



STUDENT ACTIVISM IN MIZORAM

H. Lalenzuali * & Jangkhongam Doungel

Department of Political Science, Mizoram University, Aizawl, India

*✉ engzuali1@gmail.com

H. Lalenzuali: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8892-8884>

ABSTRACT

The paper examines the inception and development of student movements, focusing on significant organisations such as the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) and their critical roles in tackling educational, political, social and cultural challenges. The paper covers student activists' strategies, such as protests, negotiations and campaigns and evaluates their success in bringing about policy changes and creating social consciousness. The study concludes with an examination of developing patterns in student activism and ideas for expanding its reach in Mizoram. This extensive analysis emphasises the importance of student activism as a change agent and its ability to affect Mizoram's future sociopolitical environment.

Keywords: *Activism, MZP, Movement, Political, Student.*

Introduction

Mizoram is one of the North-Eastern states of India. North East India (NEI) is a frontier tract which is bounded by Bhutan and China in its north and northeast side, by Myanmar on the south-east and Bangladesh on the south and south-west except for a narrow corridor of about 20-22 kms width which connects it with West Bengal and through it with the rest of India. North East India alone has about 145 small and large tribal communities recognised as scheduled tribes.

Mizoram which was previously known as the Lushai Hills was annexed by the British in 1890 for administrative purposes and a regular administrative set-up was established in 1891. Before this, the British sent several punitive expeditions to counter-attack the frequent attacks of the Mizo. The first time the British sent a troop was in 1844. This was done to punish Lalchokla's (Lalsuthlaha) village (Doungel, 2013). The last expedition called the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-1890 finally led to the creation of Mizo Hills under British rule.

The Lushai Hills was divided into two for administrative purposes- North Lushai Hills and South Lushai Hills but was later amalgamated as the Lushai Hills District of Assam in 1898. The British administered the region till 1947 by creating a system of administration which emphasized self-government based upon the traditional chieftainship.

Under the British administration, the Mizo people were not allowed to take part in any political activities. However, just a year before India got her independence, they were permitted by the Superintendent to form political parties and as a result, the first political party known as the Mizo Union (originally named Mizo Commoners' Union) was formed on the 9th of April, 1946. The party was driven by the educated and politically conscious Mizo people and supported by the commoners who had the intention of becoming a part of the governance. Independent India with its movement towards the establishment of a liberal democratic political system was a big source of inspiration for the politically conscious Mizo Union Party whose first main objective was to stop all traditional privileges enjoyed by the chiefs which was naturally opposed by the chiefs and their supporters. As a result of continuous pressure on the government by the Mizo Union, a District Advisory Council was set up which comprised of 30 representatives. There were twenty members from the Commoners, ten chiefs from the Chiefs' Council, one woman each from Lunglei and Aizawl elected by women, three members from Aizawl and two members from Lunglei (Joseph, 2015). Ultimately, this led to the

abolition of chieftainship by the Assam Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of Chief's Rights) Act, 1954.

After India's independence, Mizoram continued to be known as the Lushai Hills and was given an Autonomous District Council under the provision of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. The first Lushai Hills District Council was held on 5th December 1951. The Union Parliament changed the name Lushai Hills District to Mizo District in 1954. In the southern part, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (PLRC) was also formed with Saiha as its Headquarters. On 21st January 1972, the Mizo District Council was granted the status of a Union Territory with its present name Mizoram having a legislature comprising 33 members, 30 elected and three nominated seats. In the same year on 2nd April 1972, the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (PLRC) was divided into three Regional Councils namely, the Pawi Regional Council, the Lakher Regional Council and the Chakma Regional Council with full-fledged autonomous District Council status. By an act of Parliament in 1989, the names of the Lakher Autonomous District Council and the Pawi Autonomous District Council were changed to the Mara Autonomous District Council and Lai Autonomous District Council respectively.

Following the settlement between the MNF and the Government of India, the Government of India, to elevate the status of Mizoram from a Union Territory to a full-fledged state, introduced the Mizoram Statehood Bill 1986 and the 53rd Constitution (Amendment) Bill 1986 was

passed on 14th August 1986. As a result, on 20th February 1987, Mizoram was inaugurated as the 23rd state of the Indian Union, having a unicameral legislative assembly with forty (40) elective seats. Four days before the inauguration, i.e. 16th February 1987, the first general election of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly was held.

