987-2003. In the rural areas as in the state level, the main participants in the Assembly elections were Congress, MNF and PC parties. The following table shows the relative party position in the State Assembly Elections since 1987 in the rural areas of Mizoram.

Table 3.4
Relative Party Position in Mizoram State Assembly Elections from 1987-2003 in the Rural Areas (14 Constituencies)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indian National Congress (INC)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizo National Front (MNF)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizoram People’s Conference (MPC)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bharatiya Janata Party</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist Party of India (CPI)</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP)</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents &amp; Others*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* ‘Independents and Others’ included candidates of unrecognized parties.

From the above table it can be seen that the Congress party occupied a dominant position in the first three state assembly elections (1987, 1989 and 1993) and in the last assembly elections (2003) in the rural areas of Mizoram. In 1987 elections, the Congress party won 8 seats out of 14 seats in the rural areas, while the MNF and MPC secured 3 seats respectively. While the Congress party won the majority seats, i.e. 8 seats in the rural areas, at the state level, on the other hand, it was
the MNF party that won the assembly elections in 1987 with a large majority of 24 seats in the House of 40 members Assembly.

In 1989 mid-term elections, the Congress party formed a pre-poll alliance with the MNF‘D’ (a splinter group of the MNF) and won the elections in the rural areas by increasing its previous strength from 8 seats to 9 seats. MNF secured 4 seats while PC could secure only 1 seat in the rural constituencies. At the state level, the Congress also increased its strength from 13 seats to 23 seats and the Congress-MNF‘D’ coalition ministry was formed under the leadership of Lalthanhawla Congress from 1989.

The next general election was held in 1993. In this election, the Congress made a pre-poll alliance with the Mizoram Janata Dal (MJD) which was earlier known as People’s Conference (PC). The Congress party secured 7 seats in the rural areas while the MNF party returned with a reduced number of 3 seats in the elections. Besides, there were also 4 elected Independent candidates. At the state level also, the Congress party secured majority seats – 16 seats and its partners – MJD won 8 seats. The MNF could secure 14 seats only. A Congress-led coalition ministry was formed.

Only in 1998 assembly elections, after its ten years’ rule in the state, the Congress party lost its dominant position in the rural areas of Mizoram. In 1998 elections, the MNF made a pre-poll alliance with the
Mizoram People’s Conference (MPC) which was previously known as MJD. The Congress party could win only 3 seats from the rural constituencies against 8 seats in 1987, 9 in 1989 and 7 in 1993. At the state level also, the Congress suffered a serious setback. It secured 6 seats out of 40 seats in the assembly. The MNF won 21 seats while its allied party MPC could win 12 seats. Thus, the MNF-led coalition ministry was formed and it ruled till the end of its term.

During 1987 and 2003, assembly elections were held five times. Though the Congress did not win consecutively five times from any rural constituency, it won four times from each of the 5 rural constituencies, namely, Chawngte, Buarpui, Kawrthah, Phuldungsei and Tlungvel constituencies. For Chawngte constituency MLA, Nirupam Chakma of Congress was declared elected right from the first Mizoram State Assembly election 1987 to 1998 election. But in the 2003 election, Nirupam Chakma, after winning the assembly seat four times continuously from Chawngte constituency, lost the seat to the MNF candidate Rasik Mohan Chakma, the reason could be either the voters in Chawngte constituency wanted a change or were carried away by the MNF wave.

During 1987 and 2003, the Congress lost its seats from Buarpui, Kawrthah, Phuldungsei and Tlungvel constituencies only in 1998 election. These four rural constituencies were said to be the Congress
strong holds, the reason for the loss of the Congress seats seemed to be that the MNF and PC made a pre-poll alliance and an electoral adjustment of seats between them in 1998 election. Thus, the Congress was not able to defeat the combined MNF and PC in this 1998 election.

P. Lalbiaka of Congress captured Buarpui seat consecutively three times from 1987 to 1993 elections. He was replaced by P.B. Nikhuma of Congress in the 1998 election. P.B. Nikhuma lost the Congress seat from Buarpui constituency for the first time. Reason may be not only because of the change in the Congress candidate, but also the wave of combined MPC and MNF that went in favour of the MPC candidate Lalrinzuala. Though the Congress lost its seat from its votes bank ‘Buarpui constituency’, a new and young face, Zodintluanga of Congress, was nominated in the 2003 election. Zodintluanga got back the lost Congress MLA seat from Buarpui constituency in 2003 election.

Saikapthianga and Liansuama of Congress won consecutively four times from Kawrthah and Phuldungsei constituencies respectively. They lost their seats only one time each that was in 1998 election as they fought against the combined political parties, MNF and MPC in the 1998 election. Saikapthianga was defeated in 1998 by the combined MNF-MPC candidate K. Sangthuama by a margin of 123 votes. K. Sangthuama of MNF and was backed by the allied PC party. Liansuama of Congress also lost his seat from Phuldungsei constituency, for the
first time, in 1998 election to the MPC-MNF candidate J. Lalthangliana by a margin of 528 votes. J. Lalthangliana of MPC was supported by MNF. But Saikapthianga and Liansuama got back their assembly seats from Kawrthah and Phuldungsei constituencies in 2003 assembly election respectively because this time the MNF party fought the election on its own without making alliance with any other party. Though the two regional parties, PC and ZNP made a pre-poll alliance in 2003 election, they could not do much headway as they two were small comparing to the two major parties, Congress and MNF.

