CHAPTER–III

Role of HPC and HPC-D in Hmar Autonomy Movement
It may be interesting to note that political development in the name of Mizo unification took place in the late 1940s. Obviously, the failure of Mizo Union and MNF movements for the Mizo unification had left the Hmars in Manipur, Assam and Mizoram in a condition of political frustration. Ethnic based politics emerged among the Hmars once again exhibiting communal movement on the line of insurgency. Some historians opined that the twenty year experience of insurgency during the MNF movement had spawned a strong and unified communal base politics among the Hmars. The Hmars felt deprived of their political rights and privileges as contained in the peace Accord of Mizoram. They felt that the peace agreement signed between the Government of India and MNF had no political benefit for the Hmars as a community in Mizoram.

The Accord of Mizoram did not incorporate the hopes and aspirations of the Hmar people. In short, this resulted in the disappointment among the Hmars, leading to armed violence in the late 1980s. Some important factors that caused the Hmars discontent from the predominant Mizo politics are feeling of political deprivation, fear of cultural and customary extinction, language assimilation and socio-economic exploitation. Moreover, ethnic cultural difference with the mainstream Mizo society was another important factor to have stirred up Hmar nationalism too.

The integration of all the Hmar inhabited areas had been the greatest desire and the political objective of all the Hmar political organisations. The division of the Hmar inhabited areas under different administrative units had been a drawback for the progress and development of the tribe. The aims and objectives of all the Hmar political movements had been based on the creation of Hmar District Council. The scope of the movements also extended to all the Hmars inhabited areas of Manipur, Mizoram, Cachar and N.C. Hills of Assam and Meghalaya. Before the birth of HPC in Mizoram, a number of political organisations had been formed by the Hmars expressing their grievances and legitimate political rights to the Government of India. Most of the political parties before the formation of HPC, except HNC and HNU, had not made remarkable records for the Hmar community as a whole. Obviously, it can be claimed

---

that both HNC and HNU parties had been the forerunners which created the foundation of political consciousness among the Hmars for the formation of HPC in Mizoram.

With the signing of the Memorandum of Settlement between the MNF and the Government of India on 30th June 1986, a twenty year insurgency of MNF came to an end. The subsequent passage of the Constitution (53rd) Amendment Bill and the State of Mizoram Bill (1986) by the Parliament on 7th August 1986, the Union Territory of Mizoram became the twenty third State of the Indian Union on 20th February 1987. The Mizo Accord was one of the most important milestones in the history of Mizoram.

The Memorandum of Settlement concluded the decade old Mizo political problem, but it left out the political issues of the minority tribes such as the Hmars who were living in the North and the Brus (Reangs) who are living in the West of Mizoram. The Hmars living in the Northern parts of Mizoram had expected to share and benefit from the new political arrangement of Mizoram Statehood in the form of a separate Administrative Unit for themselves, as was the case for the Pawis, the Lakhers and the Chakmas who had enjoyed the benefits of Autonomous District Council right from the time when Mizoram was a Union Territory. Dissatisfaction with the politics of MNF, the Hmars in Mizoram had started ethnic political movement under the political umbrella of HPC party with non-violence means. It was within this policy of framework that HPC launched its first phase of non-violent protests with a 24-hour peaceful bandh in their demand area on 28th March 1989. However, the Government of Mizoram reacted violently against the non-violent movement of the HPC. The peaceful bandh called by the HPC and its supporters were forcefully encountered by the Mizoram Armed Police and resulted unprecedented clash between them. The confrontation between the bandh supporters and Mizoram Armed Police (MAP) resulted in bloodshed leaving many innocent Hmars injured and hospitalised. The confrontation aroused a feeling of suspicion in the minds of the Government of Mizoram that HPC was a militant organization disguised as a Political Party to champion the cause of the Hmars political problems. In fact, the confrontation between the Government of Mizoram and HPC had prompted the latter to take up arms and go underground.