The Governor is the head of the state. It has a council of ministers headed by the Chief Minister. In addition, in the extreme southern side of Mizoram, there are three Autonomous District Councils, namely, the Lai Autonomous District Council, the Mara Autonomous District Council and the Chakma District Council functioning with legislative, executive and judiciary organs under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. The Government of Mizoram has a separate Department known as the District Council Affairs Department which caters to the affairs of the three Autonomous District Councils.

The state of Mizoram has 11 districts for administrative purposes. They are Aizawl, Lunglei, Champhai, Siaha, Kolasib, Serchhip, Lawngtlai, Mamit, Saitual, Hnahthial and Khawzawl. Aizawl is the most populated while Siaha is the least populated. Under the Lushai Hills District Village Council Act, 1953, the district headquarters have been operating under Village Councils since 1954, except for the state capital Aizawl City which is now functioning as a municipal council after the passing of The Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007.

Emergence and Development of Formal Education

The establishment of educational institutions in Mizoram unfolded in the late 19th century during the British colonial era. One of the first educational initiatives within this hilly terrain materialized in Bualpui, coinciding with the establishment of a hospital. It is worth noting that this initial school had among its students the great-grandfather of Lalvunga, who would go on to become the first Mizo to join the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) (Nghaka, 2018). Regrettably, this early educational endeavor was short-lived, as the local village chief encountered practical challenges in maintaining it.

In 1894, another educational institution surfaced in Lunglei, situated in the southern expanse of the Mizo Hills. An interesting facet of these early schools was the teaching of Bengali script and dialect to the students, an educational approach that many learners found considerably challenging (Nghaka, 2018) Meanwhile, in 1893, a school designed to cater to the children of the army personnel was established in Aizawl. Notably, this institution initially used Hindi script and language for instruction but later transitioned to Bengali as the medium of education.

Reverend Savidge and Reverend Lorrain, British pioneer missionaries, introduced the Roman script and created the Mizo alphabet (Liangkhaia, 1976). In 1894, they established Mizoram's first primary school in Aizawl, with the support of the Assam government, which allowed them

sizable autonomy in running the school, especially at the primary level. The school operated successfully for a period but had to be closed so that the missionaries could focus their remaining time in the Lushai Hills on completing important literary projects. These projects included translating sections of the Bible and creating a concise Lushai-English Dictionary (Lalrimawia, 2004). In 1898, the school was revived by another Christian missionary, Rev. D.E. Jones, leading to the opening of schools in various locations (Nag, 1998). The first Lower Primary Exam took place in Aizawl in 1903, with 27 students participating, and 19 of them successfully passed the examination. In 1909, two middle schools were established, one in the north of Aizawl and one in Serkawn in the south, with all six candidates passing their exams (Hluna, 1992).

The proliferation of formal educational institutions led to a growth in the student population in Mizoram. The first High School in Mizoram opened its doors in February 1944 at Zarkawt, Aizawl, under the leadership of Headmaster Rev. David Evan Jones, with an initial enrollment of 56 students. With limited access to educational resources, the Mizo community took the initiative to establish more schools using their own means. Over time, additional schools were founded in various parts of the Lushai Hills, though they typically extended only up to the High School level. For those students aspiring to pursue education beyond the High School level, opportunities were limited, and many had to seek education outside the Hills (Lalrimawia, 2004). This presented a significant barrier

for those who could not leave the region. The door to higher education remained shut for them. A few fortunate individuals managed to study primarily in Shillong. The Assam government provided a special scholarship for ten High School students studying in Shillong and Silchar, but the number of students who qualified for this scholarship was quite low. In 1931, only nine students received this special scholarship from the Assam government, with eight of them studying in Shillong and one in Silchar. The small, educated Mizo community took a significant step by establishing the first Mizo students' organization in Shillong in 1935.

By 1935, Mizoram boasted five middle schools and an impressive 221 primary schools, serving a total of 9,606 students (Lalrimawia, 2004). This marked a substantial growth in both the number of educational institutions and student enrolment compared to the situation in 1909. Back in 1909, there were only two middle schools along with upper primary and fifteen lower primary schools, catering to a student population of 799. The British missionaries, who had introduced education to the Mizo people, did not significantly expand educational offerings beyond the middle school level, as their primary objective was the propagation of the Gospel (Lalchungnunga, 2004). Following India's independence, Mizoram underwent significant transformations, particularly in the realm of education. In 1958, the state witnessed the establishment of its first college, Aijal College (now known as Pachhunga University College). Just months before Mizoram attained union territory

status, the region had already seen substantial growth, boasting 290 primary schools, 190 middle schools, 80 high schools, and three colleges' (Lalchungnunga, 2004).