Zoramsangliana of Congress won the assembly elections consecutively three times from Tlungvel constituency, that is, from 1987-1993 elections. Zoramsangliana was replaced by another Congress candidate Dr. H. Thansanga in 1998 election. Dr. H. Thansanga was defeated by the combined MNF-MPC candidate, L.N. Tluanga of MPC. L.N. Tluanga was supported by MNF. But in 2003 election, Sainghaka was put up by the Congress for its candidate in Tlungvel constituency. Sainghaka got back the Congress MLA seat from Tlungvel constituency defeating his nearest rival Lalthanliana of PC by a margin of 410 votes. Lalthanliana was backed by the ZNP as ZNP and PC made an electoral alliance this time. This shows that the hold of the Congress in Tlungvel constituency was quite strong till 2003 assembly election.
While the Congress was unable to win the elections consecutively five times from a single constituency, the MNF, on the other hand, won consecutively five times from Sateek constituency. From Sateek constituency, Laldenga, MNF Leader and President, won the first Mizoram State Assembly election in 1987 with a majority of 3219 votes defeating his nearest rival Rokhawmthanga of Congress with a margin of 1621 votes. In 1989 mid-term elections, the MNF candidate Lalrawnliana defeated his nearest rival Rokhawmthanga of Congress with a margin of 135 votes from Sateek constituency. In 1993 election, Lalrawnliana of MNF was replaced by B. Lalthlengliana of MNF who continued to win the Sateeek MLA seat continuously for the last three times. Thus, Sateek constituency can be said to be a ‘save’ constituency for the MNF as the MNF never lost its MLA seat right from the first State Assembly election 1987 till 2003 election.

When the Congress could win four times from 5 rural constituencies as stated above, the MNF was able to win four times only from 2 rural constituencies, namely, Ratu and Vanva constituencies. The MNF won consecutively four times from Ratu constituency. Lalrinchhana of MNF was the elected MLA for three times, that is, in 1987, 1989 and 1993 elections. For the fourth time, i.e. 1998 election, Lalrinchhana was replaced by Lalthankunga, who was elected for MLA defeating his nearest rival Lalbiakzuala of Congress by a margin of 940
votes. Lalthankunga of MNF was a candidate of the combined MNF-PC parties in this Ratu constituency. The ZNP Leader and President, Lalduhawma, a candidate of the combined ZNP and PC parties won the assembly seat in 2003 election from Ratu constituency. The MNF lost a seat only one time that is in 1993 election from Vanva constituency. K. Thanfianga of MNF won from Vanva constituency in 1987 and R. Romawia of MNF won in 1989 election when the Congress came out with a victory at the state level with its allied MNF ‘D’ party. The MNF lost its seat from Vanva only in 1993 to H. Thangkima, who contested as an Independent candidate but a candidate of the combined Congress and MJD (earlier known as PC) parties. H. Thangkima of MJD defeated his nearest rival Malsawma MNF by a margin of 311 votes from Vanva constituency. C. Lalrinsanga of MNF won the Assembly seat from Vanva constituency in the last two elections held in 1998 and 2003. In 1998 election, C. Lalrinsanga of MNF defeated his nearest rival H. Thangkima of MPC who was the previous MLA in this Vanva constituency by a margin of only 66 votes. In 2003, C. Lalrinsanga MNF defeated his nearest rival P.C. Lalthanliana of Congress by a margin of 341 votes.

Thus, the 3 rural constituencies (1) Sateek, (2) Ratu, (3) Vanva constituencies could be claimed to have been ‘won’ and transformed into the MNF strong holds. At the same time, the 5 rural constituencies
(1) Chawngte, (2) Buarpui, (3) Kawrthah, (4) Phuldungsei, (5) Tlungvel may be said to be the Congress strong holds.

In 2003 election, the Congress got back 5 assembly seats that is lost in 1998 election because of the alliance made between MNF and PC, and some other reasons. It won back five seats in 2003 that it lost in 1998 from Buarpui, Kawrthah, Phuldungsei, Tlungvel and Lungpho constituencies. At the same time, in 2003, the Congress lost 3 seats that it won in 1998 election, namely, Chawngte, Lawngtlai and Tuipang seats. Chawngte seat went to MNF seat and Lawngtlai seat also went to MNF seat and its Tuipang seat went to the Independent candidate P.P. Thawla, who contested on MDF ticket when the Congress lost all the 3 seats that is won in 1998, at the same time, Congress took back the 5 seats that it lost in 1998. Besides, its candidate H. Rohluna of Congress won the 2003 election from Ngopa constituency. Ngopa used to be a vote bank for the PC party right from 1987 election till 1998 election. Thus, 1 more seat was added to its 5 seats becoming 6 seats in the rural areas.

Thus, from the above analysis it can be mentioned that the hold of the Congress in the rural areas/constituencies was stronger than the MNF as it had more number of constituencies where the voters seemed to vote faithfully to the Congress in every election time. Such constituencies were Buarpui, Kawrthah, Phuldungsei, Tlungvel. Though
Congress lost its seat from Chawngte in 2003, in all the other elections, Congress got its MLA. From Tuipang constituency, Congress won three times in 1987, 1989 and 1998.

But in 2003 a tribe-based political party MDF appeared from Tuipang. Likewise, in Suangpuilawn constituency also a tribe-based party HPC appeared in the election held in 2003. The rural constituencies which can be said the MNF strong holds were only 4 (four) such as Sateek, Vanva, Ratu and Sangau. But in 2003 election, in one of the four constituencies, Ratu constituency, the combined ZNP-PC candidate Lalduhawma could defeat the MNF candidate, Lalthankunga who was also the former MLA. Besides, the 3 MNF constituencies, Sateek, Vanva and Sangau, the MNF got 2 more new seats which were not won in 1998 by the MNF, namely, Lawngtlai and Chawngte constituencies. The success of the MNF in these two constituencies might be the candidate’s image and personal merits, the wish of the voters for a change in the MLA or the wave of the MNF party during the elections at the state level.