The first gun-battle between the Mizoram Armed Police and HPC occurred on 16th May 1989 at Moniarkhal, Assam, where two HPC militants and one sub-inspector of police were killed on the spot. The nexus with the NSCN-IM helped the HPC to easily obtain sophisticated fire arms and ammunitions in abundance. Moreover, the deep and inaccessible jungle of Buhban (Khawbawn Tlang) range of Cachar served as a safe haven and passage after launching ambushes and surprise attack in Mizoram and they then easily retreated to Assam and Manipur. It was also learnt that HPC undergrounds were receiving military training from NSCN-IM. This apparently indicated that the HPC undergrounds were acquiring military aid and assistance from different angles which created a lot of problems for the Government of Mizoram in checking the Hmar movement.

The Government of Mizoram came to realise the complication involved in putting down the HPC movement by means of armed showdown. The Government then expressed its willingness to solve the situation politically and prepare the ground rules for a political dialogue with the HPC on the question of autonomy, provided that HPC undergrounds would surrender their arms and ammunitions and discontinue any subversive activity before having any meaningful peace talk. To bring about HPC movement to an end, the first and the second round of peace talks were conducted in 1991 at the initiative of Swaraj Kaushal, the then Governor of Mizoram, but the peace talks failed. Yet, it paved the way for the formation of a Peace Committee for further peace talks. With the initiative of the Peace Committee consisting of representatives from various Church denominations in the demand area, talks were continued in 1992.

The subsequent Memorandum of Settlement signed on 27th July 1994 between the Government of Mizoram and HPC ended the seven year arm revolt of HPC. The Peace Accord resulted in the formation of Sinlung Hills Development Council (SHDC) and more than 300 hundred HPC undergrounds with their arms and ammunitions surrendered to the Government of Mizoram at the playground of Sesawng village in Mizoram. Each of HPC underground member was given an amount of Rs.30000/- by the Government of Mizoram for rehabilitation and ex-gratia to the next of kin of the HPC members who died during the armed confrontations. The provisions of memorandum of settlement are as follow:
MoS between Government of Mizoram and HPC, 1994

The preamble of the Memorandum of Settlement signed by Hmingchunghnung, the President Hmar People’s Convention, on the one side and Lalfakzuala, the then Chief Secretary of the Government of Mizoram on the other on 11th August 1994 was the concluding documentary proof of a lasting settlement. The Preamble of the settlement;

1. The Government of Mizoram has been making earnest efforts to bring about an amicable solution to the problems arising out of the demands of the Hmar People’s Convention (HPC)

2. Towards this end, an initiative was taken by the Government of Mizoram and a series of peace talks were held with the HPC leaders. Settlement on various issues reached during the course of the talks are incorporated in the following paragraphs

The main objective of the Memorandum of Settlement was to give adequate autonomy to the Sinlung Hills Development Council (SHDC) for social, economic, cultural and educational advancement of the Hmar people under the jurisdiction of the Council. Whether the Memorandum of Settlement signed between HPC and the Government of Mizoram satisfied the Hmars or not, an autonomy status given to the Sinlung Hills Development Council was a remarkable milestone in the political history of the Hmars in Mizoram. In order to restore peace and normalcy in Mizoram, the HPC on their part agreed to undertake, within the agreed time-frame, all the necessary steps to cease all types of insurgent movements and activities. The HPC also accepted to lay down arms and ammunitions, ensure the return of its cadres to civil life, to abandon activities of violence and help in the process of restoration of peace and normalcy. The modalities of bringing out all underground personnel and their rehabilitation would be worked out by the Government of Mizoram. The implementation of the foregoing would be under the supervision of the Government of Mizoram. To fulfil its obligatory task of settlement, the HPC should take immediate steps to amend, as might be necessary, Articles of Association/Constitution so as to make them conform to the provisions of law.

The Peace Accord also discussed in detail the question of how to deal with the surrendered cadres of HPC who would join civil life. The Government of Mizoram should take adequate steps for relief and rehabilitation of all HPC underground personnel who had joined the HPC prior to 18th December 1992, coming over-ground and ex-gratia would be paid to the next of kin, heirs, dependants of the HPC killed during the insurgency. In return, HPC promised to abide by the agreement and not to extend any support to NSCN, ULFA and any other such underground groups by way of supplying arms, providing protection, hideout or in any other manner.