Early Activism of Mizo Students

Upon attaining a union territory status, Mizoram achieved significant progress in the field of education. The initial step involved elevating Pachhunga College, the first college in Mizoram, to a constituent college under NEHU (North Eastern Hill University) in 1979, leading to its renaming as Pachhunga University College. In the same year, several postgraduate study centers were established in Mizoram under NEHU's purview. This continued until the establishment of Mizoram University in 2001. Following its transition to statehood in 1987, Mizoram continued to make substantial advancements in the realm of education. Numerous schools, colleges, and technical and professional institutions were founded during this period. This sustained development eventually led to the establishment of Mizoram University. On July 2, 2001, Mizoram University was founded as a central university under the University Grants Commission, Government of India.

The introduction of education undeniably broadened the horizons of the Mizo people in various aspects. As they gained access to education, they began nurturing new aspirations and developed a heightened sense of political awareness. This transformation was particularly notable after the establishment of two non-political entities in 1935: the Young Lushai

Association (now recognized as the Young Mizo Association or YMA) in the Lushai Hills and the Mizo Students Association in Shillong. These two associations marked the inception of formal organizations among the Mizo people. The experiences garnered through the activities of these associations significantly expanded the knowledge of the populace, and it ignited a desire among the Lushai for a better future (Rao, 1976). Multiple factors contributed to this political awakening. The Mizo people drew inspiration from the intense political activities unfolding in Assam and Bengal. The looming presence of Japanese troops in Burma heightened their sense of urgency (Prasad 1987). They yearned for liberation from the authoritarian rule of the Superintendent and the traditional chiefs, expressing discontent with the development efforts of the administration, among other grievances. In 1946, the Mizo people were at last granted permission to establish a political organization, leading to the formation of the first political party known as the "Mizo Common People's Union".

The limited number of Mizo students who pursued advanced education had the opportunity to engage with new individuals and novel concepts. This exposure heightened their awareness of the significance of social organization for the protection, well-being and advancement of their society. The small group of educated students who studied in locations like Shillong, Gauhati, and Calcutta initiated the very first known Mizo organization in 1924, which took the form of a students' association and was named the "Lushai Students' Association" (LSA) (MZP

Chanchin, 1985). Regrettably, this inaugural Mizo students' organization had a brief existence primarily due to the scarcity of Mizo students in these urban centers, coupled with the challenges of communication. However, after eleven years following the establishment and subsequent dissolution of the initial student association in Mizoram, Mizo students in Shillong came together to form the "Lushai Zirlai Pawl" (Lushai Students' Association) on October 27, 1935.

Aizawl was designated as the headquarters for this organization. In 1938, the association released its inaugural magazine. Regrettably, the initial editions of this publication have been lost to time. In 1946, the association underwent a name change, transitioning from the "Lushai Students' Association" to the "Mizo Students' Association" or Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP). The association had three primary goals and missions:

- Enhancing the well-being of students.
- Promoting the welfare of the broader society.
- Evaluating governmental policies and decisions.

In addition to these core objectives, it also pursued additional aims, including the protection, preservation, and advancement of the dignity of the Mizo people.

The MZP, through its initiatives, effectively laid the foundation for subsequent student organizations. The early engagement of Mizo students in political

matters was, in essence, a manifestation of their deep-rooted commitment to the well-being of their community and the region as a whole. This period served as the groundwork for the active and influential role that student activists would go on to play in the political development of Mizoram. The MZP's commitment to education and the preservation of Mizo culture set a precedent for the multifaceted role that student activists would play in the years to come. This commitment to education and cultural preservation laid the groundwork for a generation of student leaders who would continue to shape Mizoram's political landscape in the decades that followed.