In 2003 assembly elections, the main participants in the rural areas (14 rural constituencies) are Indian National Congress (INC), Mizo National Front (MNF), Mizoram People’s Conference (MPC), Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) and some Independents. The following table shows the
relative party position in the rural areas (14 rural constituencies) in the Assembly election which was held in 2003.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Indian National Congress (INC)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mizo National Front (MNF)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mizoram People’s Conference (MPC)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Communist Party of India (CPI)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Independents and others</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table, it is seen that in the rural areas, in 2003 assembly election Congress party secured 6 seats forming 42.85 per cent of the total seats (14). MNF could win 5 seats which formed 35.71 per cent of the total seats. Another party ZNP, which had never appeared in the election scene in the rural areas, could win 1 seat. 2 (two) seats went to 2 Independents – 1 supported by unrecognized party, Maraland Democratic Front (MDF) and another 1 supported by unrecognized party, Hmar People’s Conference (HPC). MPC did not secure even a single seat in the rural areas.

In 2003 elections, in the rural areas Congress increased its strength from the previous elections. Congress won 3 seats in 1998 and 6 seats in 2003. MNF also increased its strength from 4 seats in 1998 to 5 seats in 2003.
As a whole, it can be noted that MNF, in spite of having a good performance at the state level in 2003 assembly elections, did not do well in the rural areas. The hold of Congress party in the rural areas had been stronger than the MNF party from the first Mizoram State Assembly Elections, i.e., from 1987 till 2003 elections. The Congress could garner more support than the MNF in rural areas of Mizoram in 2003 elections.

II. Analysis of the Performance of Political Parties in the 4 Rural Sample Constituencies - Tuipang, Buarpui, Suangpuilawrn and Sateek Constituencies

Tuipang constituency

The previous relative party position in Tuipang constituency in the assembly election during 1987-1998 is given in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indian National Congress (INC)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4185</td>
<td>50.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mizo National Front (MNF)</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peoples Conference (PC)</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4117</td>
<td>49.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9302</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first elections, after the attainment of statehood, were held in 1987. The main participants in the elections in Tuipang constituency have been the congress, MNF, PC and Independents. There were straight contests in the elections of 1987, 1993 and 1998 between the Congress
and Independent candidates. There were triangular contests in 1989 and 2003.

In 1987 and 1989 elections a Congress man Hiphei was elected for the member of assembly from Tuipang Constituency. In 1993 elections an independent candidate K.T. Rokhaw won the seat and the congress candidate T.T. Vakhu lost the seat. K.T. Rokhaw later joined the congress party. K.T. Rokhaw contested the elections again from the congress party in 1998 and won the seat defeating T.T. Vakhu who was his former rival in 1993 election and now became an independent candidate supported by the unrecognised Maraland Democratic Front (MDF) party. The percentage of votes polled by the Congress was 50.40. The independent candidate T.T. Vakhu secured 49.59 percent.

In 2003 elections, unlike in 1998, there was a triangular contest in Tuipang Constituency. The following table shows the total number of votes polled by the parties during the 2003 assembly elections in Tuipang constituency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>No. of Candidates</th>
<th>Seat Contested</th>
<th>Seat Secured</th>
<th>Votes polled</th>
<th>% of Votes polled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2379</td>
<td>26.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2877</td>
<td>32.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent (Supported by MDF)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3716</td>
<td>41.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8972</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Congress nominated its sitting MLA, K.T. Rokhaw, in 2003 elections. But the Congress lost heavily as it could secure only 26.51 per cent of votes polled in 2003 against 50.40 per cent in 1998. The MNF also secured 32.06 per cent of total votes polled. An independent candidate, P.P. Thawla, supported by MDF (an unrecognized party), won the seat by securing 41.41 percent of votes polled.

Table 3.8
Comparative Statement – Electorate, Contestants, Number of Valid Votes Polled in Tuipang Constituency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Seat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Electorate</td>
<td>10444</td>
<td>10717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Contestants</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Valid Votes Polled</td>
<td>8302</td>
<td>8972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Valid Votes Polled</td>
<td>79.49</td>
<td>83.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Buarpui Constituency

The following table represents the party position in the successive Mizoram State Assembly Elections in Buarpui Constituency during 1987-1998.

Table 3.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1644</td>
<td>23.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNF</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>28.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2044</td>
<td>29.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>11.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents &amp; Others</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>6.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7021</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Congress party won the MLA seat in Buarpui Constituency from 1987 to 1993 continuously. The same person, P. Lalbiaka, occupied the seat during this period. In 1998 elections, after a rule of the state for ten years by the Congress, a senior Congress man, P.B. Nikhuma, was nominated by the Congress to contest the election. The result was that the Congress not only lost the seat, but also stood in the third position. The Congress secured only 23.41 per cent of votes polled against 37.17 per cent in 1987, 35.35 per cent in 1989 and 43.38 per cent in 1993.

In 1998 the PC and MNF arranged a pre-poll alliance and they made electoral agreement between themselves. According to their agreement, Buarpui was under free zone where the two parties, MNF and MPC, could contest separately on friendly basis. Accordingly, the MPC nominated Lalrinzuala. Lalrinzuala of MPC won the seat securing 29.11 per cent of total valid votes polled. The MNF also contested the election, but secured 28.61 per cent. Thus, for the first time in the assembly elections, after Mizoram attained statehood, the MPC won a seat from the Buarpui Constituency.

The MNF was the ruling party in the state at the time when there was assembly election in 2003. The Congress nominated Zodintluanga for the Party candidate in the 2003 elections. The result was that the Congress regained the seat that it lost in 1998 elections by securing 37.07 percent of total votes polled against 23.41 percent in 1998.
Table 3.10 shows the party-wise votes polled in the elections of 2003 in Buarpui Constituency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>No. of Candidates</th>
<th>Seat Contested</th>
<th>Seat Secured</th>
<th>Votes Polled</th>
<th>% of Votes polled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3272</td>
<td>37.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2128</td>
<td>24.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2401</td>
<td>27.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZNP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>8.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents &amp; Others</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>8825</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The MPC party lost the seat by securing only 27.20 per cent of votes polled in 2003 against 29.11 per cent in 1998. The ZNP, for the first time in the electoral history of the state, appeared as a recognised party securing 8.96 percent of votes polled in 2003 while the two Independents and another one independent supported by Janata Dal (United) secured 2.64 per cent of votes polled. Only Janata Dal (United) secured 40 votes forming 0.45 per cent of total votes in the constituency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Seat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Electorate</td>
<td>9370</td>
<td>10145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Total contestants</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Valid Votes Polled</td>
<td>7021</td>
<td>8825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of valid votes Polled</td>
<td>74.91</td>
<td>86.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Suangpuilawn Constituency