The Government of Mizoram agreed to develop and recognise the Hmar language as one of the major languages of the State of Mizoram. In order to fulfil the above agreed point and to satisfy the desires and aspiration of Hmar community in Mizoram, the State Government would initiate measures for use of Hmar language as a medium of instruction up to Primary level in all the schools within the jurisdiction of the Council. The recognition of Hmar language as one of the major languages in the State of Mizoram had been a corner-stone for the preservation of the Hmar language which faced the possibility of complete absorption by the Mizo (Lusei). Regarding the promotion and preservation of Hmar culture and identity, the Government of Mizoram agreed to take all necessary actions to undertake accordingly as permissible under the rules of the Department of Art and Culture.

The State Government had to establish a new Civil Sub-Division at Sakawrdai and the Sub-Divisional Offices of different departments also be established at convenient locations in the area. Moreover, the Government of Mizoram promised to upgrade the present Primary Health Centre at Sakawrdai into thirty bedded Community Health Centre. For the social, economic, cultural and educational development of the people in the north and north-eastern parts of Mizoram comprising an area to be specified and agreed upon by Government of Mizoram and HPC, Sinlung Hills Development Council would, by notification in the Official Gazette, be constituted by the Government of Mizoram and separate fund be earmarked for schemes which could be specified for implementation within the area of the Council.
Composition and Structure of Council

The Memorandum of Settlement clearly highlights the composition and Structure of the Sinlung Hills Development Council. The two year interim Council (SHDC) shall be instituted as follows:

1. President, Hmar People’s Convention -Chairman

2. Any sitting MLA of the area (to be nominated by Government -Vice-Chairman

3. Seventeen Nominated members from the area (14 members to be nominated by Chairman of the Council and three members by Government)-Members

4. All sitting MLAs of the area -Members

5. Representative of Finance Department -Members

6. Representative of Planning Department -Members

7. Representative of Rural Development Department -Members

8. Deputy Commissioner concerned -Members

9. Development Officer (Sr. IAS or MCS Officer)-Member-Secretary

It was agreed that the headquarters of the Council should, during the interim period of two years, be Sakawrdai and have a separate office with supporting staff. Permanent headquarters of the Council after the interim period had to be decided by the Government of Mizoram in consultation with the Interim Council. No salary or TA/DA is admissible to the Vice Chairman and had to draw his salary and TA/DA as MLA from the Budget of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly. The other non-official members of the Council were to be entitled to such allowances as admissible to the non-official members of the State Planning Board.

The Chairman of the Council would be initially be the President of HPC and would be provided with vehicle and residential quarters or bungalow and personal staff
as determined by the Government. The Chairman would hold office for two years initially. Composition of the Council and the manner of nomination or election of the Chairman and Members, after expiry of the interim period of two years, should be decided by the Government in consultation with the Interim Council. The term of office of the Chairman and the Council was made to be three years.

**Official Staff of SHDC**

The interim Council of SHDC had a Secretary-cum-Development officer designated from among MCS senior officer who was vested with the power of drawing and distributing officers in different departments of the government. The Secretary of the Council was the head of official staff who would be assisted by the following staff in their respective roles.

1. Head Assistant-1 (one)
2. Accountant-1 (one)
3. Cashier-1 (one)
4. Upper Division Clerk-2 (two)
5. Lower Division Clerk-6 (six)
6. Driver-3 (three)
7. Peon-cum-Chawkidar-5 (five)

**Offices of SHDC**

The Interim Council of SHDC had two Offices, one at Sakawrdai and at Aizawl respectively. Although its Head Office was at Sakawrdai, the Headquarters of SHDC, it was nominally functioning owing to the absence of infrastructure such as office buildings, staff quarters and other related institutions like banking and internet facilities, Post office etc. Moreover, the absence of sufficient power supply, adequate water supply, and communication network system were the reasons the SHDC office was not smoothly operational at Sakawrdai. Thus, the SHDC office at Sakawrdai was nominally functional by a few staff members and in a rented house.