The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 caused the MZP to go inactive, rendering it unable to carry on its operations. It was revitalized in 1947 and underwent a reorganization in 1959 (Lalzawnga, 2015). Aizawl was designated as the central hub, with Shillong serving as the subsidiary hub. Aizawl, however, had limited activity, primarily because the majority of members resided in Shillong. The leaders based in Aizawl were predominantly government employees, and the place primarily served as a center for publishing the students' magazine' (Malsawma, 1985). Frequent disagreements arose between individuals in Aizawl and students in Shillong regarding the extent to which they should voice opposition to the Mizoram government. Since most of the office bearers in the Aizawl headquarters were government employees, they hesitated to openly confront the government. In contrast, the office bearers of the Shillong Sub-Headquarters,

composed of students, were more inclined to express their opinions openly. "The leaders of the students in Aizawl were cautious about student involvement in politics, while those in Shillong believed that students who disregarded politics did not truly care for their community and were self-centered" (Malsawma, 1985). This divide led to a situation where students in Shillong, who were more fearless in their approach, became disillusioned with their counterparts in Aizawl. As a result, they declared Shillong as the new headquarters of the MZP. However, the MZP Aizawl Headquarters extended an apology, and a compromise was reached. Aizawl remained the central headquarters of MZP, while Shillong was designated as a joint headquarters (Lianzama, 1985).

During the 40s and early 50s, the MZP magazine which could not be published because of the Second World War was revived. Though there was no actual agitation of the Mizo students against the authority, the few educated Mizo had become aware of the importance of politics for their community. The main issue that the students took up during this period was to have Mizo vernacular subject in the college. Seeing their fellow Bengali, Assamese, Manipuri and Khasi students having their vernacular as one of the subjects in the college, the Mizo students also wished for the same. However, after discussing with competent authorities, they realized that it was required for the community as a whole to have several books published in their language and that there were not adequate published books in the Mizo dialect. This led them to make serious efforts to create

awareness among the educated Mizo to write good essays and poems and publish them. Though the effort of the Mizo students was somewhat quite futile at the initial stage, it is an important milestone in the introduction of the Mizo vernacular in the college syllabus.

The Mizo people in Shillong used to celebrate 'Thalfavang Kut' (Thalfavang Festival, a festival celebrated when weeding or the process of removing wild weeds from the farms is completed and the farms are ready for the next set of crops). In 1951, a grand celebration of the Festival was organized by MZP in Shillong in which the Assam Governor was also invited. The Mizo students asked the Assam Government to declare the Thalfavang Kut as a holiday but did not succeed. However, they felt that it succeeded in achieving one of its aims, i.e., in promulgating Mizo as a separate ethnic identity to the Government officials and other communities.

As previously mentioned, during the early stages when students organized themselves into a group, the leaders in both Aizawl and Shillong primarily consisted of government officials. They refrained from involvement in government initiatives, policies or political matters. Instead, their primary emphasis was on the advancement and preservation of the Mizo language. The insurgency that erupted in 1966 forced the students to remain inactive until 1970. By the year 1980, some semblance of normalcy was restored, but it was not until 1985 that the organization regained full strength.

With the establishment of High schools and colleges by the Government, the

Presbyterian Mission, the Baptist Mission the Catholic Mission and other private agencies, the number of students increased and this gradually gave birth to several student organizations, especially during the latter part of the 1970s and the 1980s. Following its transition to statehood in 1987, Mizoram continued to make substantial advancements in the realm of education. Numerous schools, colleges, and technical and professional institutions were founded during this period. This sustained development eventually led to the establishment of Mizoram University. On July 2, 2001, Mizoram University was founded as a central university under the auspices of the University Grants Commission, Government of India. Each college has its own students' union to help in the administration of the college and especially to assist in the administration of various students' activities. All students of the college are compulsorily members of the union and the leaders are democratically elected amongst themselves.