The position of the participating political parties in Suangpuilawn Constituency may be seen from the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1415</td>
<td>24.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNF</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>34.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents &amp; Others</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2302</td>
<td>40.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5705</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Congress won a seat in Suangpuilawn Constituency in 1987 and 1989 Assembly Elections. It secured 38.97 per cent in 1987 and 21.57 per cent of total votes polled in 1989. In 1993, the Congress entered into an electoral alliance with the Mizoram Janata Dal (MJD) which was an unrecognized party and the offshoot of the PC. Thus, the Congress and MJD nominated a common candidate, F. Lawmkima, as an Independent. The Independent candidate, supported by the two allied parties, Congress and MJD, won the seat in the elections of 1993. In 1998 the Congress fought the elections by itself without entering into electoral alliance with any party. At the same time, the MNF made a pre-poll alliance with the MPC party. The MNF did not have its party candidate, but supported the MPC candidate H. Laltanpuia to contest the elections in Suangpuilawn Constituency in 1998. H. Laltanpuia secured 34.85 per cent of total votes.
polled. The Congress candidate, Vanlalngena, secured 24.80 per cent of votes polled. The other 5 independent candidates secured 40.35 per cent of votes polled.

In 2003 elections, all the three major participating political parties in the constituency got very low percentage of votes polled. The following table shows the party-wise votes polled in the 2003 election.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>No. of Candidates</th>
<th>Seat Contested</th>
<th>Seat Secured</th>
<th>Votes Polled</th>
<th>% of Votes Polled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>7.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>11.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>6.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist Party of India (CPI)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents &amp; Others</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2240</td>
<td>74.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3014</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An analysis of the election results shows that the sitting MLA, H. Laltanpuia of MPC secured only 6.43 per cent of total valid votes polled in 2003 against 34.85 per cent in 1998. The MNF was a ruling party at the time when elections were announced. The MNF party secured 11.67 per cent of votes polled. The Congress also got a very low percentage of votes polled, that is, 7.33 per cent only.

One Independent candidate, H. Lalsangzuala, supported by HPC secured 72.82 per cent of total votes polled in the Suangpuilawn
constituency. The other Independent candidate supported by JDU secured 1.49 per cent of total votes polled.

The above table shows that the total number of votes polled in the constituency was 3014, while the total number of voters/electors was 7783. Thus, the percentage of votes polled in the constituency was only 38.72. The total number of votes polled by the three major political parties- Congress, MNF and MPC was 767, which constituted 25.44 per cent of total votes polled in the constituency and 9.85 percent of the total number of votes in the constituency.

The analysis shows that in the 2003 assembly elections in Suangpuilawn Constituency, there was a boycotting among the voters to cast their votes. Except those voters who supported the HPC candidate, H. Lalsangzuala, the majority voters did not cast their votes. As such, the votes polled were only 38.72 per cent in Suangpuilawn Constituency, whereas the percentage of votes polled in the other selected Constituencies was above 80 percent.

Table 3.14
Comparative Statement – Electorate, Contestants, Number of Valid Votes Polled in Suangpuilawn Constituency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Seat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Electorate</td>
<td>7018</td>
<td>7783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Contestants</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Valid Votes Polled</td>
<td>5705</td>
<td>3014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Valid Votes Polled</td>
<td>81.29</td>
<td>38.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sateek Constituency

The following table represents the party position in the successive elections to the Mizoram State Assembly.

Table 3.15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2171</td>
<td>25.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2974</td>
<td>35.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1280</td>
<td>15.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents &amp; Others</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>23.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8439</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From 1987 the MNF won the assembly seat in the Sateek constituency continuously. In the first elections, after the attainment of statehood, the MNF President, Laldenga, contested the elections from this constituency. He secured 56.75 per cent of total votes polled, whereas the Congress secured only 28.17 per cent in the constituency. The analysis of the election results at table 3.15 indicates that the MNF had a stronghold in the Sateek constituency. But the MNF party’s performance in the constituency was not an improvement. B. Lalthlengliana of MNF was elected MLA for three times continuously, that is, from 1993-2003 elections. But the MNF party lost its strength gradually in every successive election. In 1998 the MNF secured only 35.24 per cent of total votes polled in the constituency against 50.26 per cent in 1993, 45.46 per cent in 1998 and 56.76 per cent in 1987. The following table
shows the total number of votes polled by the different parties during the 2003 assembly elections in Sateek Constituency.

Table 3.16
Party-wise Votes Polled in Sateek Constituency, 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>No. of Candidates</th>
<th>Seat Contested</th>
<th>Seat Secured</th>
<th>Votes Polled</th>
<th>% of Votes Polled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3714</td>
<td>36.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3882</td>
<td>38.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPC</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZNP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2509</td>
<td>24.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents &amp; Others*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10,189</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Independents & Others included candidates of unrecognized parties.

In 2003 the MNF party won the seat again in the elections. It increased its percentage of votes polled by securing 38.09 per cent in 2003 against 35.24 per cent in 1998. The Congress gain in 2003 elections is greater as it secured 36.40 per cent of votes polled against 25.72 per cent in 1998. The difference between the MNF and Congress had become now much lesser in 2003. The ZNP allied with the MPC secured 24.62 per cent of votes polled in 2003. The two Independents secured only 84 votes polled.