---

195 Proceedings of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly, thirteenth Session of the Sixth Assembly held from 12th March 2013 to 4th April 2013, Mizoram Legislative Assembly Secretariat, Aizawl, p. 37.
On the other side, the SHDC office at Aizawl was arranged as a Secretary office as it facilitates multi-dimensional conveniences for the smooth functioning of administration. Until and unless SHDC had a well-equipped office with required facilities and amenities at Sakawrdai, it was essential to have one office at Aizawl as it was convenient for the Council leaders and officials to have access and stay in touch with the higher authorities in different departments in the Capital City. Thus, the office at Aizawl was functioning as the virtual headquarters office. The Secretary and all the important staff members were working at Aizawl as if it was the head office of the Council. Therefore, the office staff workers at Aizawl were relatively large in number.

**Powers and Functions of the Council**

The provisions for the powers and functions of the Council were as indicated below:

It is the obligation of the Sinlung Hills Development Council to make various development plans out of the earmarked fund. The plan will be implemented by the departments concerned. Any development plan made by the Council will be subject to the approval of the Government of Mizoram. The Council is empowered to reallocate fund from one scheme to another within the area and within the sectorial allocation, provided that in case the proposed new scheme is not identical in nature with the approved scheme, approval of the Government will be necessary. It is the power of the Council to draw up a calendar of work for various departments in the area and oversee their implementation and also to make recommendations to the Government as deemed necessary in the interest of better planning, implementation and monitoring. It will be the duty of the Council to review the different schemes of development and progress of the area quarterly. Thus the Council needs to collect and obtain detailed information from any officer in charge of the area regarding progress of development plan schemes. Any other development functions, if necessary, may be allotted by the Government of Mizoram from time to time.

The executive power is vested with the collective body of the Council. The Chairman who is the leader of the Council is the Executive Head of the Council. Any resolution passed by the council is executed from the office of the Chairman. The Chairman is responsible for the execution of any resolution of the Council. The
Chairman presides over the session of the Council and the Secretary-cum-Development Officer is responsible for recording the proceedings of the Session of the Council.

As to financial matter, utilization of any fund for any work that incurs expense of SHDC fund is executed by the office of SHDC on the approval of the Chairman. In short, the management and utilizations of SHDC fund are primarily subject to the approval of the state Planning Board and the state Finance Department.

**Frequency of Council Meeting**

According to the Peace Accord, the Sinlung Hills Development Council will meet at least once in three months. In the Council meeting, the Chairman will have the power to invite any two Government officials or non-officials to attend any particular meeting of the Council, if considered necessary.

The Government of Mizoram has appreciated the concern and pressing demand of the HPC delegation, particularly regarding political safeguards as available under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. According to the Memorandum of Settlement, the Government of Mizoram will take immediate measures for inclusion of an area to be specified within the HPC Demand Area of Mizoram and the other Non-Schedule areas of Mizoram in the Tribal area of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India so that the above mentioned areas are safeguarded under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India.

To fulfil the peace agreement, the Government of Mizoram will not take steps to prosecute any HPC member coming over-ground for the offences committed in connection with underground activities. Investigation of all cases registered in Mizoram which are in progress currently against HPC personnel shall be dropped forthwith and those convicted of any such offences will also be granted remission of sentences. Though the Memorandum of Settlement is drafted in a clear and lucid language, the successes and achievements are mainly to depend on the faithfulness of both the Government of Mizoram and HPC to seriously implement the Peace Accord.
Demarcation of SHDC Boundary Issue

The boundary issue remains as the most controversial topic in the follow-up meetings between the representatives of the Government and HPC as the boundary of the SHDC was not clearly mentioned during the negotiation. It was simply agreed that the demarcation of SHDC area should be made comprising the area where the population of the Hmar is in majority.” In order to specify and settle the boundary issue, the HPC leaders and Government officials under Home Secretary to the Government of Mizoram held a meeting. Both the HPC and Government of Mizoram agreed to form Boundary Commission to examine the Hmar majority villages in the northeast and northwest of Mizoram where the HPC claimed the Hmars were in majority. In pursuance of the agreement, the Council of Ministers in its meeting held on 22nd November 1994 formed a Boundary Commission under the leadership of C. Hmingthanzuala IAS, Deputy Secretary, Home Department and Vanengmawia, Director, Revenue and they were sent to do the work with the agreement of both sides. After the Commission finished its findings, the Report was given to the joint meeting of HPC leaders and Government of Mizoram for discussion on 13th December 1994. The findings of the Commission did not satisfy HPC leaders because the Commission report concluded that the Hmars are not majority in almost all the villages of the HPC demand area. It was also found that the Commission could not cover many villages within the HPC demand area due to limited time given to them. However, the Commission claimed that the villages which they considered to be more important had been covered.