Students' Union helps cultivate political awareness and political education among students and are an important instrument for promoting democracy at the grassroots level as students learn the art of self-government. It is also a good training ground for those students who aspire to become future political leaders. Many of the leaders of the two apex student organizations- the MZP and MSU- are ex-student union leaders of the colleges in Mizoram. The MZP and MSU are the main apex student bodies in Mizoram and are involved in many of the state's problems

Today, there are several student organizations operating in Mizoram. Notably, the MZP and Mizo Students' Union (MSU), established in 2001, are among the most prominent. These organizations have expanded beyond tribal or clan affiliations and have become a cornerstone of student life in Mizoram. In addition to the MZP and MSU, various tribe- or clan-based student organizations have also emerged. Some of these are the Mara Students Organization, Lai Students' Association, Hmar Students' Association, Thado-Kuki Students' Organization, Siamsin Pawlpi, Ranglong Students' Union, Pang Zirlai Pawl and Mizoram Bawm Students' Association, all of which are affiliated with MZP (MZP Souvenir, 2010). These affiliated student associations are very cooperative in various activities and movements organized by the two apex student associations, MZP and MSU. The students' associations outside the state like Mizo Students Union of Pune, and Delhi Mizo Zirlai Pawl are also affiliated with MZP. Both MZP and MSU have their General Headquarters at Aizawl and have also established headquarters at several places in and outside Mizoram although they still maintain affiliations with these larger student bodies.

The Mizo students played significant roles in the peace process of the state and the attainment of statehood of Mizoram. They have very often been vocal and active on various issues concerning the student community as well as those concerning the whole community. Although the student organization seeks and strives to maintain neutrality in the party politics of the state by

not having a direct link with any of the political parties, there may be indirect political interferences in some cases (Lalremruata, 2018). The students in the society are among the most knowledgeable and most dynamic and a strong force for electoral politics which political parties are fully aware of. Since MZP is the most dominant student organization in the state, its leaders are looked upon as future potential political activists by political parties and they try to lure them into their parties and have often been successful in doing so. There had been quite several former student leaders of MZP who had officially joined one political party or another after leaving the student organization. Some of them became legislators of the state, some became leaders at the local level and some held important posts in the party organization. Since the first Mizoram Legislative Assembly Election in 1987 till today, ex-student leaders and activists have consistently won a few number of seats in the State Legislative Assembly. The 2018 Legislative Assembly of the state had 8 members who had been leaders of the MZP (Chinkhawmanga, General Secretary MZP)). In the latest Mizoram Legislative Assembly Election of 2023, six of the successful candidates are ex-student leaders and student activists (Michael Lalramsanga, 2024). The present Member of Parliament representing Mizoram in Rajya Sabha, K. Vanlalvena is also a former General Secretary of MZP.

The peace of Mizoram was disturbed by the MNF insurgency and the counter-insurgency of the Government of India and this affected the smooth functioning of the

MZP. Despite this, it revived and continued to exist and today it has become the largest student organization and serves as an umbrella for all other student organizations in the state and most of the student activities take place under its initiatives.

Students' Activism in Pre-Statehood

The first time that the Mizo students became involved in the political process was in 1959. They started playing an important role in the political process and development of Mizoram particularly since the '*Mautam famine*' of 1959 (a cyclic ecological phenomenon that occurs every 48–50 years in the northeastern Indian states of Tripura, Mizoram and Manipur, as well as in many places of Assam which begins with a rat population boom, which in turn creates a widespread famine in those areas). Mizoram was still a District under the Assam government. Disgruntled with the slow and inadequate provision of the Assam Government towards the famine relief of the Mizo people, the Mizo students organized a hunger strike at Shillong to put pressure on the Assam government.

The Mizo students were instrumental in bringing about the return of normalcy and bridging the divide between the MNF and the Indian Government so that peace negotiations could take place. The Mizo students approached the peace talks with great anticipation, hoping that they would result in a long-term, peaceful settlement between the two parties. The Mizo students were directly involved in the peace efforts as early as 1979, when Lalthangliana Sailo, K. Hrangthankima, Vanupa Zachhang, and C.

Thuamluaia, the leaders of the Mizo People's Party, travelled to New Delhi to meet with Indira Gandhi, the Indian prime minister at the time, and Laldenga, the leader of the Mizo National Front, to present a memo to the prime minister (Memorandum, 1971).

During their discussion, Laldenga attempted to convince the student leaders that the primary impediment to the peace process was the ministry of Brig. T. Sailo in Mizoram. In addition, the Prime Minister allegedly informed the student leaders that the T. Sailo ministry in Mizoram was not their party government and that they could not just be asked to resign or dissolve their government since that would be against the constitution, as they were students and might know better. Additionally, according to Chaltuahkhuma, Laldenga asked the student leaders to organise a protest in Mizoram to express their desire for a settlement and to expedite peace negotiations. From that point on, the Mizo students became actively involved in bringing about peace until the MNF and the Indian government signed a memorandum of settlement. Students' discontent and protest came to an abrupt halt on January 12, 1982, when a peace conference between the MNF and the Indian government was cancelled. Several student leaders were imprisoned as a result of their anti-government actions. Furthermore, the state government banned the MZP and did not allow educational institutions to establish an MZP branch. As a result, several students who supported MNF joined the underground, while others joined the Mizoram Congress (I), the ruling PC, and

still others founded the Students' Conference for Action Programme (SCAP), an organisation that supported the ruling party.