Table 3.17
Comparative Statement – Electorate, Contestants, Number of Valid Votes Polled in Sateek Constituency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Seat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Electorate</td>
<td>10208</td>
<td>11,855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Contestants</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Valid Votes Polled</td>
<td>8439</td>
<td>10,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Valid Votes Polled</td>
<td>82.67</td>
<td>85.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The main political parties which contested the assembly elections from the rural sample, Tuipang, Buarpui, Suangpuilawn and Sateek constituencies, were the Congress, the MNF and the MPC.

The following table represents the position of political parties in successive elections to the Mizoram Legislative Assembly in the four rural sample constituencies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJP</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP)</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist Party of India (CPI)</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents &amp; Others</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table it can be said that in the rural sample (i.e. four selected rural constituencies), the main participants among the political parties were Congress, MNF and PC parties in the assembly elections held during 1987 to 2003.

As already seen in table 3.18, in the rural areas, as a whole, the Congress party occupied a dominant position in the four assembly elections (1987, 1989, 1993 & 2003). Only in 1998, after its ten years rule, Congress lost its dominant position in the assembly elections. In the 4 selected rural constituencies – Tuipang, Buarpui, Suangpuilawn
and Sateek constituencies, Congress occupied a dominant position in the first two elections, namely, 1987 and 1989 elections. But from 1993 elections the Congress party lost its dominant position which was due to the appearance of Independent candidates in the election scene and the development of coalition politics in the elections.

In the first assembly elections to the state of Mizoram held in 1987, the Congress party returned with 3 seats out of 4 seats, in the rural sample constituencies. The MNF managed to win 1 seat. Congress, thus, occupied a dominant position in the sample constituencies.

It is significant to mention that after the signing of Mizoram Peace Accord between the Government of India and Mizoram Government under the Chief Ministership of Lalthanhawla (Congress) in 1986 and when Mizoram became a state in 1987, the first elections to Mizoram State assembly was held on 16th February, 1987. The MNF became the majority party by securing 24 seats in the House of 40 Members Assembly. However, out of these 24 seats it secured, the MNF could get only 3 seats from the rural areas, that is, 14 rural constituencies. Thus, the MNF could secure only 21.42 per cent of the 14 seats in the rural constituencies of rural Mizoram, while the Congress party won 8 out of the 14 rural seats in the assembly, that is, 57.14 per cent.

Thus, it can be noted that the MNF party could not have mass base in the rural Mizoram even during the period of its glory in Mizoram
politics. In 1989 mid-term general election, Congress party bagged 3 seats from the 4 selected rural constituencies while MNF bagged 1 seat. Congress party secured 9 seats and MNF won 4 seats from the whole area of rural constituencies, that is, 14 rural constituencies.

At the state level, Congress returned with 23 seats while MNF was with 14 seats. Thus, it can be mentioned that the Congress party occupied a dominant position in the areas of rural sample constituencies, in the entire rural areas as well as in the whole state of Mizoram in 1989 elections.

In 1993 assembly election, the Congress party lost its 2 seats from the four rural sample constituencies to the 2 Independent candidates who were from Tuipang and Suangpuilawn constituencies. Congress won only 1 seat from the 4 rural constituencies while MNF also secured 1 seat. Congress won its seat from Buarpui constituency and MNF got its one seat from Sateek constituency. Congress won a seat from Buarpui constituency in successive elections, i.e., from the first elections till 1993 elections. Likewise, MNF also won its seat from Sateek constituency till 1993 elections. When the Congress declined in its strength in the rural areas of the 4 selected constituencies, Congress was still a dominant party in the entire rural areas of Mizoram in 1993. Congress could win 7 seats while MNF won 3 seats. But, unlike in the previous elections there were 4 elected Independents in 1993 in the entire rural areas of Mizoram. The
Congress occupied a dominant position not only in the rural areas of the 14 constituencies but also in the state as a whole. Congress secured 16 seats while MNF could win 14 seats in 1993 elections.

In 1998 assembly elections, the Congress party, after its 10 years rule in the state, could win only 1 seat from one of the 4 selected rural constituencies, that is, Tuipang. The MNF again secured 1 seat from the same constituency where it had a stronghold from the first elections, that is, Sateek constituency. Now, for the first time in the rural areas of the four selected constituencies, the People’s Conference (PC) party won the elections. PC secured 2 seats out of the 4 seats in the rural sample. In the entire rural areas of the 14 constituencies, Congress managed to win 3 seats when MNF could win 4 seats and PC won 6 seats. 1 seat went to the Independent candidate. In the state, Congress party could get 6 seats only when MNF got 21 seats and PC won 12 seats in 1998 elections. There was 1 elected Independent member.

Thus, it can be mentioned that when Congress party suffered a serious setback in 1998 elections, Congress party could win 25 per cent of seats in the rural sample constituencies (1 seat). Again, Congress could secure 21.42 per cent of seats in the entire rural areas (3 seats) and 15 per cent of seats in the entire state of Mizoram (6 seats).

The MNF party, in 1998 elections, did not increase its strength from the 4 rural constituencies. MNF secured 25 per cent of seats from
the rural sample (1 seat). It could win 28.57 per cent of seats in the entire rural areas (4 seats). When MNF lacked mass base in the rural areas, it came out, at the same time, with a majority of 21 seats in the state to be the ruling party. Out of its 21 seats, MNF secured 17 seats from the semi-urban and urban areas of Mizoram.

The 2003 assembly elections saw the return of Congress and MNF with 1 seat each in the rural areas of four selected constituencies. The remaining 2 seats went to Independent candidates, one from Tuipang constituency and another one from Suangpuilawn constituency. The appearance of 2 Independents from the two constituencies can be that no single political party, neither Congress nor MNF, could make much headway in the constituencies.

The following table shows the party-wise votes polled in the 4 constituencies – Tuipang, Buarpui, Suangpuilawn and Sateek constituencies in the Assembly Elections, 2003.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>No. of Candidates</th>
<th>Seat Contested</th>
<th>Seat Secured</th>
<th>No. of Votes Polled</th>
<th>% of Votes Polled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9586</td>
<td>30.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNF</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9239</td>
<td>29.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2595</td>
<td>8.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZNP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3300</td>
<td>10.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents &amp; Others</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6273</td>
<td>20.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the above table it can be noted that though Congress and MNF won one seat each in the assembly elections in 2003, the number of votes secured by Congress is higher than the number of votes won by the MNF.