However, HPC argued that the Hmars authentically constitute a majority in all the villages of demand area. But Lalthanhawla, the Chief Minister of Mizoram pointed out that the Hmars, except in one village, have no majority in northern part of Mizoram. The HPC leaders reacted that the State Government had rigged the census figures to manipulate the Lusei majority in North Mizoram in a bid to forestall the Hmar claim for an autonomous district covering five Blocks.\textsuperscript{196} The Commission claimed that not only Hmars were there in the HPC demand area, but also many other tribes like Luseis, Ralteis, Paites, Khawlhring etc combined population superseded the population of the Hmars. According to the Commission Report, the Hmars were majority only in a few

\textsuperscript{196}S. N. Singh, \textit{op. cit.}, p.186.
villages in HPC demand area. HPC side flatly rejected the Hmingthanzuala Commission Report because HPC leaders claimed the report was very bias and one-sided. They felt that the finding of the Commission was at best very doubtful. Moreover, the Commission reports, submitted to the Government of Mizoram on 13th December 1994 clearly mentioned that the Commission was not able to cover many villages within the HPC demand area due to limited time given to them. At this point, the question of SHDC boundary was an endless issue between the Government of Mizoram and HPC. Since the Hmingthanzuala Boundary Commission Report was not acceptable to the HPC side, another negotiation was held under the Home Secretary, J.K. Sanglura IAS. It was agreed that another Boundary Commission was to be set up to lay down specific boundary line by conducting house to house counting within the HPC demand area once again. The Three Men Commission consisted of H. Raltawna IAS (Retired) as Chairman and Dr. H.C. Thanhranga Ex-Secretary, Law and Judicial as member and Pu Lalthanmawia IAS (Retired) as member Secretary. The Three Men Commission was formally constituted on 24th March 1995. The Commission began intensive verification of Hmar population within HPC demand area. The Commission conducted house to house survey to confirm the ground reality whether the Hmars were majority in all the villages of the whole HPC demand area. After completing the mission, the Three Men Commission submitted its finding report on 1st August 1996 to the Government of Mizoram. The Commission report concluded that the Hmars were in majority in all the villages of HPC demand area.

Unfortunately for the HPC, the Commission Report was withheld by the Government of Mizoram. The Government of Mizoram did not want to take action on the basis of the Commission report. The Commission Report was not even opened and discussed in the joint meeting of HPC and Government representatives. The bilateral negotiation on the issue of SHDC area demarcation of boundary reached an unfortunate deadlock. One of HPC Leaders, Malsawma Darngawn, ex-Chairman of SHDC said that the reason why the Commission Report was withheld by the Government was not known but it was believed that the Commission findings seemed to be in favour of the

198 An interview with Hmingchunghnung, former President, HPC and existing Chairman of SHDC on 24th August 2017, Aizawl.
HPC.\textsuperscript{199} Since then, the HPC came to realise that the Government of Mizoram was not serious enough for a full implementation of the Memorandum of Settlement. Several rounds of subsequent talks between the two parties failed without any positive result. Lack of general agreement on the question of demarcation of Council boundary based on Hmar majority was the main stumbling block for the proper functioning of the Council till today. As the Boundary Commission Report was not deliberated in the joint meetings of HPC leaders and the representatives of the Government of Mizoram, the HPC leaders resolved to convene Special General Assembly to deliberate on issue of Sinlung Hills Development Council boundary. The Special General Assembly was called at Ratu village on 17\textsuperscript{th} January 1996 and the HPC passed a very crucial resolution that if the Government of Mizoram could agree on and notify the SHDC boundary on the basis of the Three Men Commission Reports chaired by H. Raltawna before the forthcoming election of Member of Parliament (MP), all the Hmar people would unanimously cast their valuable votes in favour of Congress (I) candidates in the election as a token of thanks giving. At the same time, it was agreed that if the government of Mizoram could not agree and notify SHDC boundary within the stipulated time framed, all the Hmar people would vote for the rival candidate of Congress (I) in the election. The crucial steps taken by HPC was clearly informed to the Government of Mizoram for immediate action. While the matter was being under consideration by the Government in the cabinet meeting and a positive response was hopefully about to come up, unfortunately for HPC, seven members of HPC leaders went over to Congress (I) leaders conveying a sign of good faith on the ruling Congress (I) party in the event of the forthcoming MP election. Thus, by taking advantage of the circumstances, the Government of Mizoram ignored the issue of SHDC Boundary and no positive response came out thereafter.\textsuperscript{200} That was the last attempt to solve the demarcation of SHDC boundary issue by HPC party.