Concurrently, on December 30, 1982, representatives of the Mizo Students' Union (MSU) and All Mizo Post Graduate Students' Union (AMPGSU) in Shillong jointly founded a students' forum known as the Mizo Peace Forum (MPF). Without a doubt, the MPF's main goals upon formation were to mobilise the populace along MNF lines and to affect the political attitudes of the various categories of people. However, the MPF quickly changed its status to a political party. Among other things, preserving eternal calm and quiet was one of its key goals. Therefore, the MPF was a pro-MNF forum from the beginning. The Mizo students once more awoke from their slumber with the formation of the Students Joint Action Committee (SJAC) at Aizawl on May 7, 1985, in the hope of playing a more significant role, following the Central Government and the MNF's renewed peace talks in 1984. A preliminary draft of the peace deal was finished in December 1985 following several rounds of discussions.

The Mizoram Congress (I) Government, led by Lal Thanhawla, was viewed in Aizawl as the primary obstacle to the peace process, as he was unable to resign as Chief Minister in favour of the peace process. This resulted in a deadlock, after which Laldenga, the MNF underground President, travelled to London for Christmas in late 1985. Nevertheless, the final peace agreement could not be reached. The Prime Minister had told Laldenga before he left

that he would be called in around January 10, 1986.

Nevertheless, Laldenga was not requested to return to New Delhi by the Indian Government until February 1986. To persuade the Prime Minister to invite Laldenga back to New Delhi to conclude the peace negotiations, the SJAC dispatched two delegates, R.F. Muana and Lalhmingliana, to New Delhi. The SJAC representatives, however, were unable to schedule a meeting with the Prime Minister. The SJAC delegates were granted an appointment to meet with the Prime Minister on March 10, 1986, after they threatened to begin fasting in front of the Parliament building. They requested him to bring Laldenga back from London to conduct peace talks.

All Mizoram MLAs received letters from the SJAC asking them to step down to speed up the peace settlement, but the MLAs ignored the call. Furthermore, the SJAC asked the State Congress (I) Government, headed by Lal Thanhawla, to resign to achieve a peace deal. On March 12, 1986, the SJAC coordinated a public demonstration in Aizawl to expedite peace talks between the Indian government and the MNF underground. On June 3 and 4, 1986, they began a state-wide agitation and demanded a two-day complete bandh (Hluna, 2015). To put it briefly, Mizo students had a significant role in the insurgency.

It is interesting to note that the peace negotiations between the MNF and the Indian government encountered several challenges, setbacks, and impasses. The students made significant contributions to

the success of Peace Talk by pressuring the authorities to reinstate it during those crucial days. It is not an exaggeration to say that the students' crucial contribution contributed to the MNF and Indian government finally signing a Peace Settlement in New Delhi on June 30, 1986.

Students Activism in Post-Statehood

Students continue to be a powerful force shaping the socio-political landscape of Mizoram. Student activism usually transpires under MZP or MSU since they are the two big student organizations of the state. They have evolved to become a crucial entity for both student welfare and the broader Mizo community. In the realm of education, the student organizations have been instrumental in advocating for student rights, promoting quality education and ensuring the welfare of students in Mizoram. Beyond focussing on student welfare, they play a pivotal role in addressing broader issues affecting the Mizo community. The organization has been involved in advocating for the preservation of Mizo culture, heritage and language and promoting social harmony and unity among the different sections of society.

During 1997-99, following one of their objectives- "to safeguard the rights and shares of the Mizo students", the MZP strongly campaigned for a full share in the technical and non-technical quota for Mizo students. The students blamed the government for acting unjustly like accepting late application forms, entertaining fake marksheets in the interview, result leakage and modification of result for the selection of MBBS candidates.