While Congress could get 30.92 per cent of total votes polled from the rural sample constituencies, MNF got 29.80 per cent of total votes polled. From this point of view, it can be said that Congress is the largest party in the rural areas of the four rural sample constituencies. Congress had the largest number of voters or supporters. Congress could garner more support than the MNF in the rural sample. Besides the two main parties, Congress and MNF, Mizoram People’s Conference (MPC) could get 8.37 per cent of the total votes polled in the sample constituencies without a single seat. ZNP got 10.64 per cent of votes polled in the sample, while Communist Party of India (CPI) could get 0.02 per cent and Independents got 20.23 per cent of votes polled in the sample constituencies.

When Congress and MNF had one seat each from the four rural sample constituencies, there was a preponderance of Congress party in the entire rural areas of the 14 constituencies in 2003 elections. Congress could get 6 seats out of 14 seats while MNF got 5 seats. A splinter group of MNF called Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) could get 1 seat while 2 seats went to Independents in the entire rural areas of Mizoram. While
Congress occupied a dominant position in the rural areas as a whole, it was lower in its position than the MNF in the state level in 2003 elections. In the state, Congress won 12 seats while MNF secured 21 seats out of the 40 elected seats in the assembly. ZNP won 2 seats while other 2 seats went to Independents. Thus, the analysis of the performance of political parties in the four rural sample constituencies confirms the fact that Congress is the largest party in the rural areas.

III. Socio-Political Background and Experience of the Candidates in Rural Sample Constituencies

The candidates put up by the political parties had varied socio-political background and experiences. To obtain information regarding the socio-political background of the contesting candidates, a small schedule was prepared and supplied it to the main contesting candidates put up by the different political parties, Congress, Mizo National Front (MNF), Mizoram People’s Conference (MPC), Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP), and unrecognized parties, Maraland Democratic Front (MDF) and Hmar People’s Conference (HPC). Out of the total 21 candidates contesting the elections of 2001 assembly election, 15 candidates were chosen from different parties for the purpose of interview. The remaining 6 candidates were from very small parties and some were Independent candidates securing very few votes. It was difficult to find out their address also. The interview schedule was deliberately kept small in size,
and the same questions were put in the same order to each candidate for purpose of comparability of the responses. The interviews were successfully completed. Out of the 15 selected candidates, 14 candidates were interviewed for purpose of the study. Information about 1 candidate could not be obtained due to his non-availability.

Representation of the contesting candidates in the four rural constituencies according to age group can be seen in the following table.

Table 3.20 Distribution of Candidates According to Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age in years</th>
<th>No. of candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 – 40</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 – 60</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 and above</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note from the above table that a majority of the candidates, that is, 10 candidates belonged to 41-60 years age-group. This indicates that there remained a preponderance of the middle age group.

**Education**

The findings of the present study regarding the educational attainment of the candidates are given in the table below.

Table 3.21 Educational Attainment of the Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of education</th>
<th>No. of candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post graduate</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two candidates had passed middle school, 3 had education upto High School standards, 4 had intermediate education, 2 had college education and 3 candidates had university education. It can be said that the educational standard of the candidates was not poor.

**Tribe**

As tribe has its unique place in the context of Mizo politics especially in the rural areas, the social background of the candidates was collected to discover the trends of tribe -wise participation in the elections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>No. of candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Lusei</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Lai (Pawi)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mara (Lakher)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Hmar</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Paihte</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Chakma</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Bru (Riang)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Others</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reveals that a largest group of contestants, 7 belonged to Lusei tribe. Next to this, 2 contestants belonged to Mara tribe. There were 2 contestants from Hmar tribe. Mara and Hmar, except Lusei, had greater participation in the electoral contest than other tribes in the four rural constituencies. The reason can be the presence of two minority tribe-
dominated constituencies, Tuipang (Mara area) and Suangpuilawn (Hmar area).

There was only one candidate each from Lai (Pawi) tribe as well as from Paihte tribe. The other one candidate belonged to ‘other’ category. From this, it can be mentioned that Lusei people had greater participation in the electoral contest.

**Occupation**

From occupational point of view, the number of businessmen was found high. There were 7 businessmen and 2 contractors. The other 5 candidates could not mention their main occupation. This shows that the business community had more interest and participation in the assembly elections processes.

**Past Experience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Contests</th>
<th>No. of Candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contested only once</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contested twice</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than twice</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never before</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above clearly shows that a majority of the candidates, that is, 8 contested the assembly elections for the first time. 1 contestant had contested the election once before, 2 candidates contested twice and 3
candidates contested more than twice prior to the assembly elections of 2003. This shows that fresh blood is also active and interested in contesting for assembly elections.

Table 3.24
Number of Assembly Elections Won by the Candidates in the Past

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Elections Won</th>
<th>No. of Candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elected once</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected more than once</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of the contestants, that is, 11 were those who had never been elected to the assembly. But 1 contestant had been elected once while the other 2 contestants had held elected positions in the Legislative Assembly more than once.

While analyzing the age groups of the contesting candidates, it was noticed that out of the 14 respondents, it was noticed that 2 were below 40 years, 10 were in the age group of 41-60 and another 2 were in the age group of 61 and above. But of 21 candidates, only 4 were declared elected. All these 4 elected members were in the age group of 41-60.

From educational point of view, one of those elected had education upto High School. Besides one had intermediate education while another had done graduation. The remaining elected candidate was post-graduate.
It is seen from the above table that the elected members belonged to different tribes. There was one elected member from Lusei tribe, one member from Lai (Pawi) tribe, one member from Mara tribe and yet another from Hmar tribe.