\textsuperscript{199}An interview with Malsawma Darngawn, former Chairman, SHDC, (2002-2006), on 14-02-2015, Shillong.
\textsuperscript{200}An interview with Hmingchunghnung, former President, HPC and existing Chairman, SHDC, on 24\textsuperscript{th} August 2017, Aizawl.
Internal Conflict within the Leadership of HPC

The Lalthanhawla Congress Ministry did not pay much attention to the grievances of HPC. Instead, the Government took measures to convince and win over some leaders of HPC in order to sow the seed of disunity among themselves. The divide and rule policy of State Government was quite successful. As time rolled by, diverse opinions and views cropped up among the HPC leaders whether to continue dealing with the Government of Mizoram or not in the formation of Council without specific demarcation of boundary. Some leaders argued that if they were hostile in approaching the Government, there would be no progress in fulfilling the Memorandum of Settlement which had been signed. They argued that while forming the Council they would continue to give more pressure to the Government to reconcile the boundary question in their favour. They were in favour of forming the Council under the Congress Ministry.

To give pressure to the Government, the majority of HPC leaders, under the leadership of their President Hmingchunghnung, boycotted any talk with Chief Minister Lalthanhawla because they did not see transparency on the issue of boundary demarcation. Some HPC leaders even threatened to take up arms against the Government of Mizoram again. While the boycott of talk was in progress, some HPC members under the leadership of Rosiem secretly contacted the Government of Mizoram informing that they could form the Council. Not one to miss the opportunity, the Government of Mizoram directly installed Rosiem to form the Council and be the Chairman with seven Executive Council members in 1998. The first Executive Council Members after the signing of Memorandum of Settlement were:

1. Rosiem : Chairman
2. Khunte Hmar : Vice-Chairman
3. Sapkhuma : Member
4. Malsawma Ralchhun : Member
5. Zova : Member
6. Sangthankhuma : Member
7. Darlai : Member

The above Council lasted for two years only. The divide and rule policy meted out within the leadership of HPC by the government was a success. The Council could
be formed only after three years from the signing of Accord. The reason why SHDC was formed so late was that there was no general agreement on the boundary issue between the Government of Mizoram and HPC. The controversial issue of the demarcation of boundary had hindered any progress for the early functioning of SHDC. In fact, the Council was fully monopolised at the mercy of the Government of Mizoram till today. On 27th January 2000, before Rosiem stepped down from the SHDC chair, a Memorandum was submitted to the Chief Minister Lalthanhawla, informing once again that the SHDC was yet to function as it ought to be and the term of the interim Council also had expired on 27th August 1999. As per the provision of the Memorandum of Settlement the interim period of the Council would be only two years. The memorandum also asked the Government of Mizoram to immediately arrange an early election of a full-fledged Council and to fulfil article 6.1 of the Memorandum of Settlement where the political safeguard of the people under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India was agreed upon by the Government of Mizoram and HPC.