They organized total bandh and hunger strike to press the government to meet their demands. The government had to set up a special Inquiry Commission and based on the report submitted by the Commission, re-selection of MBBS was conducted on 17th August 1998.

The MZP Federal Assembly approved a resolution in 2013 calling for a "Chakma Foreigner Census". Additionally, it was decided to build "Zofate Chawlhbuk," or rest shed/house for the Zo-tribes, in Borapansury, the sub-headquarters of the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC). Lalhmachhuana, the former president of MZP General Headquarters, stated that it was the Mizo community's duty to preserve and protect the community and land for the coming years and the next generation. The MZP vehemently contended that the Chakmas have never been indigenous in Mizoram and that they are not entitled to the Mizo people's rights following the inclusion of 38 Chakma students in the State Technical Entrance Examination (STEE) results in 2014. The MZP resolved to stage a state-wide demonstration in response to this issue, and on September 25, 2014, it was effectively held at the state capital of Aizawl as well as other district headquarters. "Chakmas are not indigenous of Mizoram; the rights of the Mizo should not be given to others" was the rally's catchphrase, which attracted thousands of college students. As a result of the students' effort, the terms "indigenous people" with "Mizo" were replaced in the State Technical Entrance Examination (STEE) regulations.

On July 7, 2023, a large-scale protest against the appointments of 11 workers to the Mizoram State Legislative Assembly was held in front of the Mizoram Assembly by the Mizo student bodies, Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), and Mizo Students' Union (MSU). It should be noted that translators, assistants, Upper Divisional Clerks (UDCS), and Lower Divisional Clerks (LDCs) have lately been appointed by the state assembly. According to their reports, nine of the eleven newly recruited staff members are close relatives of the Assembly Speaker, Secretary, and other top officials (Rochanlua, 2023). Students had claimed during the demonstration that nine of the eleven newly hired employees have close ties to Assembly Speaker Lalrinliana Sailo, Assembly Secretary Lalhmahruaia Zote, and other influential figures. They charged favouritism and favour-giving to the family on the part of Sailo, Zote, and other authorities. The Mizoram Assembly Secretariat has withdrawn the appointments of eleven staff members in response to a student-organized protest. The Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) and Mizo Students' Union (MSU) planned a protest on Friday in front of the Assembly House, calling for the cancellation of the appointments. The 11 employees' appointments were immediately revoked by the Assembly Secretariat in an official decision that was made public on Saturday. Meanwhile, the roster of applicants assigned to the committee tasked with recruiting replacements was likewise revoked. Eleven employees were hired by the state Assembly later: eight Lower Division Clerks (UDCs), one Upper Division Clerk (UDC), one translator, and

one assistant. Apart from the annulment of the appointments, the students insisted on conducting a new recruitment process in compliance with the Assembly's recruitment guidelines. MZP and MSU leaders met with Chief Minister Zoramthanga to urge him to take the appropriate steps to cancel the appointments. The chief minister's intervention finally resulted in the appointments being revoked by the Assembly Secretariat. On the other hand, the Assembly Secretariat insisted that the hiring procedure had been carried out properly and following the Assembly Secretariat (Recruitment and Condition of Services) Rules of 1995.

Moreover, on 1st February 2023, the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), firmly expressed their disapproval of the central government's intentions to remove the Free Movement Regime (FMR) and erect barriers along the Indo-Myanmar border. The protest turned violent when the MZP set fire to monuments and banners of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in opposition to the proposed amendments. The MZP expressed their displeasure with the government's proposal in a press release, highlighting the historical dispersion of Mizo clans throughout India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Indian states. Furthermore, they contended that the Mizo people had never in their hearts accepted the boundaries that the British had imposed without their permission of them. Their main concern stems from their understanding that the government's decision to impose border fencing and terminate the FMR would make it more difficult for the Mizo people to support one

another, disturb social affairs and prevent clan engagement. The MZP emphasised the right of indigenous peoples, who are spread across international borders, to communicate and forge stronger relationships in their statement, citing Article 36 of the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (Desk 2024). The MZP also emphasised the right to freedom of association in matters of politics, food and religion and urged authorities to confer with indigenous peoples to guarantee the realisation of these rights. Moreover, the MZP called on the central government to explore alternative methods to tackle illegal drugs and prohibited items without disrupting the border, as per reports. Before their protest, the MZP had reportedly sought action from the Mizoram Chief Minister and Home Minister. They further submitted a memorandum to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, providing copies to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Vice President, and Union Home Secretary.