There are two Lusei dominated constituencies, Buarpui and Sateek. While the elected member from Buarpui constituency was Zodintluanga belonging to Lusei tribe, the member elected for Sateek constituency was B. Lalthlengliana from Lai (Pawi) tribe. But from Mara dominated constituency – Tuipang, the elected member P.P. Thawla belonged to Mara tribe. Likewise, in Suangpuilawn constituency where majority voters are Hmars, the member declared elected, H. Lalsangzuala belonged to Hmar tribe and was supported by a tribe-based political party called Hmar People’s Conference (HPC) in the elections. This shows the growth of tribe-based groups or parties in the rural areas of Mizoram which does not appear to be healthy in Mizo politics.

The candidates put up by the political parties had some experience in the state politics. The elected candidate from Tuipang constituency,
P.P. Thawla, was put up by the unrecognized party, Maraland Democratic Front (MDF) as an Independent candidate in 2003 elections. P.P. Thawla entered into active politics from 1995. It is interesting to note that P.P. Thawla was one of the founders of a Mara tribe-based political party named Maraland Democratic Front (MDF). Firstly, a Democratic Reform Committee was formed under the leadership of P.P. Thawla on 23.3.1995. After one year, on 25th January, 1996, a Maraland Democratic Front (MDF) came into existence at the initiative of a Democratic Reform Committee. P.P. Thawla was elected as President of the party. The main aims and objectives of the party were to demand for Union Territory of Maraland, upgrading the Mara Autonomous District Council and integration of the Mara people living in the contiguous areas under a single administrative unit.

Congress had a stronghold in Tuipang constituency earlier. Since the attainment of statehood in Mizoram, the constituency had only Congress MLAs. But now, for the first time in the history of assembly elections, a tribe-based political party – Maraland Democratic Front (MDF) had been successful. Reason may partly be the merit and personality of the candidate and partly be the growing ethnic consciousness among the Mara people in the constituency. P.P. Thawla,

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57 Researcher’s Interview with P.P. Thawla. Also Constitution of Maraland Democratic Front (MDF) Hqrs. Saiha (written in Mara language).
after winning the assembly election in 2003, supported the ruling MNF ministry.

The Congress candidate in Buarpui constituency, Zodintluanga, had become a new face in the state assembly. He had education upto intermediate level. He was 41 years old and entered into active politics since 1995. He contested for the first time in 2003 assembly elections and won.

Buarpu constituency was a Congress dominated constituency since the attainment of statehood in Mizoram. The elected MLAs from Buarpu constituency in the three general elections (1987, 1989 & 1993) were Congress candidates. This shows that Congress had a stronghold in this rural constituency - Buarpu. In 1998 assembly elections, the allied parties, MNF and Mizoram People’s Conference (MPC) had a common candidate who was from the MPC party. Therefore, Congress lost its seat to the candidate from MPC party. But in 2003 elections, not only Congress, but also the MNF party fought the election battle without any alliance. This time, the assembly seat from Buarpu constituency was returned to the Congress candidate.

Thus, it can be mentioned that the MNF party lacked a strong mass base in the rural areas of Buarpu constituency. On the other hand, the Congress had a sound mass-base and did not depend on the help of other party.
H. Lalsangzuala, an independent candidate but supported by Hmar People’s Conference (HPC), was also a new face in the assembly elections in Mizoram. He belonged to Hmar tribe and had education up to matriculate. He entered into active politics since 1988. He was declared to be the successful candidate in 2003 assembly elections from Suangpuilawn constituency, where the people belonging to Hmar tribe were in large number. He secured only 28 per cent of the total votes present in the constituency. It is significant to note that there was a boycotting of elections in some polling stations by the voters due to intimidation to the voters.

The MNF party candidate, B. Lalthlengliana had long experience as Member of Legislative Assembly in Mizoram. He entered into active politics from 1986. He was 55 years old. He had earlier contested the assembly elections twice from MNF party (1993 and 1998) and won both the elections from the same constituency, Sateek. At the time of assembly elections, 2003, he was the sitting MLA and Cabinet Minister in the MNF ministry. After 2003 elections, he became the Cabinet Minister again in the MNF ministry. MNF party had a stronghold in Sateek constituency right from the attainment of statehood in Mizoram that is from 1987 assembly elections which might be partly due to the personality of the MNF candidates and partly be due to the commitment of the voters to MNF party.
In Mizoram, political life commenced with the formation of regional parties. National political parties entered the Lushai Hills very late. There was a series of regional parties formed by ambitious politicians for the realization of their political aims. There has been frequent appearance and disappearance of regional parties, some having very short existence. Out of this great number of parties, only a few had been able to emerge and remain for some time as major parties in terms of following and electoral achievements. Others had to go out of existence or merge with bigger parties. Among the major ones, only the Indian National Congress (INC) was popular in Mizoram as an All India level party; Mizo Union (MU), United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO), Mizo National Front (MNF) and People’s Conference (PC) were popular in their respective periods as regional parties. The PC party once converted itself into a national party viz. Janata Dal when the Janata Dal was the ruling party in the centre but it could not make much headway as such. Later on, the Mizoram Janata Dal (MJD) converted itself into Mizoram People’s Conference (MPC). The Mizo Union (MU) and the United Mizo Freedom Organization (UMFO) could not maintain their distinct identity.

The political parties which were popular in the present context included the National Party Congress (INC) and the state (regional) political parties, MNF and MPC (recognized). Besides, Zoram
Nationalist Party (ZNP) (recognized), Maraland Democratic Front (MDF) (unrecognized) and Hmar People’s Convention (HPC) (unrecognized) have shown their existence in the 2003 assembly election. Though the other two national parties, BJP and CPI and the two unrecognized parties, Ephraim Union (EU) and Janata Dal United (JDU), had entered the electoral scene, the voters were least impressed by their appeals.