Before any concrete step was taken, the Congress Ministry was replaced by MNF government in 2000. On the initiative of the new ministry, Lalrosiem, Chairman of SHDC, was asked to step down and Hmingchunghnunng was appointed in his place till 2002. But this Council did not last long due to alleged financial mismanagement. Then Hmingchunghnunng tendered his resignation from the Chairmanship and Malsawm Darnawn was appointed by the Government to be the chairman in 2002.201 Due to leadership crisis and the changing of Council Chairman from time to time, Sinlung Hills Development Council (SHDC) could not function as it was expected. According to the provisions of Memorandum of Settlement, the Government of Mizoram would take immediate measures for inclusion of an area to be specified within the HPC Demand Area of Mizoram and the other Non-Scheduled areas of Mizoram in the Tribal Area of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India so that the areas are safeguarded under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India.202 This provision is clearly laid down in Para 6.1 of the Memorandum of Settlement. But the Government of Mizoram did not fulfil the matter till date. Due to the failure of the Government of Mizoram in fulfilling its obligation on agreed points, the HPC submitted memorandum

201An interview with Malsawm Darngawn, former Chairman SHDC (2002-2006) on 14 February 2015, Shillong.
to the President of India on 24th September 2003 and the Memorandum asked the President of India to give direction to the Government of Mizoram for the implementation of Memorandum of Settlement. The President of India handed over the HPC Memorandum to the Ministry of Home Affairs and asked to resolve HPC grievances at the earliest possible. Then, the Ministry of Home Affairs informed the Government of Mizoram to arrange the ground rules for negotiation with HPC party and asked Mizoram government fully to implement the Memorandum of Settlement.

Moreover, the Ministry of Home Affairs instructed the Government of Mizoram to take up immediate measures for arranging a peace process with the HPC-D militants who are presently committed to continue the demand for a full-fledged Autonomous District Council from Mizoram. On 1st July 2001, HPC-D submitted memorandum to the Union Home Minister of India for the creation of Hmar Autonomous District Council under Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India within Mizoram. The memorandum asked the Union Home Minister to give direction to the Government of Mizoram to take immediate measures for the implementation of HPC Accord and to create permanent solution of the Hmar issue in Mizoram.

With the instruction of Ministry of Home Affairs, Suspension of Operation was signed between Mizoram Government and HPC-D for a period of six months. But the Suspension of Operation did not last long due to lack of understanding between the two parties on the question of foreigner issue for the representatives of HPC-D in the proposed peace talks. There was a rumour that HPC-D proposed one Hmar who was an American citizen to be one of its delegates in the proposed peace talk which was flatly rejected by the Government of Mizoram. The Government of Mizoram argued that an American man would not understand the ground reality of the Hmar political problem in Mizoram. Moreover, the state government was concerned about the attention of Central Government on the question of including a foreigner in the peace talk. Thus, the Government of Mizoram refused to resume peace talk due to involvement of a foreigner in the delegation team of HPC-D. The reconciliation process to solve the Hmar political problem in Mizoram, as instructed by the Ministry of Home Affairs, once again failed because the Government of Mizoram was not sincere enough to do

---

204 An interview with Lalhmingthang Sanate, President, Hmar People’s Convention – Democratic (HPC-D), on 10th June 2015, Hmarkhawlien.
so. In reaction to the disinterest shown by the Government of Mizoram, HPC-D boycotted all political parties except the HPC candidates to contest Village Council election in thirty one villages within the Sinlung Hills Development Council area. Owing to alleged dictate of HPC-D to vote for HPC-D backed HPC candidates only, the State Election Commission on 22nd February 2012 indefinitely postponed the Village Council elections in thirty one villages within HPC-D demand area. Accordingly, the Government of Mizoram advised the incumbent Village Council members to continue the Village Councils.

As mentioned earlier, HPC-D did not accept the Memorandum of Settlement signed between the Government of Mizoram and HPC. It was also said that the party was formed to safeguard the Hmar people from various militant groups. The party claimed that it was the vanguard of Hmar nationalism movement in the Northeast States of India. The political demands and grievances of the party in Mizoram over the years had been the same. The creation of autonomous district for the Hmars in Mizoram remains their stance. In the beginning, the HPC-D militants were primarily active in Sinlung Hills Development Council (SHDC) areas of Mizoram. Now, they were also spread to the Hmar inhabited areas of Churachandpur District in Manipur and Cachar and North Cachar Hills District in Assam.