The MZP's fervent stance underscores the complex socio-cultural dynamics at play and the deep concern among the Mizo people regarding the potential impact of the government's border-related decisions.

Perceptions of College Students on Student Organization

Student organisations continue to be an essential part of college life, providing a wealth of advantages that foster both professional and personal development. However, how successfully they satisfy the changing demands of their members will determine how successful they are in the

long run. Student organisations can sustain their existence and have a good impact on the student population by promoting diversity, upholding transparency, showcasing their impact and adjusting to innovative trends. However, the long-term viability of these organisations depends on comprehending and correcting student views. The secret to fostering a supportive and stimulating atmosphere for every student is consistent feedback, strong leadership and dedication to the organization's objective.

Student organisations create a feeling of community, develop leadership qualities, support networking opportunities and promote both personal and professional progress. Additionally, it fosters the growth of teamwork, communication and time management skills, all of which are advantageous for future employment. Participating in student organisations can also enhance the educational experience by allowing students to follow their passions and interests outside of the classroom. The

above table shows that more than half of the respondents (58.10%) argue that the student organization is still necessary for the overall well-being of the students in Mizoram. However, 32.38% of respondents believe that the student organisation serves as an instrument for some people's political benefit and platform. They do not believe it is no longer required as a result.

Likewise, 62.86% of respondents said they were dissatisfied with the tasks and responsibilities performed by student organisations. They claim that they frequently receive disappointment since their expectations are not fulfilled. Expectations for advocacy, academic support, and social activities are all part of this. They further asserted that they frequently became involved in matters or actions that were outside of their purview. Apart from that some of the respondents (31.43%) think the student organization is no longer relevant in the present day. Conv-

Table 1: Perceptions of Student Organizations

Sl. No.	Question	Respondents (210)		
		No	Yes	No Idea
1	Do You think it is necessary to have a student organization in Mizoram?	68 (32.38%)	122 (58.10%)	20 (9.52%)
2	Are you satisfied with the role played by student organizations in Mizoram?	132 (62.86%)	62 (29.52%)	16 (7.62%)
3	Do you think student organization is still relevant in the present day?	66 (31.43%)	92 (43.81%)	52 (24.76%)
4	Do you think students should affiliate or join the student organization?	102 (48.57%)	80 (38.10%)	28 (13.33%)
5	Do you think student organization has become an instrument/tool for some people for political gains?	61 (29.05%)	138 (65.71%)	21 (10%)

Source: Fieldwork

-ersely, fewer than half of the participants (43.81%) contended that student organisations remain pertinent and significant for students, primarily because they are willing to put in effort when students have challenges, particularly with the government.

Furthermore, nearly half of the respondents (48.57%) disagree that student affiliation or membership in student organisations is required. They believe that students have the freedom to choose whether or not to join a student organisation. Also, more than half of the respondents (65.71%) argued that student organizations have become an instrument/tool for some people for political gains. They added that joining a student organisation is a prerequisite for going into politics. As a result, student organisations were frequently politicised and made to appear filthy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the Mizoram student protests, coordinated by several student organisations, are generally more nonviolent and peaceful than student protests in other states. It can also be said that both the state's socio-economic development and the peace process benefited greatly from their involvement. In addition, its function and attempts to uphold the rights and shares of the native population in Mizoram and to encourage the togetherness and fraternity of the many Zo-ethnic groups are praiseworthy. When compared to other Indian states, it is true to say that the movement and activities of student organisations in Mizoram appear to be beneficial without being influenced by

unscrupulous party politics. There is still an opportunity for the organisation to grow to persuade society and play a more beneficial role. The direct connection between the political party and the student group is unsafe, would undermine the organization's value and would mislead the young students. Therefore, it is imperative that both the leaders and the active members continually strive to be morally pure and devoid of unfair tactics and corruption. Besides, they should make an effort to maintain the body free from political motives and interference.

It is important to acknowledge that student organizations have the ability to significantly influence the students' experience. However, it is also possible that they are vulnerable to internal power dynamics and external influences that may divert their focus from their primary goal of promoting the well-being of all students. Student organizations and their leaders must guarantee that their activities and initiatives are in accordance with the larger interests and welfare of the student body.

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