Since Mizoram attained statehood in 1987, the state has come across 5 Assembly elections. Results of the five Assembly elections held so far (1987, 1989, 1993, 1998 and 2003) reveal that Congress party lost the first State Assembly elections held in 1987 to the newly formed MNF political party that came out of the underground after twenty years, signed a memorandum of settlement to bring peace in the Mizo society and contested the first Mizoram State Legislative Assembly Election for the first time. The Congress could come to power twice in 1989 and 1993 only through electoral alliances. The Congress-MNF(D) combined and the Congress-MJD combined swept the polls respectively in 1989 and 1993. The MNF (D) and the MJD were willing to strike an alliance with a much larger and better established party, Congress, basically in the hope of forming government since elections in 1989 and 1993 were held when the Congress was in power in Delhi.
The Congress also wanted alliance because it did not expect to win these elections on its own. There was no ideological consideration involved in forging these alliances either from the Congress side or from the MNF (D)/MJD side. Though the Congress party was not opposed to having pre-poll alliances with other non-Congress parties (MPC and ZNP) in 1998 and 2003, the latter were not keen to alliance with the Congress. The likely reason was that the Congress was out of power at the centre and hence alliance with the party was cold shouldered both by the MPC and the ZNP in 1998 and 2003. Whenever the Congress party was in power in Delhi or was confident of winning on its own, it went alone in the Lok Sabha elections as in 1984, 1989, 1991, 1996 and 1998. Out of these five Lok Sabha elections, it lost only in 1998 by only 41 votes. When the Congress party was out of power both in Delhi and in Mizoram, the Congress in Mizoram had alliances with other parties for the lone Lok Sabha seat for Mizoram, i.e. in 1980, 1999 and 2004.

The only exception was in 1972 and 1987 when, despite the Congress being in power in Delhi at these times, a faction-ridden Congress was beaten by the Mizo Union (MU) and a massive ‘MNF Wave’ ensured the MNF’s victory respectively in 1972 and 1987. Likewise, the presence of a non- Congress rule in Delhi influenced the electoral outcomes in favour of the non- Congress parties in Mizoram. It can, therefore, be noted that the non- Congress parties in Mizoram
wanted to make electoral alliance with the Congress in Mizoram only when the Congress was ruling in the centre.

Though the MNF was rewarded by the people of Mizoram, after coming out of underground and was given ‘sympathy’ votes by the people of Mizoram in 1987 assembly election, a split in the MNF party, after 19 months of its rule, caused the downfall of the MNF rule in Mizoram and brought the proclamation of President’s rule in the state.

The Congress-MNF(D) victory in 1989 elections led to the formation of Congress-led coalition ministry. The 1993 elections again resulted in the formation of the Congress-MJD coalition ministry. But after its long ten years rule, especially towards the end of its rule in the 1990s, the Congress Government was largely seen as incapable of doing any good. Due to long period of its rule and past misdeeds, Congress was criticized on so many points with regards to the governance and achievement.

It is significant to note that when the Congress could not win the assembly election in 1998 and 2003 at the state level, it captured more assembly seats in the rural areas (rural constituencies) than the MNF in 2003 elections. In all the five assembly elections (from 1987-2003), the real contest was between the Congress and MNF. The Congress won more seats in the rural Mizoram than the MNF as already stated and seen in table because the Congress used to have more rural
constituencies where they had stronghold than the MNF. The All India Congress Committee (AICC) used to give substantial assistance to the Congress candidates in the form of money, election materials, vehicles, etc. The party also paid attention to the ethnic factor in giving party tickets in areas dominated by minority tribes of the Chakma, Lai, Mara, Hmar and Paihite. These strategies adopted by the Congress party were very useful to get a strong hold especially in the rural areas.

The first and the most important factor is the perceived winning chance of a person. Other factors include loyalty to the party and to the leaders, economic and educational, family background and ethnic background, personal integrity, hold on the party’s organization, societal or religious contributions, etc. These criteria adopted by the Congress in choosing the candidates had an important impact in the success of the Congress and for the establishment of a Congress’ strong hold in the rural constituencies. From the survey of the election results in the rural constituencies, it is seen that the same individual candidates contested the elections from the same constituencies for three or four times as they kept on winning the MLA seats which could be due to their family or ethnic background.

In some cases/constituencies even if the same person did not contest from the same constituency, the Congress voters kept on voting

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for the Congress which showed the strong support-base of the Congress in such rural constituencies. Another reason why the Congress could garner more support than the MNF from the rural areas must be that the party continues pursuing populist programmes like free galvanized iron sheet and free housing for the poor saying that the poor and the less privileged need doles. This policy must have worked because now all the parties that had earlier criticized the Congress on the issue have adopted the same. Some of the pro-poor socio-economic programmes implemented by the Congress like distribution of free galvanized iron sheets to the poor and the NLUP could not be considered radical measures because their implementations indicated lack of seriousness and intention to actually change existing socio-economic relation.

The analysis of the data for the 4 selected rural constituencies revealed that though the Congress and MNF got 1 seat each in 2003 elections, the Congress could be said to be the largest party in the rural areas of the four constituencies because the votes polled by the Congress was more than the votes polled by the MNF, that is, 30.93% and 29.80% respectively. Thus, the analysis of the performance of political parties in the same rural constituencies confirmed the fact that Congress was the largest party in the rural areas.

It is also learned that a majority of the candidates were middle age-group (41- 60). The educational standard of the candidates was not
The candidates belonged to different tribes, but Lusei tribes were in majority which shows that Luseis had greater participation in the electoral contest. The people engaged in business had more interest and participation in the assembly election processes. The four elected candidates were middle age-group and majority of candidates were new faces and had never contested in the sample constituencies. MDF and HPC had also appeared in the electoral scene. The Congress had a stronghold in the rural constituency as in the case of Buarpui constituency and MNF had also a stronghold in Sateek constituency. The study reveals that majority of the rural voters voted for the Congress in the 2003 election. The factors that made them vote for the Congress will be studied in the following Chapters in more detail.